ACT 2: KANSAS CITY SHUFFLE

by calumTraveler

Summary

Your name is JACK O'NEILL, RETIRED AIR FORCE COLONEL, and you're busy SIGHT SEEING THE STARS through your BALCONY TELESCOPE when you hear the familiar sound of a MOTOR ENGINE pulling up to your house.

You've got a BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.

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Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you are FEELING PRETTY GOOD about today! Your MOIRAIL is counting on you! You can do this!

YOU CAN DO THIS!!!
Notes

Story should alternate from one side to the other with the "SG1" and "ALT" tags at the beginning of each chapter. Note: Timelines will NOT be chronically synchronized until further notice. SG1 side is 1 year ahead of ALT side unless TIME TRAVEL is involved.

EDIT: As of Chapters 7 and 9, Obduction has been added to the crossover category, mostly as WORLD FILLER for the Alternian Galaxy. Things from the ALT side might crossover every now and then to the SG1 side, in ways that might NOT quite be obvious at first glance due to the TIME DIFFERENCE.
Your name is JACK O'NEILL, RETIRED AIR FORCE COLONEL, and you're busy SIGHT SEEING THE STARS through your BALCONY TELESCOPE when you hear the familiar sound of a MOTOR ENGINE pulling up to your house.

"Colonel O'nel?" the driver asks as he steps out of the car, and approaches your balcony. Can't even get your name right either, it seems.

"It's O'neill, and I'm retired," You say, not even taking your EYES OFF THE STARS. "What is it?"

"You weren't answering your phone," the driver says. "I was sent from General Hammond's office to get you directly."

"Hammond?" You turn to look. Standing before you is a DECORATED SERVICE MAN, looks like a SARGENT, but what the hell do you know in this dark light. You can barely see enough of his NAME TAG to pick up the name 'DAVIS' but you can't tell if that's a first or last name. "What's he want?" You ask, sitting up at attention.

"He said it's about Dr. Jackson, sir." DAVIS says, taking off his RATHER USELESS SUNGLASSES. It's the middle of the night on the FIRST OF DECEMBER, dude. You don't need them. "His wife is in labor, and the General's requested your presence at the base."

"Well why didn't you just say so?" You grit your teeth a little, and then get to your feet. "Give me a minute to get my badge. I'll be right with you."

SHA'RE's in labor? You grimace as you head inside and grab your STARGATE COMMAND ACCESS BADGE, pausing only briefly to catch a glimpse of PHOTOGRAPH taken on ABYDOS about six months ago when Daniel had first asked you to come visit so you could be told in person.

In it are you, CARTER, FERRETTI, HARLEY, DANIEL, SHA'RE, and Sha're's YOUNGER BROTHER, SKAARA. But why the hell would Sha're be at the SGC without Daniel?

You've got a BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.

It's A FAMILIAR DRIVE down the streets to the SGC, but it's DISTURBINGLY QUIET at this late hour of the night.

It's been a little over A YEAR since ABYDOS, just a little bit closer to the full 365 DAYS since HARLEY'S KID, JOEY, went missing through a SECOND STARGATE nobody had been aware of even being on Earth.

SGT. DAVIS says nothing as he takes you through the security checkpoints, and only opens his mouth again once you're on the ELEVATOR.

"We have to go to level-" he starts, only for you to press the button for the INFIRMARY LEVEL.
"I've been here before, Davis," you remark to the man, who's only response is to put his sunglasses back on and try to maintain his COOL AND COMPOSED FACADE. You get a BETTER LOOK at his name tag, and see that his full name is DAVIS STRIDER. Interesting. Hadn't you heard about some OTHER Strider in recent times making news? Probably unrelated, you'd guess.

The elevator ride down is tense, and when you get to the right floor, your trained eyes immediately pick up on the fact that there are a lot of ON GUARD soldiers standing tensely around.

Then, you hear the pained screams of a woman in LABOR.

You don't need SGT. DAVIS to lead the way, you make your way there with surprising ease.

Your NERVES are not put any more at rest by getting to the INFIRMARY, however. You notice a BUNCH OF ABYDOSIANS lying in beds- WOUNDED as if they'd recently been in a fight. SHIT.

You work past them quickly, following the screaming, until you find the observation room for the SANITARY CHAMBER- which seems to have been reworked into a MATERNITY WARD in an AWFUL HASTE.

Inside that room, you see DR. JANET FRASIER working with her team of doctors to help SHA'RE deliver her CHILD. You'd scrub up and go in to help in an instant, but that's all on the other side of a wall of glass, and you're not all that qualified for HELPING A WOMAN GIVE BIRTH, to be honest.

Instead, you focus your efforts on the people in the observation room with you.

SKAARA is here, along with FERRETTI- both of them look a little BANGED UP as well. Ferretti's got something of a head injury he's obviously pushing past to work on a LAPTOP, and SKAARA has his LEFT SHOULDER bandaged up.

"O'neill!" Skaara smiles at you when he notices you're here- but it's a faint smile that seems a little hollow. "You made it!"

"Yeah, I made it," you say, frowning. "What the hell happened?"

"Hostiles through the gate, Sir," Ferretti says, looking up from the laptop. "They hit Abydos hard. Took a couple of people too. Sha're got clipped, went into early labor."

"Who got taken?" you ask, a dark feeling brewing inside your heart.

"Daniel, Kairi, and a few other women," Skaara says, a fearful tone in his voice. Fear and concern for two important people in his life. Daniel, being his brother-in-law, and Kairi, being... the girl you think he was crushing on, last you'd spoken?

You don't know how that progressed since then, but it doesn't matter.

Daniel's missing, and so are a bunch of Abydosians.
"Shit." You swear.

It's been a year since Abydos. You've been vaguely aware of the SGC running the occasional mission- one of which you were actually brought in on at Harley's request, to help retrieve an old friend of his who had been lost through the gate years ago. But for the most part, the ADDRESS LIST from Abydos hasn't worked out well. Almost ALL FAILED TO LOCK, and the FEW THAT DID had all been uninhabited worlds- or were ones that HAD once been inhabited, but had been wiped out by what you were told could only be the work of KHEPRI'S ACCOMPLICE.

So... the question was who was it?

"Who did it?" You ask.

"That's exactly what you're here to find out, Colonel," says the all-too-familiar voice of GENERAL GEORGE HAMMOND as he enters the observation room. "I'm sorry it's come to this, but I'm reactivating you."

You take a deep breath, exhale, and say, "No, sir. I should have been here. I could've done something to help."

"Come with me," Hammond says, and you reluctantly follow him out of the room.

You're lead to the MORGUE, where you find several corpses whose HEAVY ARMOR has been removed and hung on RACKS NEARBY.

"A team of six of these silver suited figures accompanied by one gold one came through the Abydos Gate less than an hour ago," Hammond says. "Ferretti, Frasier, and Airman Carol Weterings, who we'd just cleared for field duty, were on Abydos making a house call to check on Sha're's progress when the Stargate suddenly activated." He picks up what appears to be a MINIATURE DEATH STAR, but more stylized like a THERMAL DETONATOR. "This came through the gate, the Lieutenant picked it up, and then it let loose some kind of scanning wave. A moment later, she fell to the ground, and the enemy team came through the gate."

"A probe of some kind?" You ask.

"Exactly our thoughts," Hammond nods. "About five minutes before this happened on Abydos, we received an Incoming wormhole here on Earth. No IDC came through, so we left the Iris closed. There was a single Thwump as something hit it, and then the Gate shut off almost immediately after that. We found some residue on the inside of the Iris afterwards that matches the chemical composition of the outside shell of this one." He places the probe back down on the table.

"...Someone's probing gates," you realized. "Looking for worlds with people they could kidnap?"

"That's our working theory as well," Hammond nodded, then picks up a familiar, SNAKE SHAPED silver metal weapon. "These warriors came through the Gate, stunner weapons firing, and Ferretti and the Abydosian guards fought back. That's when the guards opened fire with their staff weapons." He put the stunner down, to motion towards a FAMILIAR LOOKING STAFF leaning against the wall.

You pick it up, and OPEN IT with A PRACTICED EASE.

"It sure looks like the same thing Khepri's guards used on Abydos, sir," you say, running your hands
over it. "But the texture's a bit different on the grip. Feels rougher somehow. Probably been used more often, or is a cheaper construction; I'd guess both."

"Understandable, Ra and Khepri did seem to hold the monopoly on all the good technology," Hammond pauses, then continues where he left off from before. "During the fight, Dr. Jackson's wife tried to stop the fighting, and took a glancing staff blast to her chest for her troubles."

"Damn," you grimace. That explains the early labor. "And Daniel?"

"He didn't react well," Hammond shakes his head. "Tried to shoot the golden one with a staff weapon. It didn't work out well."

"Probably having flashbacks to the fight with Khepri," You sigh, closing the staff and putting it back against the wall. "What happened then?"

"Dr. Frasier reported that Dr. Jackson was taken through the gate alive and conscious, though fighting. The others who were taken, including Airman Weterings, were unconscious when they went back through," Hammond concludes. "Ferretti managed to get a look at the DHD as the Gold one dialed back. We have an address."

"So... Rescue mission?" You ask for confirmation.

"Surveillance first, and Rescue only if possible," Hammond says with a nod. "Comparing this incident with what we learned from the alien that was possessing General West before it died, our running theory right now is that one of these 'System Lords' has finally figured out that Ra-slash-Khepri is dead, and is searching their territory to see where the limits are."

"Makes about as much sense to me," You agree, eyeing him. "This is just about the worst First Contact scenario possible, isn't it?"

"We don't have the luxury of time any more, unfortunately," Hammond says. "Finding another peaceful world to enter the grand stage of the galaxy has to fall by the wayside at this point. If whoever this new threat is is any fraction as powerful as Khepri or Ra or whatever she wanted to call herself was... we have to take the appropriate actions."

"So what do you expect me to do here, Sir?" You ask.

"Do what you did last time. Lead." Hammond says with a serious tone. "I'm recalling Harley and Captain Carter from the Hauntswitch facility. They'll be here within a matter of hours to join the recon mission."

"Speaking of Harley, sir," you look Hammond in the eyes. "Honestly, how's he holding up?"

"About as well as anyone could when their daughter takes a leap of faith through an unstable Stargate," Hammond shakes his head, looking guilty for reasons you can't quite piece together. "He's been working day and night for the last year to get that damned Makeshift Stargate working again, but that stray shot West managed to get in on the DHD fried too much to have it working again just yet. Too much slagged into a solid chunk."

"Right," you say, then look to your watch. "So, if it's going to be a few hours-?"

"Go, be with your friends," Hammond says with a nod, and with that, you're gone back to the
It's another LONG, PAINFUL TEN MINUTES before Sha're and Daniel's DAUGHTER is finally born in the last few hours of DECEMBER 1ST, 1995. Sha're manages to give her the name she and Daniel had been planning on if it was a girl- JADE- but a moment before she closes her eyes and the HEART MONITOR FLAT LINES.

And thus, you're forced to watch with pain gripping your heart as DOC FRASIER does her best to bring Sha're back to life once again.

It's only a minute, but seems like a LIFE TIME, before a heartbeat comes back.

Unfortunately, Sha're is still UNCONSCIOUS... and she doesn't seem to be going to wake up any time soon.

"The Staff Blast got dangerously close to her heart for a grazing hit," DR. JANET FRASIER says to you and SKAARA as you two, and HAMMOND stand around the BABY SIZED ISOLATION CHAMBER that's standard fare in MATERNITY WARDS for premature births. Inside, a young little infant girl rests inside, having cried herself to sleep already. "Sha're's lucky to have made it through the Gate and give birth without her heart stopping sooner. As it stands, I'm not sure I could bring her back if her heart stops again."

"What happens if you can't?" Hammond asks.

"Under normal circumstances, a hospital would keep the baby in isolation until she's stabilized, which I'm inclined to repeat here," Frasier says. "After that, she'd be discharged to any family that's still alive. Skaara, being a blood relative, is pretty much next in line."

"I can't," Skaara says, shaking his head. "Not with Daniel out there somewhere."

"Agreed," you say. "If we can get Daniel home safe and sound, he'll take care of the kid. I'm sure of it."

"And if we don't?" Frasier gives you and Skaara both a firm glare. "What if it takes years to find him? What if by the time we do, Daniel's Dead?"

"...Grr..." You look to Skaara, whose hands are clenching into fists. Anger flashes across his face. "If Daniel's dead, then I hunt down the monster who killed him and kill them."

"But what about if it takes years to find him?" Frasier presses. "If you're so focused on revenge, or on finding Daniel, who takes care of Jade?"

Skaara's shaken out of his rage for a moment, considering it, and then... He looks to you for help.

You sigh, running your hands through your hair. "Foster care. We foster her with someone involved with the SGC until we find Daniel."

"I certainly hope you're not going to hoist her off on me, Colonel O'neill," Frasier says, crossing her arms and giving you an unamused look.

"No, I was thinking someone else," you shake your head. "Isn't that Lalonde girl who works as
Harley's babysitter going to be a mom soon?"

"So you're saying you'd rather hoist an infant off on a first time mother?" Frasier's growing more unimpressed with you by the second.

"No, what I'm saying is-" you sigh, exasperated. "Look, if Harley's go-to baby sitter is going to be a mother, he's going to be helping out with a baby soon anyways. He's already raised two kids from babies too, so he's got the most experience among anyone else we know who could take care of the girl."

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't you have a wife and kid once upon a time, Colonel?" Frasier presses, scowling at you now. "Why don't You take her in?"

Your heart skips a beat, and you close your eyes for a moment as you grit your teeth. Then, you open them and force out: "Had.' Doc. Had is the key word here. And that 'had' is exactly why I was chosen for the Abydos mission by West in the first place."

Frasier takes a moment to comprehend what you're saying, and then her face softens. "Oh. I'm sorry. It wasn't in your file, so I didn't realize-"

"It's fine, Doc." You say, trying not to look at Skaara or Hammond as they're surely looking at you. "I'm not a regular visitor to this part of the base so you wouldn't know." You force yourself to breathe. "Just... I'm the last resort of last resorts for taking care of anybody's kid, alright?"

"Understood," Frasier nods, then looks to Hammond "So... Jake Harley for foster care if Sha're dies and Daniel's lost to us for the next few years?"

"He'll be our top candidate," Hammond says, "but in case he declines, I want you to put together a list of on-base personnel who are willing to take in an infant girl."

"I'll get right on that," Frasier says, nodding, and moving to go leave. "Colonel, General."

"Later, Doc," You give a half-hearted wave as she walks past you.

Nobody says anything more as you look down at the infant in the plastic box in front of you. Jade Jackson, potentially to be raised as Jade Harley if Sha're dies, and Daniel...

You put your hand on Skaara's good shoulder, and give a squeeze. "We'll get Daniel back."

You're not sure if you're telling Skaara that, yourself, or JADE.

Either way, the tiny little infant wearily opens her eyes for a moment, and you see the BRIGHTEST GREEN ORBS you've ever seen peering up at you.

"I promise," you add.

A moment later, the girl's eyes close again.

You wonder if she'll ever remember any of today... and pray for the love of any and all real or fictional gods out there that she never does.

BUT A FEW SHORT HOURS LATER, you are now REINSTATED AS COLONEL.
"As much as I'd love to go on a gaunty visit to another alien planet full of unknown hostiles," JAKE HARLEY says to you and HAMMOND within Hammond's office. "I can't. With Joey out there somewhere, and Roxy so close to giving birth, I promised Jude I'd never step foot off world again unless it was somewhere safe like Abydos." He gives you a smile, "However, I can definitely do you all a solid by tearing apart that probe sphere and see what kind of juicy data we can pull off of it."

"Speaking of kids being born," you begin, and explain the situation with Sha're and Daniel.

Jake Harley considers the offer for a few minutes, then says, "If Sha're and Daniel both are similarly lost... then yes. I'll take her in."

"You should go let Skaara know then," you say. "He's been hovering back and forth between Jade and Sha're, worrying about them both like crazy."

"I will," Harley nods. "I'll go do that right away." He turns to leave with a "Good luck to you on bringing our people home, Colonel O'neill."

DECEMBER 2ND, 1995.

It's the early morning hours, and YOUR TEAMS are ASSEMBLED.

You, CAPTAIN SAMANTHA CARTER, and SKAARA are officially designated "SG-1" for this mission, of which you're the LEADER. There's a conspicuous, SYMBOLIC ABSENCE in the spacing of the TYPICALLY FOUR MANNED MISSION for JACKSON for when you find him and drag him back home. Your pal KAWALSKI is declared leader of "SG-2," whose members are PRESENTLY COMPOSED of THE OTHER SURVIVING MEMBERS of the original ABYDOS MISSION, with A SIMILARLY CONSPICUOUS ABSENCE in the PLANNED FOUR MAN STRUCTURE for FERRETTI, who Doc Frasier didn't clear for duty due to HEAD INJURY.

You have TWENTY-FOUR HOURS to SURVEY THE OTHER PLANET, and either REPORT BACK immediately or ENGAGE IN RESCUE if BACKUP CANNOT BE SECURED in a reasonable amount of time, otherwise the SGC will have to ASSUME YOU'VE BEEN CAPTURED and LOCK OUT YOUR IDENTIFICATION CODE.

With the GATE ADDRESS Ferretti got during the attack set into the DIALING COMPUTER, you stand at the ready alongside your team, watching as the Gate DIALS from the side of the GATE ROOM.

"I seriously hope we're not going to make a regular thing out of this," KAWALSKI remarks. "My heart's going to go out sooner or later if we keep this up beyond a once a year thing."

"I'm actually pretty excited," Carter says. "What little technology we've been able to scavenge from Abydos and the few other worlds we've visited so far have been really enlightening. I hope we get a chance to scavenge something new from this."

"Oh, so she's a Rescue Archaeologist then," Kawalski mutters, regarding Carter.
"I heard that," Carter snipes back at him. "And it's Rescue Astrophysicist to you. As in, I'm going to probably be rescuing everyone with-" 

"Now, kids," you interject, exasperated, before it can expand into a full blown argument. "There's no need to get all 'are we there yet' when we haven't even gotten in the car yet."

Skaara chuckles at your remark, though you're PRETTY SURE he doesn't understand the full context, unless Daniel made a similar joke once. He very well could have for all you know.

And it's... strange seeing the Abydosian kid here, wearing the same MODERN STANDARD ISSUE GEAR that the rest of you are wearing here. It's almost as incongruous as imagining ANY of you wearing this kind of heavy, bulky gear on Abydos- but your mind specifically tries to envision DANIEL wearing it. Green fatigues, large, bulky BULLET PROOF VESTS that probably won't do any good against STAFF BLASTS, but hell- what do you know. Maybe all it takes is a thin sheet of metal to block one of those things.

Plus, in a single year, STANDARD OPERATION PROTOCOL seems to have changed by A LOT. You'd swear it was maybe TWO OR THREE YEARS going by how much better it is, but then again, maybe that's the RETIREMENT getting to you.

CHEVRON SEVEN LOCKING tears you out of that train of thought- and the WORMHOLE OPENS with a WAA WAA KAWOOOSH that you think might NEVER GET OLD. And thus, you lead the charge with the CARGO CART through the GATE.

The first thing you notice is the LACK OF FREEZING COLD FROST on your body, and no DISORIENTATION either.

Instead, the only COLD is from the ACTUAL PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE, and the only DISORIENTATION is from the STAIRS being uneven beneath your feet.

You look around. The GATE is in a CLEARING in a LARGE FOREST. There's STONE DECORATIONS all over the place reminiscent of STONE HENGE- but they're all CLEARLY made out of the STARGATE MINERAL- sharing that same, shiny color that's being lit up the same as everything else with the BRIGHT, SUNNY, MIDDLE OF THE DAY lighting that seems more at home in THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS or maybe up in CANADA SOMEWHERE.

This is of note because you didn't get much sleep last night; barely a COUPLE OF HOURS before the SCHEDULED DEPARTURE TIME arrived. The SUN wasn't even UP YET, according you your ALARM CLOCK. You're PROBABLY going to be regretting the LACK OF SLEEP in a couple hours, but TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE HERE. Time is also A POTENTIALLY ORPHANED GIRL with DEAD PARENTS.

Behind you, the rest of SG-1 emerges from the gate- that is to say, CARTER and SKAARA arrive, and clear the way for SG-2 to come through. Carter immediately makes note of the lack of FROSTBITE, however.

"That's really weird. The connection was a lot more stable this time than it usually is to Abydos. I wonder why?" She muses.

"I'm sure there's some reason for it," you say, looking around as KAWALSKI emerges, followed by his two TEAMMATES. "SG-2," you order, "stay here and guard the gate. See if the DHD is similar
"Got it, Sir," Kawalski nods, and he starts giving orders to figure out who does what.

"SG-1, with me," you continue. "Looks like there's a path in the trees over that way. And where there's a path, there civilization."

And so you head towards that path.

Soon enough, you come to a WELL MAINTAINED STONE ROAD, leading upwards into the distant mountains. At this angle, you can SEE A LARGE CITY.

You whistle, impressed.

"So, Skaara," you say, "how much do you want to bet we can make a better first impression than we did back on Abydos with the sandstorm?"

Carter gives you both an odd look as Skaara laughs at the somewhat awkward memory.

"Definitely better," Skaara says. "Only way it could be worse is if they don't speak any of the languages Daniel taught us back on Abydos."

"Oh?" You ask. "He Taught you languages?"

"A few important ones," Skaara says. "Mostly 'root languages,' he said." And then he switches to an impression of Daniel, "'From there, you can easily figure out everything else you need to speak!'" He smiles, sadly, as do you.

It's but a minute later that you come across some HOODED MONK TYPES wandering onto this HIGHWAY from another, smaller road.

They all take keen interest in your group, and you look to Skaara.

"Well, kid, looks like you're up," you say.

Skaara nods, and makes his way over to them smiling friendly.

The monks likewise smile friendly, and begin chattering quickly.

Skaara seems surprised, and then takes but a moment to start conversing back with them in what you recognize as MOSTLY ABYDOSIAN, with a few FUNKY FLARES thrown in for good measure.

Once he's finished for the moment, he turns back to you and says, "They're asking if we're here for the Choosing."

"The 'Choosing'?" You ask.

"Choosing for what?" Carter asks.

Skaara turns back to them, and then receives a baffling answer. "The Children of the Gods."

"Well... sure," you say, a little unnerved. "Choosing's good. We're here for the choosing."
Skaara answers, and then the Monks seem absolutely DELIGHTED, and start gesturing towards the city, repeating a word a few times.

"Chulak?" you ask.

"Ah! Ah!" one of the monks nods. "Chulak!"

"The name of the city," Skaara clarifies for you.

"Ah, well, lead on!" you motion towards the city, and the Monks gleefully begin leading you there, talking the entire time.

You notice Carter's got a TAPE RECORDER going, probably recording all of this for future reference.

Skaara takes a break every now and then and then to fill you in on some INTERESTING FACTS.

That this world belongs to the GOD APOPHIS is the most important one to make note of. You have NO IDEA who the hell Apophis is mythologically speaking back on Earth, but you assume he's some BIG SHOT here. Big enough of a big shot to send RAIDING PARTIES to Worlds formerly under RA'S CARE.

Other interesting facts include:

The JAFFA TRAINING CAMPS are in full swing this season.

Apophis seems keen on building ARMIES AND SHIPS.

And apparently Apophis' BRIDE, AMAUNET, is going to be CHANGING STYLES and will be UNVEILING HER NEW STYLE tonight.

You have no idea what the last one means, but the FIRST TWO can't be any good.

Interestingly, as you get closer and closer to the city, CHULAK, you begin to notice that you're UNDERSTANDING not only the MONK'S WAY OF SPEAKING, but also are starting to hear SKAARA in ENGLISH as well, despite him clearly talking in ABYDOSIAN.

"Carter," you whisper to her, "is it just me or are my ears hearing things differently?"

"I've actually been hearing it occasionally on Abydos, Sir, when I've gone visiting," Carter nods, tapping at the tape recorder. "That's why I started recording the moment we started talking here. I'm curious to see what language we're really speaking at this point."

"On Abydos?" you ask. "You sure that's not 'cause Daniel was teaching them other languages?"

"Not entirely sure, sure, my theory is it's part of the Stargates," Carter says. "I'd imagine there has to be some kind of... translating nano particle or something that makes it work long term. Not every world has an identical language, after all."

"True," you concede. "So... the Stargate puts a babble fish in my ears?"

"That's my theory, yes," Carter nods. "When we get back to Earth, I'm going to have someone who's
never gone through the gates before listen to the tape I'm making and we'll see what they hear."

"...Cool," you say.

By the time you're in the CITY, you're mostly hearing ENGLISH EVERYWHERE, and by the time the MONKS have lead you to a PALACE, you're hearing exactly what everyone's saying perfectly.

You wonder why it didn't happen with Abydos? And you ask Carter that. She shrugs, suggesting that maybe there has to be one party member among those who traveled through the Gate at the same time who needs to learn the language differences before it works properly?

In which case, Skaara serves as that translating Rosetta Stone, she supposes. And if Skaara understands Abydosian instinctively, and he can understand the Monks almost fluently the same way, and has learned enough of Earth's Languages through Daniel...

You'll have to ask him later what language he's hearing you all speak with.

Soon, you're guided to a BANQUET HALL, and everyone gathers around a table. You, Carter, and Skaara are seated at the far end of the table, along with the other late arrivals, the HOODED MONKS, who are all still rather cheerful despite everyone else in the room merely being NERVOUSLY HAPPY.

And then the GUEST OF THE HOUR shows up- flanked on all sides by MEN IN SILVER ARMOR wearing SERPENT SHAPED HELMETS is a MAN IN GOLD ROBES, and a WOMAN IN FLOWING WHITE DRESS.

At the golden man's right side is a SILVER SUITED WARRIOR without a helmet, instead wearing but A METAL PLATE on his head that PERFECTLY HIGHLIGHTS the GOLDEN EMBLEM wedged into his dark skin.

"PRESENTING YOUR GODS!" the man- you guess he'd be the FIRST PRIME, if all the other so called "GODS" have First Primes like that NIRRTI lady did- yells. "YOUR LORD: APOPHIS!"

The Golden robes wearing man steps forward, a proud smile on his face. "AND YOUR REVITALIZED QUEEN: AMAUNET!"

And thus, does this APOPHIS remove the veil blocking the woman's face, and Skaara bites down a gasp.

You recognize the face as well- even though she's not someone you've met personall. Hammond gave you a picture in the mission debriefing.

That's AIRMAN CAROL WETERINGS, the one that was KIDNAPPED off of ABYDOS.

Both APOPHIS and WETERINGS' eyes flash GOLDEN YELLOW in what had to be a planned, synchronized event.

"WELCOME!" Apophis throws his arms out wide, as he smiles upon the gathered people. His voice ECHOES just like KHEPRI's did. Except where her's, apparently, was self inflicted... this time it's due to a BRAIN PARASITE. "Welcome... to the Choosing." He and his "bride" sit down at the head of the table, with the First Prime guy moving off to the side.

Your eyes meet his, and for a moment, you think you see a FLASH OF REGRET reflecting back at you before it's squashed away beneath a MASK OF INDIFFERENCE. You should know. You've
"Tonight, after we feast," Apophis continues, "we shall all go down to the Choosing Chamber, and you can watch as we select those who will be Gifted with the blessing of being the new faces for My and Amaunet's children."

"I see we have some fresh blood in attendance tonight," Weeterings- no, Amaunet- says next, her voice likewise echoing. "You three, in the back, wearing green and black. Please, stand and declare from where and WHY you've come to visit us from."

Craaap.

You look to Carter, then to Skaara, and you all are in crystal clear agreement. Of COURSE your cover would be blown because one of the people you came to rescue was BODY JACKED by a snake.

You stand up, Carter following, with Skaara just after her, and so, as team leader, you speak.

"Uh, Hi!" You wave. "Names Jack. O'neill. That's with Two L's." You hold up three fingers for a moment, hopefully as a way to confuse them. "There's another guy with one L that I used to work with and he's just... not that great of a comedian, really. Uh..."

Amaunet's eyes are focused on you, and her FACE SCREAMS PURE UNAMUSEMENT. Apophis, on the other hand, continues to smile, as if he's enjoying this.

"So, yeah. Uh. We come from..." You pause, trying to think of a decent name. "We come from Yavin Four. Our God the great and wonderful... Oz, a powerful wizard, sent us here to give you the blessings of one of his most wonderful spells!"

Carter looks like she wants to groan at your OBVIOUSLY FAKE ATTEMPTS AT DISINFORMATION, and Skaara looks like he's just trying to memorize it all incase he has to repeat it back again. Good kid, figuring out that the key to any good bluff is consistency.

You get the feeling HARLEY TAUGHT HIM THAT.

"A spell?" Apophis inquires, sitting forwards, interested. "What kind of spell?"

"Oh, it's a great and powerful spell. Super duper wonderful spell, this spell," you say. "It's all about rebirth... and... renewal."

You can clearly see that AMAUNET is loosing her patience, but Apophis seems to be either TOO AMUSED WITH THE BLATANT FRAUD TO CARE or is ACTIVELY EATING IT UP.

"The title of this spell is called 'So long, and thanks for all the fish,'" you continue. "I really wasn't prepared to present it to you this early, but I can if you want me to."

"That won't be necessary," Amaunet says, and then with a motion of her hand, orders, "Seize Them."

You barely hear the sound of the STUNNERS OPENING before you're waking up in a DIRTY, DUSTY JAIL CELL full of other people.
"Really, Sir?" Carter laments once she sees you're awake. "Hitchhikers Guide? That was the best you could come up with!"

"I was stalling for time and hoping Apophis was buying it," you remark as you get up.

"Well, clearly he didn't."

And then you and Carter both turn at the sound of that speaker's voice.

"Daniel!" Carter cries out in glee, rushing over to hug the man. "You're alive!"

"Yeah, I am," DANIEL JACKSON says as Carter lets him go. "Skaara filled me in." He says, nodding over towards the CELL DOOR at the far end of the room. Skaara is yelling through it at A SERPENT GUARD who seems either indifferent to the RATHER CLEVER SWEARS the kid is throwing at him, or HAS EARPLUGS IN HIS EARS.

Either of those, or he's asleep.

One of the three.

"So..." Daniel takes a moment to breathe. "I'm a dad?"

"And she's beautiful, Daniel," you say. "Clearest green eyes I've ever seen."

"We need to get out of here," Daniel says, shaking his head. "I need to be there for Sha're. If she dies and I'm not there... I-"

Any comfort you could bestow upon the man is cut off as Skaara suddenly jumps away from the doors, and begins hurrying over towards you. "Someone's coming! Someone's coming!"

"Who?" You ask, only to get your answer a moment later as a small section of CELL GATE opens up, to allow MR. FIRST PRIME into the room.

Immediately, he begins making his way over towards you. Everyone else in the room cower away, giving you all the space you need to talk to this guy.

"Lady Amaunet was most displeased with your Lies," the First Prime says. "Lord Apophis, however, was most amused, and has decreed that if you tell the truth, you may yet live."

"Okay," Daniel says. "I don't know what the hell Jack was telling you, but we're from a planet called Earth, uh..." he kneels down, and SKETCHES OUT EARTH'S POINT OF ORIGIN in the Dirt. "This. This is us."

The First Prime bends forwards slightly to look at the symbol. "That planet has been out of contact for countless millennia."

"Yeah, we lost the DHD," Jackson says. "It took us a while to get the Gate working again. We're adventurers. Explorers. We've been trying to make friendly contact with other worlds and people. But since you kidnapped me and a bunch of our friends from one of those friendly worlds, these three were sent here to rescue us, isn't that right?"
"Yep," You pop the P at the end while giving a friendly smile and wave. "That's us. The Rescue Mission."

"I see." First Prime guy says after a moment, and then takes his STAFF WEAPON, and BRUSHES OVER THE GLYPH with the tail end of the staff. He then turns to leave without another word.

"Chatty fellow, isn't he?" You remark.

"So, was it just me, or did he say Apophis?" Daniel asks, turning to look at you.

"That he did," you confirm.

"Apophis, the Moon Serpent. Pretty much a thematic opposite to Ra in most imaginable ways," Daniel clarifies. "That Apophis?"

"Suppose so," you say.

"What exactly did you say to his wife to get you thrown in here?" Daniel asks.

"Oh, I made some allusions to Star Wars, Wizard of Oz... Hitchhikers guide..." You shake your head. "Didn't matter. Amulet lady's possessing one of our Airman. She recognized us before we even said a word."

"So what now?" Carter asks. "It's not likely they're actually going to let us go, is it?"

"Oh, no, they're definitely going to kill us," Daniel says with a slightly happy tone. "But that means they're going to send people in here with staff weapons and we all know how good those are at blowing holes in things." He nods for you to follow him. "C'mon. I've already found a weak point we can shoot at."

The sun outside SETS, AND RAISES in the time it takes APOPHIS and AMAUNET to come with a series of GUARDS to complete this "CHOOSING."

Amaunet seems to take a perverse interest in doing this by hand, as well, whereas Apophis seems to be fine with letting her do all the work.

**What a truly balanced romantic couple.**

Amaunet selects a few ABYDOSIAN KIDS- using her HAND DEVICE to knock them out and have a SERPENT GUARD take them away-apparently just to get SKAARA RILED UP, as she smirks his way every time she does this, and then, at the end of it, selects DANIEL of all people.

"You will do nicely for my son, Klorel," she says, even as her SERPENT GUARDS get in between and cordon you off- preventing you from helping.

"No, sorry, but I've got a wife and kid to get back to," Daniel rejects the offer. "Thanks but no thanks."

*I WASN'T ASKING,*" and then she does the SHOCKY HAND DEVICE THING, and knocks him out before swinging him up over her shoulders all by herself.
"DANIEL!" Skaara cries out, trying to get past a SERPENT GUARD.

Once she's exited the cell room, and dumped Daniel off in the capable hands of another SERPENT GUARD, Amaunet turns and looks across the entire cell block. "I AM FINISHED, DO WITH THEM AS YOU PLEASE, MY LOVE." And with that, she and her guards and the DOUBLY KIDNAPPED PEOPLE leave your sight.

"Of course, My Love" Apophis smirks, sitting up from his chair, and surveying the room as the cell door locks, and the SERPENT GUARDS ALL TAKE UP A GUARDING POSITION in front of him. "Now, what to do with you all?" He smiles, pausing as if to deliberate the question. "Ah. I know." He then turns to FIRST PRIME GUY, who's in the CELL BLOCK WITH YOU as well. "KILL THEM ALL."

"It will be done, My Lord," the First Prime says, but you can SEE THE RELUCTANCE in his eyes.

As APOPHIS leaves after his WIFE, the First Prime takes up CENTER LEAD, and readies his STAFF WEAPON. The other Guards all do the same.

"Wait!" You call out to him. "It doesn't have to be this way!"

"There is no other way," the First Prime says, marching forwards, seemingly breaking protocol as the other Guards don't follow him.

"We can save these people!!" You offer.

"Many have said that," The First Prime says, drawing up close to you, charging up his staff weapon. "Why should you be any different?"

"Because..." You try something risky here. "Because Apophis and Amaunet and everyone else like them aren't really gods! They're Parasites! Fakes!!" You deliver your hailmary. "WE KILLED KHEPRI! WE KILLED RA!! THEY AREN'T IMMORTAL!"

"..." The First Prime looks upon you, considering. Then... "Many have claimed that as well."

And then suddenly, he whirls around and fires a staff blast at the ceiling- dropping a LOT of tile and BRICKS down onto his fellow SERPENT GUARDS.

In the stunned confusion, the FIRST PRIME hands you the staff weapon and draws out HIS STUNNING WEAPON.

Your eyes meet, and he says, "But you are the first I have believed it."

As the Serpent Guards get out of the rubble, you and he OPEN FIRE- rapidly taking out the two halves of the guards by room side in quick succession before they can recover.

You and he quickly fetch their WEAPONS- staff and stunner alike- and spread them out among the rest of SG-1.

"Let's blow this place," you say, and then go to the spot Daniel showed you. "EVERYONE OUT OF THE WAY!"
And thus, You, SKAARA, CARTER, and the FIRST PRIME all open synchronized fire on the wall.

It crumbles quickly, and a hole opens up. Carter and Skaara quickly begin work evacuating the prisoners through the wall, and this First Prime... drops his staff weapon to the ground and starts walking back to the other end of the cell.

"Hey!" You say, "Where are you going?"

"I've betrayed my God," he says, removing his metal head cap. "I have nowhere else to go but execution."

"...Like hell," you say. "You know what they're doing is wrong. You fought back when the moment came down to it! You did what's right. If you're going anywhere... it'll be with US!"

"With you?" He asks, raising an eyebrow. "But I am your enemy."

"No," you shake your head. "You're not." You offer him your hand. "I'm Colonel Jack O'niell."

"Teal'c," the man answers, unsurely taking your hand and letting you shake it. "...First Prime to Apophis." He considers that sentence, and gives a faint smile as he corrects, "Former First Prime."

You smile back.

What happened over the next HOUR involved running to the Gate, and just barely confronting APOPHIS AND HIS LITTLE FAMILY of BODY JACKED VICTIMS- including POOR DANIEL- whose EYES FLASH GOLDEN YELLOW as he launched a SHOCKWAVE from a hand gauntlet, knocking you backwards before he escaped through the GATE.

You redialed Earth, and thats when A DEATH GLIDER came flying in to KILL YOU ALL, aided, of course, by a multitude of SERPENT WARRIORS.

It was a running battle protecting the prisoners while fending off a battle from TWO FRONTS when Kawalski got in a lucky hit with an RPG- and the Glider went CRASHING down into the distant hills, blowing up with a large fireball.

Seems that's two of those kinds of things he's taken out that way, including Abydos.

That was when the Serpent Guards got a BIT MORE SCARED and tried their best to NOT DIE to your SUPPRESSING FIRE.

And then you finally- FINALLY- got through the gate with EVERYONE ALIVE, and you were feeling PRETTY GOOD ABOUT EVERYTHING except for DANIEL being bodyjacked up until you went to the INFIRMARY to visit Sha're and found out...

Sha're died an hour ago- right around the same time Daniel got taken over by one of those god-damned snakes.

And damn it all if that just didn't bring WHAT LITTLE HAPPY MOOD YOU HAD LEFT crashing down into a pit of despair.
It's a different kind of pain from LOSING CHARLIE.

It's more like what you'd imagine HARLEY's gone through with knowing his DAUGHTER is out there somewhere in the universe, either alive or dead, having gone through stuff you CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE.

Speaking of HARLEY, apparently he had to TAKE OFF SUDDENLY because ROXY LALONDE went into labor and he had to be there.

And that's fine.

Because there's no way FRASIER's letting Jade out of her sight until she's DAMNED SURE that the infant's ready for travel ANYWHERE.

A girl that's now a SEMI-ORPHAN, and might as well be a FULL ONE at this point.

You think back on what little you know of HARLEY'S FAMILY HISTORY, and you realize that this little girl and JOEY HARLEY share a lot in common. Mothers dead at a young age, Fathers absent for quite a lot of their lives...

Practically going to be raised by family friends.

You put your hand on the outside edge of the plastic ISOLATION CHAMBER, and you whisper to JADE, "I promise you, kid, we're gonna get your dad back to you."

And maybe if you're lucky, maybe some day you'll be there when they figure out what the hell happened with JOEY.

You get the feeling she'd take a REAL SHINE to this kid.

...You really hope she's okay, and kind of wonder...

WHAT EXACTLY *HAS* JOEY BEEN UP TO ALL THIS TIME?

Chapter End Notes

...im probably gonna get some flack for these changes to the timeline but OH WELL :D
ALT:01x01: Sing the Body Electric Part 1.

Chapter Summary

Two birds, one stone, Dammek had said.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you are FEELING PRETTY GOOD about today!

Your MOIRAIL, DAMMEK, asked you over to his HIVE TODAY to help with the FINISHING TOUCHES on PROJECT: ASTRIA PORTA- the WEAPON that will net the REBELLION its FIRST MAJOR VICTORY.

The death of THE EMPRESS, HER IMPERIAL CONDESCENSION.

The current HEIRESS is scheduled to be CONFRONTING the EMPERESS for THE TRIAL OF ASCENSION sometime SOON. She's been posting aggrandizing HINTS and NASTY CALLOUT POSTS on SOCIAL MEDIA for the last week. The OFFICIAL CHALLENGE is expected to go out before the NEXT BATCH OF Wrigglers hatches.

It's rumored that there's A ROYAL BLOOD EGG among this next batch, adding to the NEAR CERTAINTY of this declaration of TRIZZA'S. Rumor also goes that this OFFICIAL CHALLENGE will include Trizza requisitioning the return of ALTERNIA'S STARGATE.

The Rebellion's plan- so Dammek claims- HINGES on both of them dueling in front of the Stargate, and DIALING in with their CRUDE RECREATION OF A STARGATE when the Empress and Heiress are least expecting it- swallowing them both up in the UNSTABLE VORTEX of the forming wormhole.

Two birds, one stone, Dammek had said.

There's also talk of sending in an ELITE REBEL STRIKE TEAM just to FINISH THE JOB in case the initial plan FAILS.

Today's endeavors involve creating a SIGNAL DAMPENER SHIELD which should prevent the EMPIRE'S DRONES from detecting an ACTIVE STARGATE on a planet that's had it's GATE PRIVILEGES REVOKED. The device is built, it just needs to be FITTED TO THE ASTRIA PORTA- the HAND MADE STARGATE sitting at the bottom of DAMMEK'S HIVE.

And to think, you wouldn't know ANY OF THIS WAS HAPPENING if it wasn't for the fact that your MOIRAIL is one of the LEADERS OF THE REBELLION!

Of course, installing the SIGNAL DAMPENER involves connecting the ASTRIA PORTA to a POWER SOURCE- namely, ALTERNIA'S POWER GRID- which always the riskiest part. The moment this POWER connection is established, your GATE could RECEIVE incoming wormholes and get put on the network. It's a VERY SLIM CHANCE, but there's all kinds of possibility that
SOMEONE trying to access Alternia's ORIGINAL GATE, on the CONDESCE'S BATTLE SHIP, would instead connect to YOUR GATE instead.

But really, the chances of that, you were warned, is only 2.16%, and in all the PREVIOUS TESTS, it's NEVER HAPPENED. So, yeah. Nothing bad's going to happen today, that's for sure. Still, it's a precaution that has to be made.

Dammek gives you the THUMBS UP, and you use your PSYCHIC POWERS, weak as they are, to SECURE the LOCK without risk of SHOCKING YOURSELF doing it by hand.

You hold your BREATH, DAMMEK readies a GUN.

And when nothing happens after a minute, you sigh in relief.

"Okay," Dammek says. "Let's get the dampener in place."

Scattered around Dammek's HIVE BASEMENT are BOXES, BOXES, AND MORE BOXES. All of them contained the SPECIALLY MADE PARTS that went into your ASTRIA PORTA PROJECT, and all of them also contained THE SHOCK ABSORBING GEL SLIME that kept the objects from rattling around too badly.

Good for shipping, bad for using ELECTRONICS immediately afterwards.

The DAMPENER sits on one of the LARGE CRATES that had carried a large bulk of the raw GATE MATERIAL, but now only contains the goop.

You pick up the DAMPENER, and inspect it for WETNESS. "Looks dry!" You report, and turn back around.

It takes about a MINUTE to get the DAMPENER in place, and once it is, Dammek starts to run a test to make sure it's working right before you DISCONNECT the Gate from ALTERNIA'S POWER GRID.

That's when the GROUND SHAKES.

"What the..?" You blink as it subsides. "Groundtremor?"

"Oh for cryin' out loud," Dammek swears as another shake begins, this one accompanying the ASTRIA PORTA starting to HUM DRAMATICALLY. "Xefros! Get over here right now and arm yourself!" You scurry over towards your MOIRIAL, and, reluctantly, pick up THE STUNNER DEVICE that Dammek said the REBELLION'S RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT had sent him to TEST OUT.

You're not fond of GUNS, nor are you a fan of THE ODD SHAPE to this STUNNER DEVICE.

It's long, it's unwieldy, and it generally feels like you're relying TOO MUCH on the technology. If you have to, you'd rather BASH SOMEONE with your FAVORED STRIFE CLUB, but... oh well. It's better if you don't ACCIDENTALLY KILL SOMEONE IMPORTANT who was supposed to show up somewhere else, Dammek told you. MORE POTENTIAL FOR RANSOM, he'd said.

Dammek takes aim at the ASTRIA PORTA with his FAVORED RIFLE, and you can't tell what's going through his mind as the CHEVRONS begin to GLOW AND LOCK IN PLACE as an INCOMING WORMHOLE makes itself known.
ONE.

However, the SHAKING is SOMETHING ELSE- some of the SUPPORTING BLOCKS for the GATE have fallen aside, and the Gate is TEETERING DANGEROUSLY.

TWO. THREE.

"What the hell?" Dammek swears. "This isn't right." And then he lowers his gun to go check a COMPUTER TERMINAL.

You tense up, keeping your STUNNER aimed at the Gate as FOUR AND FIVE lock, and the gate DEFINITELY STARTS TILTING BACKWARDS.

"Shit! These readings don't make any sense!" Dammek cries out as SIX locks. "Where the hell are they dialing in from!?"

SEVEN- you brace yourself for the MYTHOLOGICAL EXPLOSION OF LIGHT....

"Mother Grub!" Dammek swears as the Gate WHINES, and probably the WHOLE HIVEBLOCK SHAKES clear down to the next NEIGHBORHOOD. "Eight Symbols?!"

EIGHT LOCKS, and then-

WAAAA WAAAA!

-KAWOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOSH!

Suddenly, an explosion of COULD-BE WATER shoots out the front of the STARGATE, the force of it's ejection FIRMLY setting the Gate at an awkward angle as the unstable vortex collapses back into itself. Fortunately, Damnek's BASEMENT HIVE was large enough that NOTHING GOT HIT by that explosion of light except for a few EMPTY CRATES and....

Oh.

You peer upwards and see that the VORTEX went a LOT FURTHER FORWARDS than expected.

You can see THE STARS AND THE GREEN MOON through the hole in the ceiling.

People definitely noticed that.

The tremors seem to stop, and for a moment, all that's there is the GATE, idling.

Dammek readies his gun, aiming at the GATE. "Shit, Fuck, Damn it. Even if the dampener works, there's no way that quake wasn't noticed!"

You gulp. You'll have to DISMANTLE YOUR PROJECT and everything you built for it and HIGH TAIL IT out of town the moment whatever comes through the Gate... comes through the Gate.

Then- the wormhole's eventhorizon flickers- destabilizing- and then there's a WHINE, and a SPARK from the Cable connecting it to the Power Grid.
"You've got to be KIDDING!" Dammek turns around back to look at the computer. "What the FUCK? The gate's drawing in power from Alternia's Power Grid! A fuck ton more than a normal wormhole should be drawing from!"

"What does that mean?" You ask, watching as the event horizon flickers AGAIN, this time, hovering half way between disconnected and connected for a few good seconds before stabilizing.

"It means forget about the quake!" Dammek's nearly hysterical at this point. "The Heiress is going to send her Imperial Drones to Investigate why our whole BLOCK is draining enough power to run AN IMPERIAL BATTLE CRUISER! We're CULLED!"

And then the GATE whines, flickers again, and then--- SCHLORP!

It's almost comical how calm the sound was for the sheer amount of speed a SMALL BODY FLIES OUT OF THE GATE.

They turn in the air, and then, almost in an arc, come CRASHING DOWN into one of the STORAGE CRATES, toppling it over and sending PURPLE SLIME sliding across the floor.

You hear a groan from the crate, and then there's a LARGE AND MASSIVE SPARK from the POWER CABLE, and PROJECT: ASTRIA PORTA shuts off with what sounds like could have been a LARGE OVERLOAD.

A moment later, the LIGHTS IN THE BASEMENT go out, and yeah...

That was definitely a CIRCUIT BREAKER going offline somewhere.

You are SO CULLED.

Starring:
JOEY CLAIRE HARLEY
in
STARGATE ALTERNIA
Also Starring:
XEFROS TRITOH
"Xefros," Dammek says as he turns to check on his BATTERY POWERED TABLET. "Go check on whoever the hell that was. Stun 'em if they're awake after all that. I'm going to try contacting The Muse and find out what the hell happened just now."

"Good luck," You nod, and carefully make your way over to the TOPPLED CRATE.

You crouch down and peer into the crate...

It's a girl. She's.... well, her skin is PALE compared to standard Alternian skin tones, but it IS close to what you know of people who live on worlds with LESS HARSHER WORLDS than Alternia. It's also covered in... "The... hell?" You blink, and then prod what seems to be FROST COVERED SKIN. "Dammek!" You whine, tone warning. "She- she's covered in ice!"

"What?" Dammek glances over at you, pausing in his typing. "Crap- that fits with the flickering we saw," he returns to typing on his tablet. "The wormhole just barely made it to us. Where the hell is she from?!" There's a pause, and then Dammek swears, slamming his tablet down on a table. "...DAMN IT!"

"What is it?" You ask.

"They just suppressed all local Network access!" Dammek looks to you, DETERMINATION firm in his voice. "We've probably got less than ten minutes to get out of here."

"Right," you nervously nod. "What do we do?"

Dammek marches over with you, kneeling down to look at the girl in the crate. "...Shit. She's out cold. She'll be culled on sight if anyone finds her like this. We need to get her somewhere safe..." He runs his hands through his hair. "Okay. We split up."

"What!?" You're surprised.

"I'll stay behind and dismantle the Gate's important parts, and leave as soon as I've finished," Dammek says, putting his hand on your shoulder. "You take Cornibuster and the alien girl and take her to the Muse. I'll meet you there when I've finished."

"Th- The Muse!?!" You can't believe it. "But her hive is a full night's run from here!"

"It's the closest safe house we've got," Dammek says, taking his GLASSES OFF and looking you in the eyes. "I trust you, Xefros. You can do this."

Right.

RIGHT!

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH.
Your MOIRAIL is counting on you!

You can do this!

YOU CAN DO THIS!!!

Your name is JOEY, and your eyes SNAP OPEN as you realize you're resting in the BACK OF SOME KIND OF BAG-TYPE HARNESS along with a BUNCH OF FANCY PILLOWS and FLUFFY BLANKETS surrounding you, as if to keep you hidden.

Other than that, you CAN'T SEE ANYTHING because it's PITCH BLACK.

"Wha..?" you try to move your hands and find that they're not bound, and neither are your feet. So... okay? There's sound of grunting as something is shoved into ANOTHER HARNESS NEXT TO YOU. "Hello?" You dare to ask.

There's a moment's silence, and then one of the PILLOWS infront of your face is pulled out of the harness and you get A FACE FULL of ...

SUNGLASSES? Well, that and a MESS OF BLACK HAIR and WEIRD, DEER ANTLER LIKE HORNS. But mostly SUNGLASSES. Why the hell would someone be wearing sunglasses INDOORS- which you're realizing it is- AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT with NO LIGHTS ON?? It's also hard to tell, but he LOOKS TO BE ABOUT YOUR AGE.

"Oh, good, the Alien's awake," Mr. Sunglasses says with a SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR tone of voice. You've heard someone talk like this before, but... you're pretty sure they weren't speaking in AN ALIEN LANGUAGE that you're pretty sure you can UNDERSTAND for whatever reason. He leans in close, and says, "Now before you say anything- I don't care who you are, where you came from, or WHY you chose OUR Stargate to come through. Just know that your little stunt caused our Gate to draw in enough power to bring the Empire down on our heads and you're in as much danger as dying right now as we are. Nod once if you understand."

You nod once.

"Okay, good. So if you'd be so willing to help, we've got at least seven minutes to get everything packed up so we can get the hell out of here" He says, turning to leave, "Xefros! Talk to our Alien friend and explain what you need help with! And help her out of the harness too. She's awake."

"Yes Tetrarch!" says another voice, and up scampering from a SET OF STAIRS is another boy your age. Similarly black hair, similar horns on his head, except much smaller, and... wow does he look tired. "So, uh, hi! I'm Xefros!" He says as he helps pull you out of the harness, "What's your name?"

"Joey Claire," you say. "Where am I? What happened?"

"Well, that's a bit of a long story," XEFROS says, smiling kindly. "See, we're members of the Rebellion trying our best to overthrow the Heiress and Emperess, and we were going to use that stargate to do it but... then you came through and suddenly everything's shut down and. Ah. Yeah. Bad times ahead if we don't get everything packed up and out of here."

"Sigh," you say before sighing. "I guess I just jumped out of the frying pan into the fire here."
"Oh?" Xefros asks, leading you down the stairs towards a BASEMENT AREA where A LOT OF STUFF is being torn apart and SHOVED IN BOXES. "I guess you were running from something?"

You spy the LOCAL STARGATE, which looks about as THROWN TOGETHER as the last one you used, lying at an angle against the wall. There's A BEAM OF MOONLIGHT shining down on it through a hole in the CEILING. Whoops. You guess your end wasn't the only one to have a rather VIOLENT CONNECTION.

"A Big bad Alien guy working for some other Big bad Alien lady named Khepri that my Pa helped kill," you explain. "He showed up and started shooting the place up and took my family hostage and basically forced me to dial a REALLY badly made Stargate with the only address I knew for emergencies just to escape."

"Ouch," Xefros says, then handing you a small-ish box that's loaded up with some RATHER COOL LOOKING CRYSTALS. "How'd you get this Gate Address anyways? And why'd they tell you to use it for an Emergency?" He then picks up another SIMILAR BOX for himself, and begins leading you back up the stairs.

"Some guy gave it to another guy and he gave it to me, and I guess my brother in the future or something writes it to give back to the first guy so it makes it to me so I know the address to make it through alive?" You shrug as best as you can while holding a box in your arms and walking up stairs. "I'm just about as confused as you are."

"It's either freaky good timing or freaky good luck," Xefros says. "'Cause we only even connected our gate to the power grid just to install something. We were going to disconnected almost the second you started dialing in."

"Wow, that's... kind of lucky." You can't help but agree with that sentiment.

"And it's a good thing we had it connected too," Xefros says, as you reach the top of the stairs. You stop and stare as you FINALLY REALIZE what you were in the HARNESS OF. "See, the wormhole destabilized so ours had to draw in a lot of power to make sure you made it through safely and... Oh!" he laughs once he realizes you're staring. "That's Cornibuster. Dammek's Lusus."

"He's beautiful!" You whisper in awe of the MAJESTIC DEERCAT THING that's resting on the ground and LAPPING UP A BOWL OF MILK.

"He's also going to be our ride out of this place," Xefros says, continuing forwards so he can secure his box of crystals into the bag full of PILLOWS AND BLANKETS that you'd been hiding in.

"So what planet is this?" you ask.

"Alternia," Xefros says, and your heart skips a beat.

"Did you say Alternia?" You repeat.

"Yeah," Xefros nods. "Why, have you heard of it? Well, I suppose you wouldn't have if you only had a gate address to dial here."

"It's... uh," You place your own crate of crystals into the harness next to Xefros' box. "Well, remember when I said an alien lady named Khepri got killed by my Pa?"
"Yeah," Xefros nods.

"Well, apparently she came from a planet called Alternia, or, at least, that's what my Pa said," you explain. "Apparently she was some kind of Empress or something."

"Really now?" you hear Mr. Sunglasses remark as he brings up a LOAD FULL OF COMPUTERS from the basement using some kind of HOVER SLED to carry it all. "Did you catch what her original name was before the fancy re-title branding? 'Cause I've never heard of any Khepri in Alternian history."

"Um..." you smile. "I can actually do you one better." You fish around in your JACKET POCKETS - thankfully DULL GREY was a good enough of a color match to your FUNERAL DRESS that you were able to bring it- and you pull out the STOLEN PHOTOGRAPH. "This is a picture my Pa took of her when she was pretending to be his mother."

You hand Mr. Sunglasses the photograph, and he looks at it for a few moments before making a wet, strangled sounding kind of wail from the back of his throat.

"What is it, Tetrarch?" Xefros goes over to look at the photo and gasps in shock. "No way! Is that...?"

"Her Imperial Condescension. I'd recognize that ugly mug anywhere." Mr. Sunglasses looks at you, and asks, "How long ago was this picture taken?"

"About... maybe less than a hundred years ago or so?" you say. "Pa also said she'd been around since Ancient times. Like. Thousands of years ago."

Sunglasses considers that fact for a moment, then asks, "And how long ago did your 'Pa' kill this Khepri lady?"

"Just about a week ago," you answer.

And then Mr. Sunglasses hands you the photo back, and then says, "She's not dead."

"What!?!" you ask. "But- but my Pa said she took a nuclear explosion to the face!"

"No idea what nuclear means, but unless time travel's involved it's impossible that she's dead," Mr. Sunglasses says. "Her Imperial Condescension LITERALLY had a mandated broadcast reporting her progress conquering the galaxy just three days ago."

"But... all that work..." You say, feeling a bit broken-hearted for your PA.

"Whatever, we've got more important things to worry about right now," Mr. Sunglasses says before heading off. "Like not getting culled! I want us moving in two minutes!"

You look to Xefros, and he shrugs. "The Tetrarch has a point."

You sigh. Yeah. They're right about that.
Mr. Sunglasses, who you THINK might be named DAMMEK, seems to be doing his very best to SABOTAGE the STARGATE he'd apparently built with his own two hands.

Just as you and Xefros mount up on- CORNIBUSTER, you think he was called- the Deercat, Mr. Sunglasses hands you what he calls THE STARGATE'S CONTROL CRYSTAL, which apparently has been stuffed in what looks like a COMPACT VHS TAPE SHELL.

"I've got one last thing to take apart," he says. "Get that Control Crystal to the Muse. She'll know what to do with it and the sooner she gets her hands on it, the better chances we'll have that the Heiress won't get her grubbly little claws on it."

He looks to Xefros, and then stresses:

"You. Can. Do. This."

Xefros nods, and then with a HUP and a flick of the harness, CORNIBUSTER takes off out of the HIVE'S GARRAGE DOOR, and you're heading down the street at a FAST PACED RATE.

Well, as FAST OF A RATE as can be managed when LUGGING ALONG A HOVERCART LOADED UP WITH LARGE BOXES.

It's still PRETTY FAST. You'd guess if this were a car, maybe you'd be going THIRTY MILES PER HOUR? But you haven't even gotten your DRIVER'S LICENSE YET SO YOU'RE NOT REALLY SURE ABOUT THAT.

You look around at the SURROUNDING SKIES as you travel, and you feel BIT OVERWHELMED. The STARS ARE UNFAMILIAR, and the MOONS...

Abydos, your Pa told you, had THREE MOONS, each similar in size and shape to EARTH'S MOON.

ALTERNIA also has THREE MOONS... but they are so VASTLY DIFFERENT.

There's TWO PINK ONES, a MASSIVE ONE, and a TINY MOONLET orbiting it. Then, distantly, there's a SINGLE GREEN INTERLOPER who shines on like a CREEPY STALKER.

As you ride, however, a LARGE SHADOW casts itself over you as SOMETHING MASSIVE blocks out every moon. Looking up above you, you watch as a MASSIVE RED PAINTED BATTLECRUISER flies in the opposite direction you're RUNNING IN.

It's marked with an ALIEN LANGUAGE you can KIND OF READ, and looks... VERY SPIKY. But at the same time, there's a BASE, UNDERLYING SHAPE, that's VAGUELY CHEVRON SHAPED.

You're suddenly very aware of why the DHD you used had a variation of EARTH'S POINT OF ORIGIN, and what that symbol's different parts truly meant.

"I hope Dammek got out of there," Xefros mutters, craning his neck upwards to watch as the ENEMY SHIP moves in towards the town you've just left behind.

It's about thirty seconds later that the SHIP OPENS FIRE on the town. Buildings start exploding as those BRIGHT, YELLOW SQUID LIKE THINGS swoop down and begin
INDISCRIMINATELY BLOWING PEOPLE'S HOUSES UP. What was once a DARKENED, POWER LACKING TOWN is now BURNING WITH CRIMSON FLAMES.

Xefros whimpered at the sound of the SCREAMING, audible even all the way out here, and he pulls Cornibuster to a halt for the moment so you can watch with baited breath as the ENEMY SHIP comes to a halt over DAMMEK'S HIVE, the only building LEFT UNTouched by the barrage attack just unleashed, and still occurring.

And then you WATCH as a SERIES OF RINGS descend from the SHIP'S UNDERBELLY. They CRASH THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE ROOF, making the damage even worse. A moment pauses, and then there's a DESCENDING BURST OF LIGHT from the SHIP into the Hive.

The Rings retreat upwards but for half a second- pausing and hovering over the Hive as GUN FIRE CAN BE HEARD FROM WITHIN.

Xefros swears. "Damn it, Dammek! You were supposed to get out of there!!"

Then, the gun fire stops, the RINGS DESCEND again, and ANOTHER BEAM OF LIGHT shoots down.

This time, when the Rings ascend again, there's no gun fire.

Xefros turns to look away and orders Cornibuster to continue running.

You can't help but stare back and keep watching in hopes something good might happen.

Your name is TRIZZA TETHIS, and you've JUST HIT PAYDIRT.

Your ELITE RESOURCE CAPTURE TEAM has managed to SUBDUE A REBEL and has the BRONZE BLOOD on his knees as you emerge from the TRANSPORT RINGS into the Hive Basement.

"Well well, who do we have here?" You smile at the Troll, held back from doing anything by threat of INSTANT CULLING thanks to the METAL CHAIN wrapped around his neck by your CAPTURE TEAM'S LEADER. "Tell me, Bronze Blood, what's your name?"

"Nonyaa Bizniz!" The Bronze Blood spits at you- getting a bit of blood on your SKIRT.

You'll give him credit- he's got good aim.

But so do you.

You slap him across the face with the HANDLE of your TRIDENT, sending those STUPID SUNGLASSES clattering to the floor.

"Well, 'Nonyaa Bizniz,'" you smirk at him. "You're going to tell me exactly what your 'Bizniz' is here. What weapon were you designing?"
"No weapons," He spits out another glob of blood- which you DODGE this time. "Just a science experiment. Didn't mean to draw in that much power."

"Funny," you say, looking down at the DISCARDED GUN lying on the floor on the other side of the room. "The way you had that gun ready to shoot my team... I wouldn't have thought that."

"What can I say," he chuckles. "I knew I screwed up, so I wanted to go out guns blazing."

"Oh, no, I don't think you wanted that at all," you say, kneeling down and gripping the BRONZE BLOOD'S CHIN with your PERFECTLY MANICURED HANDS. "See... if you had the smarts, you'd have run the minute I had your wifi suppressed. No... instead you've torn this place apart. You're HIDING SOMETHING."

You stand up, pushing the Troll's head to the side- not enough to break the neck, but definitely enough to leave him with a sore jaw for a while.

You start pacing around the room, until you finally find what you've been looking for all this time. A means to an end. Your EMPRESS'S END, specifically.

You pull THE PURPLE GOOP STAINED TARP off of the SIDEWAYS OBJECT, and UNCOVER A STARGATE.

Oh, sure, it's BROKEN, AND POORLY DISSASSEMBLED, but it's a STARGATE NONE THE LESS.

"See," you say, turning to lock eyes with the Bronze Blood. "I think you're actually a rather smart Troll, 'Nonyaa Bizniz', and I've got a MIGHTY NEED for SMART TROLLS." You draw out your TRIDENT, and point the spikes at his chest. "See, there's two ways today ends for you. The first is you tell me what I don't want to hear, I run you through with this trident, and then I spend a few months trying to put back together what you foolishly took apart. The second is you tell me what I want to hear, I don't run you through with this trident, and we work together to take out a... Common Enemy."

"I'm just a nobody," he says. "I'm not smart. I'm actually pretty dumb all things considered."

"Many have said that." You lean in close- putting the pressure on his chest without PIERCING THROUGH- and then you hiss at him. "You're the first I don't believe." you pull the Trident away, and stalk towards THE NEAREST STAIRCASE. "And that's exactly what I wanted to hear, Tetrarch Damnek."

"...Oh for cryin' out loud," the Rebel groans out.

"Mierfa! Take him to the ship!" you order as you STRIKE A DRAMATIC POSE ON THE STAIRS. "Salazl, Okurii! Get the Stargate to my Ship. Everyone else- Tear this Hive apart until you've found EVERY COMPUTER HE OWNS!"

"YES, HEIRESS!" everyone yells out with the APPROPRIATE ENTHUSIASM.

You grin savagely. YOUR PLAN is falling into place so much faster than you ever anticipated.

Your name is TRIZZA TETHIS, and you're going to CHALLENGE HER IMPERIAL CONDESCENSION, ALRIGHT. But you're not going to do it through the USUAL CHANNELS.
Oh no, that's been the FOOL OF EVERY OTHER HEIRESS BEFORE YOU. You're going to take some... RADICAL INSPIRATION and do things OFF THE GRID.

By the time ol' Condy realizes what you're doing, it'll be TOO LATE. And then YOU WILL BE EMPERESS.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and when the JOEY HUMAN tugs at your arm to get you to look back at the hive, you almost want to yell and scream as the VOICES OF THE DAMNED yell and scream at you for being a COWARD.

But the urgent tone in her voice- "Look!" -makes you turn to look, and you feel your HEART BOTTOM OUT.

A PAIR OF IMPERIAL DRONES are CARRYING YOUR HOME MADE STARGATE up into the HEIRESES BATTLE CRUISER.

A moment later, AN ASCENDING BEAM OF LIGHT shoots up into the ship- and you just KNOW. You KNOW that Dammek is in that beam of light.

Your MOIRAIL has been CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY.

The Rebellion is SO CULLED.

"Xefros!" and then Joey shakes you by the shoulder. "Hey! Snap out of it! We need to keep moving, don't we?"

"What's it matter?" you ask, staring at the BURNING WRECKAGE of your HOME, with the HEIRESES BATTLESHIP hovering over it like AN ENGLISH DAMNED OMEN. "They have the Gate. They have the Tetrarch. The rebellion's finished without those."

"But they don't have its control crystal!" Joey reminds you. "WE DO! We have it! They can't do anything with out it, right!?"

You consider that.

It... it WAS a very hard object to create. It had to pass through the hands of SEVERAL PEOPLE MUCH SMARTER THAN YOURSELF before even DAMMEK got it. It had to have PROGRAMMING DATA stolen by ELITE HACKERS from the IMPERIAL DATABASE to make it even WORK right...

It's...

While sure, the Heiress would have a lot more resources to make it work... she would be missing the most critical part and would likely have to GO THROUGH THE SAME HOOPS as you did to even get a CONTROL CRYSTAL for it on her own, since it's by the Condesce's orders that...

That Alternia doesn't even have a Stargate.

That even MAKING one is HIGHLY ILLEGAL.
That...

That....

That the Heiress would surely be risking culling just the same by even considering using YOURS. That if she makes the INQUIRIES to even FORGE a control crystal, or have one STOLEN from another planet's Stargate...

"...There's still a chance," you say, HOPE starting to SWELL up inside of you. "WE'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE!" you spur on Cornibuster to gallop faster.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and while you're VERY AFRAID... Your MOIRAIL IS COUNTING ON YOU.

You. Can. Do. This.

YOU CAN DO THIS!!!!

Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE. In no particular order, you are a LIME BLOOD, one of the last few remaining of your kind, a DABBLER OF ASTROPHYSICIS, and a FAN OF THE OLD STORIES, as well as an ADAPTER OF SAID STORIES into MORE MODERN CONTEXTS. You are a MEMBER OF THE REBELLION, under the CODENAME "THE MUSE," and you've been worried nigh constantlly SINCE LAST NIGHT when THE TETRARCH'S COMMUNICATIONS suddenly and abruptly were SILENCED.

What little you'd gotten from Dammek said that SOMEONE HAD DIALED IN from an EIGHT SYMBOL ADDRESS and that he was SHUTTING DOWN OPERATIONS before the HEIRESS ARRIVED, implying that he would be heading to YOUR HIVE with whatever he could scavange before he WENT OFFLINE.

So, you've been taking the time to pack EVERY MISSION CRITICAL ITEM up just incase SOMEONE SHOWS UP. You've pretty much PACKED UP YOUR ENTIRE HIVE since then-everything except the TV. The sun rose and set, and now you just stew and wait. You haven't had your POWER GO OUT or had YOUR WIFI CONNECTION CUT OFF or had the TV GO OUT... so you wait for NEWS TO SURFACE.

Your WOLF-MOM LUSUS has been on HIGH ALERT due to THE SCENT OF SMOKE ON THE AIR for some time now, likely drifting in from the NEARBY TOWN that your fellow REBELS called home.

You live QUITE A BIT OUT OF THE WAY from the main cities- a necessity due to your LIME BLOOD and STRANGE, SEEMINGLY BLEACHED WHITE HAIR THAT HASN'T SEEN A TOUCH OF SUNLIGHT IN EVER.

Most TROLLS who do see you when you make the rare visit into town see your PERSONA- that is to say, you wearing a BLACK WIG and a FAKE SIGN on your shirt. A disguise you're currently WEARING, save the WIG.

You give your LUSUS a scratch between the ears, trying to soothe her a bit. But she's still alert and anxious due to the smoke... until something catches her ears.
A moment later is when you hear the sound of HOOVES clopping to a stop outside. There's the sound of people dismounting A HARNESS.

You grab the STUN PISTOL you've kept on hand, and get ready incase someone barges through the door....

**KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.**

"Muse? Callie? Are you there??" And then you hear XEFROS'S VOICE- and you sigh in relief, opening the door.

"Oh Xefros! You made it!" You smile, letting him and- oh wow. And you thought YOU looked weird as a Lime Blood! "And... just who is this Lovely gal?"

"Joey, meet Callie Olphee," Xefros makes the introductions. "Callie, meet Joey Claire. She's the Alien that came out of the Stargate."

"Well, please don't take offense by my saying so," you say, "but why would you ever want to come here for? It's a dreadful place."

"I had to outrun a mean guy shooting at me," the girl says. "Alternia's address was the only one I knew... It's kind of a leaping out of the frying pan into the fire sort of thing."

"Listen, Callie," Xefros says, "I'm pretty sure Dammek got captured."

"Oh no." You gasp.

"And the Heiress got her hands on the remains of the Stargate, too," he continues.

"Oh nooooo...." You feel faint, and hurry to sit down next to your LUSUS in hopes you won't collapse outright.

"But she doesn't have the Control Crystal!" Xefros continues. "We do! We can rebuild from scratch and-

"And what, Xefros!?" you ask, looking him in his poor, soft, unknowing eyes. "Exile ourselves to another planet!? The Rebellion's done for if Trizza has the Gate AND Dammek. We might as well all scatter to the winds right now and never speak to one another again."

"Listen," The Joey Alien Girl says. "We've been talking about it on the ride over, and when we stopped for a while to wait out the sun. WE think we have a plan."

"A plan?" you ask. "What kind of plan?" You frown. "Please tell me this plan of yours doesn't involve a suicide run barging into Trizza's Prison Block and breaking Dammek out."

Xefros and the Joey Alien Girl share a knowing look with each other.

"Well... it's less doing a suicide run and more... doing a trade?" Xefros offers.

And then they tell you the plan. Explaining thusly, and as such, every major detail.

And you couldn't help but to feel a little bit... CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC.

So you helped them refine the plan thusly, and as such, helped make it from something that had but the slimmest chance of working into something that had a larger chance of working, even if it was still astronomically low.

And so forth, did you three set out to execute your plan.

And so the curtains did rise on the proverbial stage, and the metaphorical audience thus did proceed to watch.

...In the next chapter that focuses on your side of events.

Chapter End Notes

whoo. Cliffhangers! :D
SG1:01X02: Windshields

Chapter Summary

While an ENEMY WITHIN lurks in the background, one DAVIS STRIDER is focusing more on some PERSONAL ISSUES.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

DECEMBER 5TH, 1995.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, "DAVE" to your FRIENDS AND FAMILY, and you are presently OFF DUTY on one of your RARE DAYS OFF. You have some MINOR RANK that's just barely high enough to get you access to everything while ALSO BEING BASICALLY THE ERRAND BOY for an ENTIRE MILITARY BASE.

You're serving dudes left and right like a Butler on Butler Island.

"Strider!" someone says. "Go fetch this guy from his house cause he's not answering his phone!"

"Strider!" someone orders, "Go get me a double espresso cappawhatever with TRIPLE MILK AND SUGAR."

"Dave!" Your BROTHER, DIRK, pleads over the phone, "You've got to take her in."

For the TENTH TIME in the last minute, you RUN YOUR FREE HAND THROUGH YOUR HAIR.

"Dirk," you say to him. "Dirk, please, just... for the last time. I can't just go on leave for a whole week to come down to Texas, and pick up some baby that you got dropped on your doorstep because apparently you slept with their mother ten months ago."

And honestly that's the hardest part of this to believe. Your BRO IS GAY AS A RAINBOW, and just as straight. That, EVEN AT A PARTY WITH "SPIKED PUNCH” HE WOULD WILLINGLY SLEEP WITH SOME GIRL HE DOESN’T EVEN REMEMBER THE FACE OF, is pretty much the MOST BULLSHIT EXCUSE ANYONE COULD EVER COME UP WITH.

Chances are whoever this MYSTERY LADY IS she slept with some other guy who just LOOKS like your FAMOUS D.J. OF A BROTHER, and got them mistaken and decided to drop her kid off with your BRO instead. Which is really the MAIN REASON you're not jetting down there right now to take the kid in. You've also repeated this same point TWICE ALREADY, to no avail.

"Dave, I'm- you know how our parents were." Dirk says. "You know how they reacted when I came out. I'm NOT fit for being a parent and we both know it."

"What about that guy you're dating?" you ask, getting low on possible alternatives. "What was his name again? Hal..quius or something?" You can't even remember the guy's name and just make
"Dude. Come ON. You know Clint broke it off with me a whole two years ago." Dirk doesn't sound amused.

"Wait, shit. Seriously?" You're COMPLETELY CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THIS STUNNING REVELATION. "When did this happen??"

"TWO YEARS AGO!!! At Christmas! I gave him a chocolate candy heart with a ring inside and he just shoved it right back in my face!" Dirk then interrupts your interjection with, "AND YES, I KNOW THAT'S THE PLOT OF A SONG! I swear if you say one word beginning with 'iron' and ending in 'eye' I'll..."

"You'll what?" You ask.

"I'll fly up there to candyass Colorado Springs and drop this tyke off on your doorstep myself!"

"Alright, fine," you relent. "I'm in no position to take in a kid. I'm barely scraping by as it is. My landlord found out I'm military and he's been gouging my prices up and up and I'm really having no luck getting a new place. I can't take her in! Besides, what if the Mother has any regrets and comes back for the kid?"

"She's not going to, Dave! That's what I've been trying to tell you!" Dirk says. "She's... I don't know how the hell to describe this. You just have to see it for yourself."

"I'm not coming down to Texas in the middle of December, Dirk. You'll have to do me one better than that." You insist. "Tell me one good reason that you haven't said already that I'm somehow better suited to taking in this girl than you are."

"...Fine. I didn't want to say this over the phone but she's got fucking Cat Ears, Dave!"

"Dude, did this lady give you a Cat?" You ask. "Are you seriously trying to pawn off a freaking CAT on me?? You know my apartment doesn't take in cats."

"No! I mean! She's a human girl and she's got NEON GREEN CAT EARS on top of her freaking HEAD!" Dirk's definitely freaking out at this point. "I don't know how to even take care of something like this!! A normal human girl? Sure, I'd be flipping the fuck out, but I could at least look up some kind of book or something at the library. But THIS!? What if she needs special diets and shit!? How much trouble am I going to get in if this turns out to be some kind of stolen experiment from some LAB!?"

"...So you called up your bro in the Military just because you know he could probably, at the very least, take care of a giant mutant kitten?" You pause, hear no response, then continue, "And at the very least if SOMEONE runs into trouble for a stolen genetic experiment, then AT LEAST it's the guy with a Military Reputation to uphold, right? Nothing wrong with that at all, RIGHT??"

"...Well... You're not wrong??"

You groan, planting you hand against your face. "Fucking Hell, Dirk. How is it you ALWAYS get
me into messes like this? This is the whole reason I got INTO the Military in the first place- to get away from your crazy insane bullshit like this!"

You take a calming breath while your BROTHER is stunned into silence. You realize, a little hypocritically... your CURRENT JOB will probably lead to having NO SHORTAGE of STRANGE AND INSANE BULLSHIT on a no doubt WEEKLY BASIS like some kind of TV SHOW.

"Fine. If I can clear a trip down with my bosses. Fine. I'll come down and pick up the kid."

"Dave, I can't tell you how much this-"

"But if you EVER see the woman who dropped this kid off on your doorstep AGAIN," you put on your BEST, AND MOST INTIMIDATING COMMANDER VOICE, which you've been practicing for when you one day get PUT IN A POSITION OF POWER. "You are SO giving her my card and telling her to call me IMMEDIATELY."

"Yes, Sir, Mr Major Dave Sir!" You can't tell if Dirk's being serious or JUST TROLLING YOU.

"That's Major Davis to you, Dirk," you quip, even though that's not your rank right now. Maybe someday...

And so, after putting off a rapid fire series of 'thank you so very much'es from Dirk, you finally manage to hang up. You nearly THROW YOUR PHONE across the room, and if not for its CORD, you would have done so.

You'd probably have lost it out the window if you'd done that, so yeah, thank WHOEVER invented Corded Telephones for that.

You put on your SUNGLASSES, grab your BADGE AND KEYS, and take off for the MOUNTAIN.

You're going to have to talk to GENERAL HAMMOND directly about this. Because if you're being really honest with yourself, chances are the mother just stuck a CAT EAR HEADBAND on the tyke's head and Dirk hasn't noticed yet. And as you're being honest with yourself, you'll FREELY admit one thing: Dirk's really not cut out to raise a kid if he's freaking out so badly as to not see that the kid's wearing a HEADBAND with cat ears on it.

...But on the off chance that this kid DOES have Cat ears, like, actually growing out the top of her skull...

Well, you've heard of ONE OTHER WOMAN in all the history of the SGC that could maybe have given birth to this kid, and you're pretty sure that if SHE DID DO THIS, you DEFINITELY need to inform General Hammond about the possibility of A GENETIC MANIPULATOR hiding out on Earth.

"Moon God?" Your name is JAKE HARLEY and these are the first words out of your mouth as you barge into the CONFERENCE ROOM. You're also honestly kind of wondering HOW THE HELL Daniel Jackson got that so wrong. "No, no, no. If you want a moon god there's Thoth or
Khonsu! Not Apophis! Apophis is CHAOS incarnate!!"

You suppose it was the stress of the situation, most likely. Got his facts all scrambled up in his head in the heat of the moment.

"Well, okay." Colonel O'neill gives you a strange look, as does GENERAL HAMMOND, and KAWALSKI. "That's the first thing you say to us after getting the debriefing report and coming back in? Not a 'hello I'm back' or a 'top of the morning to you!' just... 'moon god?'"

You sigh, okay. Fine. "Good morning, Colonel. How are you this morning?"

The question's answer, as a matter of course, is put on pause as SOMEONE ELSE'S STARGATE DIALS IN, and a SERIES OF THWUMPS hit the IRIS FROM THE OTHER SIDE before shutting down again.

"Better than those guys are," O'niell says, gesturing out the OBSERVATION ROOM WINDOW. "Apophis or Amaunet have been keeping it up since the the third. Apparently either they really want my unique comedy styling as their court jester, or they're Really mad their First Prime helped in a prison break."

"...What did you SAY to them, exactly?" You ask, fixing O'neill with a questioning gaze.

"Direct quote's in the report, Harley," O'neill says, smirking at you. "Which you've obviously read going by your rant about Daniel mis-appropriating the whole God hierarchy thing."

"To be fair, I've been a bit busy," you say. "I'm now, in addition to being a foster parent, a... Hold on one second." You try to remember the connections. Your sister's son- Alec- is your Nephew, who's marrying Roxy sooner or later making her your Niece-in-law, thus making... "I'm now a Great Uncle."

"A Grunkle, eh?" O'neill smiles. "Congratulations."

"Yes, yes," you nod. "I got enough of that from the hospital staff."

"So, what's the kid's name?" Kawalski asks, piping into the conversation. "Don't tell me they went with something mundane like John or Jodi."

"Nothing like that," you say, shaking your head. "I'll have you know that on December 2nd, one Rose Egbert-Lalonde was born into the world."

"Egbert-Lalonde?" O'neill raises an eyebrow. "Isn't that a bit of a mouthful?"

"They haven't settled on who's taking whose last name yet," you explain. "So until then, Rose has both."

"That makes perfect sense," O'neill pauses for a moment only to ask, "So when's the wedding?"

"They still haven't decided yet," You admit, sighing. "Honestly, I wish they hadn't rushed into this relationship, but you know how it goes with sudden hostage situations and losing a close relative..."

Your mind drifts back to that dreadful moment. The KAWOOSH of a Stargate EATING AWAY the roof above you. THE POSSESSED WEST SHOOTING AT JOEY. Her diving through the
Gate. A stray bullet smashing into the DHD and one of those CAPACITOR THINGS. The Arc of electricity shooting out and hitting WEST square in the chest.

"Harley?" Hammond asks, and you shake yourself out of it.

"Yes, General?" You ask.

"I'd like you to meet the man that Colonel O'neill brought back from Chulak," Hammond says. "Get a good impression of his character and report back to me. Colonel O'neill says he's trust worthy, and while I'm inclined to trust his judgement, my superiors aren't so keen on it."

"So you want me to judge his character or some such?" You ask, frowning. "Fine. I'll go visit him. Where is he at?"

"Down in the Infirmary right now," Hammond informs.

"Okay, I've got to go down there and check in on my new ward anyways," you say. "I'll take care of two birds with one visit!"

"I'll come down and visit in a few minutes," O'neill says.

"Sure, sure," You nod, and begin heading down that way to the infirmary.

Your name is DR. JANET FRASIER, and you're honestly feeling like you're playing CATCHUP with the rest of the universe right about now. For the most RECENT EXAMPLE, your ALIEN VISITOR named TEAL'C, who carries AN INFANTILE VERSION of the ALIEN PARASITE that apparently some ALIENS EAT FOR BREAKFAST and others (namely, HUMANS) GET BODY JACKED BY INSTEAD.

You're not even sure where to BEGIN with the concept of this thing replacing almost all of Teal'c's IMMUNE SYSTEM, or how it even FUNCTIONS inside a POUCH that, as far as you can tell, HAS BEEN EXTERNALLY Grafted INTO HIS BODY through some UNKNOWN MEANS.

Teal'c's MEMORIES OF THE PROCEEDURE aren't terribly much to GO BY EITHER, as apparently it happens at an EARLY ENOUGH AGE that he either just suppressed most of it, or actively tried to forget how it happened, which DOESN'T IMPRESS YOU MUCH on the matter of the Goa'uld's METHODS OF OPERATION.

Especially with how this apparently happens to EVERY JAFFA WARRIOR serving under a "SYSTEM LORD."

The Jaffa carry the "Symbiote," as you're starting to call it in your notes, to its term, and then replace it with ANOTHER INFANT, while the MATURATED SYMBIOTE goes on to TAKE OVER A PERMANENT HOST.

It's enough to make you a little SICK TO YOUR STOMACH.
Fortunately, when HARLEY shows up to talk with Teal'c about stuff, you're given an opportunity to WORRY ON ANOTHER TROUBLING PERSON.

Over the last year, Daniel Jackson and you had been collaborating on finding out how GENETICALLY MODIFIED the people of Abydos were from BASELINE HUMAN. You'd found some... VERY TERRIFYING AND CONFUSING GENOME STRANDS in the D.N.A. of various ABYDOSIANS. A few things seemed to be BASELINE, such as a VASTLY SUPERIOR IMMUNE SYSTEM (To the point you're now realizing that it MIGHT SURPASS a Jaffa with a SYMBIOTE POUCH) and STRANGE BRAIN STRUCTURES that Daniel admitted in private might be tied to PSYCHIC POWERS.

And honestly, give what you know of KHEPRI'S ABILITIES from the mission report alone, that might not be so far fetched. JADE SOON-TO-BE HARLEY shows the BASELINE ADVANCED IMMUNE SYSTEM as well as some FUNKY GENOME STRUCTURES she's inherited from her MOTHER that at first glance don't seem to do ANYTHING, but are SO FIRMLY GRAFTED AND WELL INTEGRATED that they could be doing just about ANYTHING AT ALL and you wouldn't have any idea until the girl got older.

That's to say nothing about her EYES. That shade of GREEN is just not a natural color by earth standards. It's INTERESTING TO NOTE, however, that poor Jade seems to have inherited DANIEL'S OWN INHERITED BAD EYESIGHT, which you'd think WOULDN'T HAVE PASSED DOWN given what Khepri had done to Daniel's eyes... but...

Maybe that was more of a PHYSICAL MODIFICATION similar to the LASIK SURGERIES that were starting to become popular?

It could very well be that Khepri didn't have the ROOT OF THE PROBLEM fixed in Daniel to begin with, and that's why it's passed on.

You've ALREADY ORDERED a set of INFANT SIZED GLASSES for the girl, which she'll hopefully be able to see better with once they arrive.

It's just a shame that Sha're never got any of those IMPROVED HEARTS that you've noticed among some other ABYDOSIANS. She might have survived past the night with one of those...

"DOCTOR FRASIER TO HAMMOND'S OFFICE," a voice interjects over the Base Intercom suddenly. "IMMEDIATELY."

And you sigh. More work to do.

You make sure to tell Harley that he's to stay at Teal'c's side the entire time until you return.

Neither have any problem with that, and seem to be enjoying their conversation about...

You eavesdrop for a moment as you leave.

"So... What else can you tell me about Ra as a ruler?" Harley asked.

"Very many things, Jake Harley. Where would you like me to start?" Teal'c answers with a question, because of course he would.

You head down to LEVEL 27, and into HAMMOND'S OFFICE.
There, you see one DAVIS STRIDER- a Sergeant, you believe, though it's impossible to confirm since he's out of uniform at the moment- talking with Hammond about a temporary leave of absence.

"Janet, sorry to bother you," Hammond says. "But we need your opinion."

"On?" You ask.

"My brother got a kid dumped on his doorstep this morning," Strider explains. "He claims she has cat ears growing out of her head. How possible is that?"

"Well, from Daniel's report on the first Abydos mission, we know Nirrti's first prime has cat ears and a tail," you say. "So it's possible with direct genetic manipulation, clearly. And we have historical precedent of Khepri's punishment of the failed Abydosian rebellion having people turned into animals..." you frown. "But as for baseline humanity? Humans do occasionally have tails when they're born, and sometimes horns, but that's purely vestigial. Cat ears? That's... It's incredibly unlikely.

"Does your brother know who the mother is?" You ask. "If it turns out to be Nirrti's First Prime..."

"All he'd tell me over the phone was she was some girl he met at a party that had spiked punch," Strider answers. "Given that he completely forgot about that night until he had a kid dumped on his lap? I'd say he probably doesn't remember anything or even knew the lady to begin with."

"So it's plausible that this is a ploy by Nirrti in some way," Hammond hypothesizes.

"I'd say so," you say, "but it's not like we haven't been preparing for something like this anyways." You consider the risks, and say, "If this is some kind of ploy, it's probably better for us if we have her in observable range here in Colorado, rather than...?" Houston, Texas," Strider supplies.

"Well, that's a bit far away," you say. "Besides that... we did a whole staff turnover for the most part after West was compromised. We checked for the same signs of possession. Strider, no offense, is basically a no-body among the current staff and nobody should know he's on staff."

"None taken," Strider says, smiling faintly.

"Considering that," You continue, "if this were a ploy to get some kind of agent into our grasp, you'd think Nirrti would have put that kid directly in our line of sight- or rather, directly in front of someone who survived the staff turnover, like Harley or Carter, instead of elsewhere in the country in the hands of someone that might or might not alert someone who would then alert us... it's... it's kind of a stretch, to be honest."

"Agreed," Hammond says. "I doubt this has anything to do with Nirrti, but it's a possibility we can't rule out." He looks to Strider and nods. "You have the Go Ahead, Sergeant."

It's only about ten minutes later, as you take A COFFEE BREAK in the cafeteria, that you realize that the cat ears would be a DEAD GIVE AWAY FOR SIGNS OF GENETIC MANIPULATION, as SURELY anyone in the SGC would be notified of such a girl regardless of HOW AND WHO she was put in the hands of.

The answer comes to you in a heartbeat as yougulp down the rest of your coffee and go to talk with
General Hammond again.

THE GIRL IS A DISTRACTION.

But for what? For WHO?

You suppose that's the best part about a distraction like this, then. This is the kind of distraction that has you focused on figuring out what you're meant to be distracted from, and leaves you just as distracted from it while still trying to figure it out.

You are once again DAVIS STRIDER, and you've just taken a RED EYE FLIGHT in the MIDDLE OF THE DAY to get from Colorado Springs to Houston, and from there a TAXI CAB straight to your BROTHER'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT.

In the time it took you to get here, DIRK managed to send TWENTY TEXTS and made THREE MISSED PHONE CALLS (Cause you were on the plane), all of which were succiently set-agro'd into the average sentence: "Please if you would kindly hurry it up, Strider!!"

You're honestly not expecting much beyond this being a case of "Surprise fake cat ears!" the moment you step through the FRONT DOOR.

As it turns out, it's not a case of SURPRISE FAKE CAT EARS. Also, your BRO WASN'T KIDDING when he said they were NEON GREEN.

For the SEVENTH TIME in your life you're glad you've mad it a habit to wear SUNGLASSES AT ALL TIMES.

The little girl resting in A BLANKET NEST on your BROTHER'S COUCH has BRIGHT ORANGE EYES that are definitely very similar to the hue your BROTHER HAS- which, yeah, if you're being honest is probably why the mother dropped the kid off on his lap- lights up the room with what little hair is on her head, with most of it being centered on the CAT EARS that wriggle onttop of her skull, and curls off in a few places elsewhere.

All of it is GREEN, AND ALL OF IT GLOWS LIKE NEON.

"So.... Bioluminescent hair," is the first thing you say to your brother. "That's new."

"No duh," Dirk replies.

"So," you begin, closing the door behind you. "What exactly happened that you didn't tell me over the phone?"

"Look, I'm being honest here," Dirk says. "This chick comes up to me this morning and tells me I'm the baby daddy and we had a night of drunken sex at some party I'm DJing at. But to hell with that! I remember that night crystal clear and I didn't drink a thing except water!" He looks like he's going to say 'but' next, but doesn't quite want to say it.

"Except?" You prompt.
"Except near the end of my set I start forgetting things, and then the next thing I know it's a whole
day later and I'm waking up back at my place." Dirk frowns. "I wrote it off as if I just got blackout
tired and didn't think much of it. Then this happens and I get to thinking... it's possible, isn't it?
Maybe someone spiked my drink??"

"Alright," you say, "let's say for a moment that you got..." DATE RAPED seems like an awkward
term to use right now, so you settle for "punch spiked. What can you tell me about the girl you saw
this morning?"

"Not much, Dave," Dirk answers. "She's got this cat themed hoodie on the entire time, and it's like,
dragged all up over her head to the point I can barely see her face. Showed up at my front door this
morning with a basket and tells me what I literally just said. I want to tell her she's wrong, but then I
get to doubting it, and then she starts saying all these things that sound like things I’d say, and she
convinces me- or tries to convince me that I’d promised to take care of the kid if she couldn't for
some reason- for long enough to hand me the basket before absconding off and vanishing around the
corner." He looks you in the eyes, suddenly, sunglasses to outrageous sunglasses. "Actually, now
that I think about it. I think I might've seen a cat tail. I thought it was just a belt or something but..."
he motions at the kid's ears in reference.

Well, shit.

"How old would you say she was?" You ask. "Because this actually sounds similar to someone the
people at my work have encountered before."
"I don't know," Dirk answers. "I don't do people's ages, Dave! I... I guess she was... short? I dunno.
I thought she was just some groupie at first, so... maybe teenaged?"

You think back to DR. JACKSON'S REPORT describing Nirrti's First Prime, "About the same age
as Dr. Harley's Daughter."

"Who?" Dirk asks and- oh, did you just mutter that out loud? You guess you did.

"Nothing, I just think you confirmed who did this, is all," you say. "I've got good news and bad
news, Dirk."

"What's good about this?" He asks.

"I don't think you had drunken sex at all with an underaged, genetically modified girl," you say, and
Dirk sighs in relief.

Then, the boot drops.

"What's the bad news?"

"The bad news is you're almost definitely the father," you say. "You got tranq'd and had your
D.N.A. sampled like Jurassic Park never went out of style, and that little girl there's your weird half-
clone cat baby."

"...Okay, no, but seriously," Dirk says. "What's the bad news?"

You put on your MOST STOIC STONE FACE just to show HOW SERIOUS YOU ARE about
this, and Dirk groans.
"You're actually serious, aren't you!?"

"Dude, I wouldn't lie about this," you say. "That said, I am going to need a DNA sample to compare when I get back to base."

"You're not staying?" Dirk asks.

"Nope, I've got my orders," you say. "Pick up the kid and get back to base asap to make sure she doesn't, like, sprout giant dragon wings or a dog tail something weird that can't be hidden by a good hat."

Ten minutes into the return flight, you've just about eaten your words because the girl started getting fussy about lying on her back and when you looked to see if something was poking into her, it turns out to have been the opposite. She's got the first signs of what look like BIRD WINGS growing out the back of her shoulder blades- complete with tiny, little, fluffy orange feathers.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER and you're REALLY starting to hate GENE SPLICERS.

Your name is COLONEL JACK O'NEILL and you're REALLY starting to hate BODY JACKERS.

It all started when Kawalski went down to the infirmary looking for asprin for a HEADACHE, and then JADE started screaming at him, he suddenly doubled over, and then FRASIER, TEAL'C, and HARLEY ALL SAW HIS EYES FLASH. Teal'c and Harley went to restrain the guy, only for him to pull off a super human feat of knocking them both to the ground and running out into the hallways. Now, you and SKAARA are searching the base, along with a few other search teams, armed with a few of those LIBERATED STUNNERS you've been stockpiling since ABYDOS and the recent CHULAK MISSION.

TEAL'C has informed you they're actually called ZAT NIKE TALKERS or something to that effect, so you've been toying around with proposing a proper shorthand name of ZAT GUNS, but for the moment, everyone just calls them STUNNERS.

"We should've noticed," you gripe as you clear ANOTHER EMPTY JANITOR'S CLOSET. Why do you even have so many of these things here? "I should have noticed. Damn it. It's been three days. How did we not catch this after General West?"

"The Goa'uld in Kawalski probably was keeping itself hidden," Skaara muses, "or wasn't mature enough."

"Wonder why Jade screaming set it off, then," you say, pushing open a door to a LOCKER ROOM. You peer around, looking for any sign of Kawalski, and then enter the room to start CHECKING STALLS.

"Probably something Nirrti or Khepri's meddling did," Skaara grumplily remarks- though it's a reasonable guess. "Probably a failsafe she had to force a possible sleeper agent into the open."

"'Sleeper agent'?" You pause to look at Skaara, who gives you an actually happy smile.
"Mr. Harley loaned us several spy books a few months ago to help us with reading English as well as speaking it," he explains, and you go AH in response.

"Well, that makes sense," you say, resuming your search. Damn Harley, introducing these Abydosian kids to the concept of THE MODERN SPY NOVEL. "...What other books did he loan you all anyways?"

"Mostly history books, at Daniel's request," Skaara answers, taking the lead this time as you approach the SHOWERS. "Oh! There was one book on... ah, Taxidermy, I think it was called? Most of us found it pretty gross but I know some people who lost some beloved pets around that time who took a shine to it."

"Taxidermy," you shake your head. "What the hell is Harley doing with a Taxidermy book in the first place?"

"I think he said something about his old dog dying when he was a..." Skaara trails off and then gives you the HANDSIGNAL for I HAVE A LEAD. Really? Did Harley give them a book on HANDSIGNALS too?? "...A teenager, he said." Skaara continues, as if that pause had been more for finding the right word.

You and he both raise your ZAT STUNNER THINGS and go to either side of a CLOSED SHOWER DOOR.

"So," you say, casually, while giving the SIGNAL FOR BREACH ON 3. "Any other interesting tidbits of information you kids picked up from those spy novels?"

1. "Oh, yes, one rather fun one about how to properly kick broken puzzle locks open," Skaara says, nodding that he's ready.

2. "Well, I can't possibly imagine how that's ever going to be useful in this line of work," you say.

3. And thus, Skaara twirls around and KICKS OPEN the shower door, dodging back to the side to avoid potential gun fire as the door swings open.

"Wait! I'm not-!"

PCH-ZYU!!!

You've spun into view and STUNNED KAWALSKI before the Goa'uld in him can try to double talk you.

"...Do you think he might not have been possessed right now?" Skaara asks.

"If he wasn't, he'll understand why we couldn't take the risk," you say, and then RADIO THE BASE. "This is Colonel O'neill, Fugitive Goa'uld has been stunned..." As you give the SPECIFIC INFORMATION as to where you are, you keep an eye on your UNCONSCIOUS FRIEND.
You sure as hell HOPE the scientists who got their hands on WEST'S BODY have figured out a way to get a damned snake out of someone's head by now.

Unfortunately, tragically, today wouldn't end the way you hoped it would, as KAWALSKI WOULD LATER DIE ON THE OPERATING TABLE.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER and you returned to the base INFIRMARY to find that SOMEONE had their HEAD CUT OFF by way of DISCONNECTING STARGATE. You're not told the WHO, but the WHY was that he had been body jacked and was killed in the ESCAPE ATTEMPT. It's a DISCONCERTING SIGHT, seeing a CLOTH COVERED BODY lying on a TABLE, very CLEARLY MISSING A HEAD. Strangely, you get a RELIEVED FEELING that it wasn't your BROTHER at least.

DR. FRASIER takes your mind off of it, though, by taking a thorough look at the BABY you'd brought in.

"Mother of- Is that Bioluminescent hair?!” she asks the moment you take off the kid's HAT.

"Just wait ’til you see the back," you say.

Soon, Dr. Frasier's doing her medical exams and taken a blood sample (startlingly, even her blood has some bioluminescent properties to it), and while the results of THAT are waiting to come back, the good Doctor has decided to put your NEW WARD in an isolation chamber similar to the one SOMEONE ELSE'S NEWBORN KID is in.

The two seem to be hitting it off, at least, giggling and staring at each other with bright, candy colored eyes.

A match made in genetically modified heaven, your INNER POET can't help but muse.

And then Frasier asks you something.

"Sorry, what?" You ask in return.

"I need a name for the files," She says.

"Ah." You nod, thinking... and then come up with, "Nepeta."

"Nepeta?" Frasier raises an eyebrow.

"Look, the only other names I've got in my head right now besides that are 'Argo' and 'Neon Icecream Headache.' Do you got a preference for one of those over the others? Would you rather I do something even more outlandish and take my first name and merge it with one of them? Does 'Davepeta' sound like a name someone would name their kid? 'Davargo'? What about 'DaN.I.H.'?"

That last one actually sounds a bit more like "DANI" all things considered, but it's too close to DANIEL to be in good taste.

"...I'll put her down as 'Nepeta Argo Strider' then," Frasier says, writing it down.
NAS? You laugh a little. That's going to be a freaky weird abbreviation, but hell, it's better than any other combination you can think of.

Frasier puts little "NEPETA'S BIRTHDAY" down as the THIRD for some reason that she seems amused about, which is STUPID because that's YOUR birthday too. You complain to her about that until she remarks, "Well, it fits the pattern." What pattern you ask? The pattern of there being two other kids born on the FIRST (The Other Baby in the Infirmary) and SECOND (No Idea Who The Heck that is) of the month respectively.

You... admittedly can't argue with that logic. Seems like DECEMBER really is the MONTH FOR KIDS TO BE BORN.

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Your name is SAMANTHA CARTER and you've JUST HAD A BREAKTHROUGH!

You've been MULLING OVER the STRANGE LACK OF FROST on reintegration on Chulak, and have FINALLY FIGURED OUT THE DIFFERENCE between the various Gate addresses that have or haven't worked. You've actually been pretty much working on this NON STOP THE LAST FEW DAYS, and today especially you've just about spent the entire time WRITING UP A NIFTY NEW PROGRAM to ensure you can accurately prove your point. And fortunately enough, right as you've finished, YOU'RE CALLED INTO A TEAM MEETING.

You ARRIVE in the command room to find DR. FRASIER, COLONEL O'NEILL, SKAARA, TEAL'C, JAKE HARLY, FERRETTI, and SOME RANDOM GUY WEARING SUNGLASSES YOU HAVEN'T MET YET, all conversing with GENERAL HAMMOND about something you apparently missed while being waist deep in your CODING SESSION.

"Ah, Captain Carter," Hammond says, interrupting the current conversation the moment he sees you, "glad you could make it."

"Thanks, Sir," you say. "I've actually got a breakthrough with the Stargates to talk about first, if you don't mind me taking up some time."

"Some good news before we go over the rest of today would be VERY welcome," Colonel O'neill says.

And so you explain about how due to STELLAR DRIFT and that MOST OF THE ABYDOS LIBRARY ADDRESSES THAT DIN'T LOCK were simply OUT OF RANGE FOR THE OLD COORDINATES, and those that DID WORK were still in range, but JUST BARELY, resulting in the CHILL FREEZE AND DISORIENTATION that had SO FAR BEEN STANDARD.

Chulak's address, comparatively speaking, was VERY RECENT and thus, connecting to it held NO PROBLEMS.

You announce that you've now designed a way to RE-ADJUST the old addresses into MODERN ALIGNMENT, and make them USABLE AGAIN. You estimate that this process should spit out a few VIABLE ADDRESSES every week, enough to begin WIDESPREAD EXPLORATION.

Hammond thanks you, and then launches into a SUMMARY of the day's events.
He starts off LIGHT, or so he says, with the introduction of DAVIS STRIDER, who then talks about the discovery of his NEW ROLE as GUARDIAN APPARENT of a YOUNG GIRL that, Dr. Frasier confirms, shows the same GENETIC MARKERS that have been showing up in the ABYDOSIAN GENE POOL.

You're shown pictures of the GLOWING CAT EARS and you're honestly wondering how much you really missed today.

Then, Hammond dives into the UNSETTLING NEWS that Kawalski was BODY JACKED by a GOA'ULD SYMBIOTE. Everyone else runs through the DAY, detailing pieces of information that, IF THEY'D MESHED TOGETHER SOONER, might have saved Kawalski's life from DEATH BY STARGATE BEHEADING. It's sad, hearing all the talk of PROMOTIONS and RANK SHIFTING going on afterwards as a result. FERRETTI is made HEAD OF SG-2, and STRIDER is added to their roster- both with NEW RANKS to match.

Hammond also confirms that SKAARA has a permanent spot on SG-1, and then also elaborates that, thanks to TEAL'C'S HELP in stopping the Goa'uld in Kawalski, The FORMER FIRST PRIME has been given a PROBATIONARY STATUS as a SG-1 team member.

In summary, you think you'll write today off as "CHAOTICALLY NEUTRAL."

As if in response to that thought, the STARGATE receives an INCOMING WORMHOLE that sends another SIX THWUMPS against the IRIS before shutting down.

"Y'know," O'neill remarks, "and here I was thinking I had it pretty good compared to those guys just this morning."

"I remember," Harley remarks. "I was here for that."

"Funny how a day turns around like that, isn't it?" O'neill asks, frowning. "Now it feels like we're all just doing the same thing, in different ways. Like we're all just bugs hitting a windshield."

That... that definitely sums up today, doesn't it?

Chapter End Notes

STARGATE NOTES: A BIIIT of a downer episode, but then again, ENEMY WITHIN was a pretty downer one to begin with, honestly. Next up on the SG-1 side of things is "SINGULARITY" - mainly because I don't see enough MAJOR RIPPLES in the timeline caused by the crossover for the majority of episodes until then, and if I cover EVERY SINGLE ONE of those, it's just going to be a boring rehash.

So, I'm instituting a minor rule here on the SG-1 side of things, IF I DIDN'T COVER IT, IT'S LIKELY UNCHANGED ENOUGH PLOT WISE TO NOT WARRANT ADAPTATION. I expect that will change as the story progresses forwards into the later seasons, but there's not a whole LOT of Season 1 SG-1 that heavily relies on the previous episodes. It's a majority of self contained adventures, for the most part.
HOMESTUCK notes: Yup. Davepeta's appearing here in place of KID!Dave, since, well... DAVE is AN ADULT here. Dirk is a FAMOUS D.J. as well, and ROSE has been born as well. That's 3/4 of the BETA KIDS, in a sense. Where's JOHN, though, if Rose has been born to the Egbert/Lalonde pair? That's the real question, and shouldn't be TOO HARD to figure out.
ALT:01X02: Sing the Body Electric Part 2.

Chapter Summary

In Which Trizza learns she should have used a SIGNAL SUPPRESSOR.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS, and as you throw the BRONZE BLOOD REBEL LEADER into a HOLDING CELL on the Heiress' PERSONAL BATTLE CRUISER, you think back on your CHOICES IN LIFE leading up to this moment.

Oh there were SO MANY CHOICES. All of them dedicated towards GETTING ATTENTION, all of the attention. All of it. So much attention. You WROTE LETTERS OF YOUR EXPLOITS, and didn't get many positive responses in return... In fact, you only ever got two.

The first was HEIRESS TRIZZA- who thought your ADMITTEDLY SOMEWHAT EMBELLISHED LETTER about how you got your TROLL HORN NUN-CHUCKS was just exactly the kind of RUTHLESSNESS she needed for an ELITE ARTIFACT ACQUISITION TEAM.

Weeks and months lead to about a HALF A SWEEP of working for the Heiress on various RECOVERY JOBS. Today's the first time you've faced LIVE COMBAT.

"So," The Bronze Blood says as you lock the door to the cell with you and him in it. "You gonna rile me up a bit to make sure I co-operate? Is that how this goes?"

You smirk at him. "Oh, I'll do something to make sure you co-operate, all right." And then you mute the RECORDING MICROPHONES and CAMERAS in the cell.

The second you letter you got back was a message from AN UNNAMED REBELLION CELL LEADER, asking you to take the job the Heiress was offering you and work as A SPY to get SELECT AND CHOICE INFORMATION to the REBELLION, as well as to help STAGE THE FINAL CONFRONTATION.

You take off your helmet, and say to TETRARCH DAMMEK, "What the hell happened to 'waiting for the Heiress to Challenge the Empress'!?"

Dammek stares at you in confusion for a moment- blinking- and then whispering sharply, "You're the Mole!"

"Of course I'm the Mole! Why else would I have taken you down non-lethally?!!" You ask, DE-CAPTCHALOGUING a MEDI-PACK from your STANDARD ISSUE RELIC RETRIEVER SYLLADEX. This experimental technology was RECOVERED FROM SOME RUINS about THREE SWEEPS AGO, and so far, only the HEIRESS'S ELITE have had access to it.

(You've already sent blueprints for the tech to the Rebellions' R&D section for it to be MASS
"Besides the Heiress' orders?" Dammek offers, wincing as you dab a RUBBING ALCOHOL PAD against his busted up cheek. "Ow! Watch it!"

"...Okay, fair point on that, but no. Heriess Trizza didn't even know if there'd be anyone alive down there," You fix him with a stern glare. "Thanks for using rubber bullets, by the way. I'm pretty sure the rest of my team would've killed you if you'd actually drawn blood and I hadn't taken you down first."

"Well, I knew the Mole WAS on the Heiress' pay role," Dammek admits. "But I didn't know who. I had to do something to salvage some part of this whole operation."

"Which brings me back to what the hell happened?" You repeat, trading away the CLEANSING PAD for A FRESH BANDAGE.

"Incoming Wormhole. Eight Symbol Address," Dammek explains in summary. "Alien girl was running from someone shooting at her. the Dialer got busted on her end, I'm guessing. Our gate picked up the slack."


"And it completely changes the operation from here on out," Dammek says, scowling. "I had to take the risk in dismantling the gate. I sent the control crystal away with the Alien girl. They're safe. Far away from here. Shouldn't get into too much trouble once they reach Comand. They'll rebuild a new gate. I'll sabotage anything the Heiress tries to pull off here, or die trying."

Saying nothing, you make sure that there are no other major injuries that need fixing, and then re-captchalogue your MEDI-KIT. You sit down across from Dammek for a moment, considering your options.

"Look, I don't think the old plan is feasible anymore," You say. "Even before tonight's little incident with an Alien Refugee, Heiress Trizza was making comments about doing her challenge differently. I was just about to send a report in to Command when we got called out here to investigate the power draw."
Dammek frowns. "The hell? What's she planning exactly?"

"I'm not sure," you shake your head. "And to be honest, I'm not sure Heiress Trizza knows either."

Whatever plan she's been making... It's nothing coherent. Not that she's told you, anyways. Maybe she's started suspecting you've been feeding information to the Rebellion?

"Okay, I'm going to turn the audio and cameras back on," you say, standing up, and putting your helmet back on.

"Hit me," Dammek orders. "Make it look good."

You nod, then reactivate it all.

"Well!" You say, "If you won't co-operate after I was so nice as to patch up your wounds... I'll just give you some more!"
You draw out your TROLL HORN NUNCHUCKS, and give a carefully calculated swing to Dammek's JAW.

The CRACK sound makes his head jump to the side, and then he spits out a tooth onto the floor.

"I'll never cave to the likes of you!" He declares.

"Then we'll just see what the Heiress has to say about this," you say, and storm out of the cell.

You hope anybody who reviews the tapes will buy that.

The Sun RAISES AND SETS again, and you've gotten a FITFUL NIGHT'S SLEEP without the slime in HIGH ORBIT over Alternia by the time you're called up onto DECK.

The Heiress has been TRAINING YOU ALL to go without SOPOR SLIME in LESS THAN ALTERNIAN PLANETARY CONDITIONS for AS LONG AS YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER OF HER TEAM. You're not quite sure WHY.

Admittedly, being IN ORBIT somehow helps WITH THE NIGHTMARES your species suffers nigh regularly, but not by much. NOT WHEN THERE ARE WHOLE OTHER BATTLE CRUISERS also in orbit containing nothing but the PURPLE BLOODED CLOWNS of your race's HIGHEST NON SEA-DWELLER CLASS.

You've heard RUMORS that sometimes, the ALREADY INSANE CLOWNS go into the vast, far reaching DISTANCES OF SPACE, and just... float out there in the BLACK without any contact with any world or other SANE PERSON.

You're told that they're COMMUNING WITH THEIR GOD when they do that by the PEOPLE WHO SUPPOSEDLY KNOW BETTER, and that they're "PERFECTLY SANE" when they come back... but rumor goes that they're CHANGED by it... and that there's a NAME for those Trolls who do this insane thing.

REAVERS.

Reavers are a thing that DEFINITELY EXIST, but the ALTERNIAN EMPIRE cites them as DANGEROUS ALIENS NOT AT ALL PART OF THE ALTERNIAN RACE. You're... pretty sure that the rumors that they're THE PURPLE BLOODED TROLLS GONE MAD AFTER COMMUNING all made up hoax nonsense designed to make GOOD, EMPRESS LOVING TROLLS LIKE YOURSELF afraid of stepping out of line because there's NO WAY the Empress would allow her BEST PSYCHICS IN THE FLEET just... go mad and start KILLING PEOPLE.

Right?

Needless to say, you DON'T LIKE BEING IN ORBIT VERY MUCH.

And it's a FULL SUN-GLARE-FILTERED VIEW of THEIR SHIPS that you see as you come onto the COMMAND DECK of the Ship.

You just call it the "SHIP" because calling it by the NAME the Heiress gave it just sounds stupid.

(Seriously, who names their SPACE SHIP "ALL YOUR BASE"? It makes no sense at all.)
"Mierfa, good, you're here," the Heiress says, not even looking as you enter the room. "Come take a look at this."

You go over to the console she's standing by- the one fixed at the edge of a balcony rail overlooking the TRAINING DECK that's been TORN APART to make room for the STARGATE. It looks like your fellow TEAMMATES have been working hard at the HEIRESS' ORDERS to put the thing back together.

"What is it, your Highness?" You ask as you approach.

"Our prisoner's Moirail just posted a video on GrubTube, directly At-ing one of my throwaway 'incognito' accounts in the title," Trizza says, smirking as she presses PLAY on a video.

"To one Pizzaa Teethz!" Says a Troll in a BLACK SKI MASK, "If you have my Moirail, Mr. Sunglasses in custody, I would like to offer a trade regarding a missing piece to the You. Know. What. So as to prevent unnecessary bloodshed, I want my Moirail, you want the Cee-Cee, Pizzaa. Let's make a deal."

The message ends there.

"There's a time and a place," Trizza says. "He's clearly desperate. Didn't even bother trying to mask the location of where this video was sent from. Sloppy work for a rebellion member, although I suppose it's entirely possible he hasn't been brought into the loop at all, though very unlikely. He knew enough to contact Me directly, after all."

"Where did it come from, exactly?" You ask.

"A small video cafe in a town about a solid day's ride out from where we picked our Rebel Dammek up from," Trizza says. "According to hacked CCTV feeds, they're still there. I say we blow them up off the face of the planet."

"Before we do that, what are they offering us in trade, exactly?" You ask, trying to salvage this situation, TRAP BELLS ringing in your head.

"The Control Crystal for the Stargate," Trizza answers. "Apparently our little Rebel sent it away with someone in the minutes it took us to get to the city. His Moirail, likely."

"If we blow up the place they're at, we blow up the crystal," you say. "Send me in, I'll retrieve it for you personally."

"While you've got a point," Trizza muses, "He's been much too blatant for that sort of thing. People'll notice if I send you down. They'll think he might actually have something of import... that they can replicate and try to black mail ME with."

...Like they wouldn't if she suddenly shot the building out of existence??

"A.... compromise then?" You offer. "Why don't we offer to make the trade, ring him up to the ship, and then kill him?"

"OOOH!" She claps her hands. "I like the way you think, Durgas! I knew there was a reason I keep
you on!

And here you thought she liked you for your COMBAT SKILLS.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you're STARING UP AT THE STARS as the HEIRESS'S SHIP descends from above.

In your hands you very clearly hold the PLASTIC CASE designed to contain the CONTROL CRYSTAL for the Stargate.

Up hiding out of sight on the ROOFTOP of the TOWERING, MULTI FLOORED INTERNET CAFE are JOEY and CALLIE and CALLIE'S LUSUS. You chose this place specifically because of its HEIGHT. It's just TALL ENOUGH THAT, at the ship's HIGHEST POSSIBLE ALTITUDE in order to use the RING PLATFORM, someone could JUMP OFF OF THE ROOF onto the SHIP'S DECK.

And if the SHIP GOES LOWER? Well, that's just fine and dandy.

Trolls of all blood colors, standing INSIDE and OUTSIDE alike all stare up in horror and awe as the HEIRESS'S SHIP comes into POSITION to drop the RING PLATFORM down on top of you.

You make sure to wave to the ship- signaling that YOU ARE THE ONE THEY WANT, and thus making a LOT OF JEALOUS, as well as PITYING, EYES TO LOOK YOUR WAY.

You. Can. Do. This.

The ship finally comes to a halt, and a BEAM OF LIGHT SHOOTS DOWN from the bottom of the ship, signaling where you need to stand.

You walk to it, and brace yourself.

As the RINGS COME DOWN, you spy a SHADOW OF A WOLF leaping between the BUILDING'S SHADOW to the SHIP'S SHADOW.

Then, a moment of disorientation follows, and the next thing you know, you're facing the Heiress's ELITE ARTIFACT RECOVERY TEAM- most of them armed with ACTUAL GUNS.

Hoo boy.

"Follow me to the Heiress!" The girl with the TROLL HORN NUNCHUCKS says, pointing said weapon at you.

You nod in understanding, and are lead through the SHIP'S CORRIDORS, past a LOADING BAY which is probably how they got the Stargate ON BOARD, and then past some CREW QUARTERS and a HOLDING BAY.

You get the feeling Dammek isn't in there right now, and as you FEEL THE SHIP ACCELERATING again, likely INTO ORBIT, you brace yourself for PHASE TWO.
Your name is JOEY CLAIRE. In no particular order you are BREAKING AND ENTERING, pulling off a RESCUE MISSION, and RESISTING SEVERAL THINGS IN GENERAL. Namely, right now you're RESISTING the urge to LOUDLY COMPLAIN ABOUT WHY a highly advanced spaceship would have a stupid, measly, THREE PIN KEY PADLOCK on its HANGER DECK DOOR.

You GET IT. Nobody's supposed to be out here when the ship isn't DOCKED. But why put the lock on the OUTSIDE?? Have there been THAT many people who accidentally sleepwalk out the door into SPACE or something?? Needless to say, you POP THE LOCK, shove the door open, and let CALLIE and her LUSUS through before sliding through and closing the door behind you. (You make sure to padlock it from the inside this time.)

"Okay," Callie says to you. "I'll head to the engine block and see about that little act of Sabotage."

"And I'll got make sure Xef doesn't get himself killed," you say with a nod, and then the two of you split off- with Callie and her Wolf-Mom riding off towards the back of the ship, meanwhile, you find a staircase and head up towards the COMMAND BRIDGE.

When you'd asked HOW Callie had BLUEPRINTS of this ship, you weren't expecting the response of "Well, there's a mole on board, dearie."

Patronizing as the "dearie" was, it gave you some hope that whoever this mole was, they'd be trying their best to help keep Xefros and Dammek alive through all of this, hopefully making your ROLE IN EVENTS a bit diminished.

Now, normally you'd be ALL FOR THE SPOTLIGHT, but in this case...

Well.

You AREN'T QUITE SURE how you're going to INCAPACITATE A BUNCH OF HIGHLY TRAINED TROLLS AND AN ANGRY HEIRESS with just A STUNNING DEVICE that feels RATHER UNCOMFORTABLY LIKE A GUN.

But hey, worst comes to worst, YOU'LL GIVE IT A SHOT!

...Oh, WOW. That is a HORRIBLE PUN.

You silently vow to take that pun and shove it in a gun that you then jettison out of an AIRLOCK into the HOT, RED GIANT ALTERNIAN SUN to MELT.

Because that's where guns belong. Melted. In a SUN. Where they can do nobody any harm.

You don't like GUNS, even though your dislike of them has FADED A LITTLE from the SHEER INTENSE BURNING HATRED you had as a younger child- mostly because your PA ended up actually MOVING MOST OF THE DAMNED THINGS out of the Hauntswitch house over a gradual period of SEVERAL YEARS.

You later found out he'd just MOVED THEM to the Colorado Springs House, but, hey, for a while there you didn't have A TON OF LOADED GUNS staring you in the face every single day.

You still don't LIKE guns. And the fact that they kill people and animals. But you're not SO
OPPOSED to them as to not be able to pick up something that's NON LETHAL. You were actually getting to the point you were able to willingly pick up a SUPER SOAKER!

Yeah. You're probably not going to ever want to touch another actual Earth-based gun-shaped object again. Not after you've been SHOT AT less than 24 HOURS AGO. At least this STUNNER is sufficiently ORGANIC LOOKING enough to get you past that resurfaced distrust.

You pause those thoughts as you make it to the COMMAND DECK'S LOWER HALF. You can see XEFROS out of the corner of your eye being lead up some STAIRS towards the UPPER HALF of the command deck.

And then he goes out of sight for a moment as he walks past the other side of a BLOCKING OBJECT. A RING SHAPED BLOCKING OBJECT.

A STARGATE.

And WOW does this thing look a bit more...

Uh.

LESS SHITTY than the last time you saw it.

It's actually looking more like the GATE from the Military Base! Except, you know, all DECORATED IN GOLD and having PURPLE CRYSTALS for the Chevrons, which are, disturbingly like the gate that sent you here, shaped like SNAKE SKULLS. Except these ones are MUCH SUBTLER and actually CAST OUT OF METAL and don't seem to be made out of GIANT BONES AT ALL.

And it's on YOUR SIDE OF THE ROOM, too!

You quickly sneak over, and risk TOUCHING THE SURFACE OF THE GATE.

Your hand pulls back covered in PAINT, revealing the RAW METAL BENEATH.

How Cheap! The Heiress didn't even bother to use REAL GOLD LEAF to cover the gate! She just PAINTED THE DRY GREY SURFACE in FAKE GOLD PAINT.

You wipe your hand on the floor, and then sneak towards the STAIRS, listening into the just about to start conversation.

"Xefros!" You hear Dammek cry out. "What the fuck do you think you're doing!??"

"I'm trading you for the control crystal, you silly troll you! Now shush and let me get you out of here safe and sound!!" Xefros answers, dramatically, passionately. You don't know what a MOIRAIL is exactly, other than that it's a TYPE OF ROMANCE. So you gave Xef some brief ACTING DIRECTIONS that he's now EXAGGERATING FURTHER. He seemed UNNERVED by the directions you gave him until you CLARIFIED that it was just an ACT designed to STALL FOR TIME.

(Callie, on the other hand, had started squealing and muttering about writing your dialogue choices down for her NEXT ADAPTATION OF A CLASSIC STORY.)
"Uh... What?" Dammek answers, completely flabberghasted and befuddled by how Xefros is talking.

"Oh wow," You hear a... well... A RATHER DRAMATIC VOICE. You look around the upper area from below, trying to figure out who's speaking, and you come to the conclusion that it must be TRIZZA TETHIS, the HEIRESS. "You gota flush crush for a Moirail, Dammek! No wonder he's been so willing to trade for ya! It's almost enough to make the romantic in me wanna just hand you over right now!"

"Would You!?" Xefros says, sounding like an EXCITED PUPPY.

"I did say 'almost'," Trizza answers, a SOUR NOTE to her voice. "Now, name your terms."

"You give me Dammek, I give you the Control Crystal!" Xefros says, and if he's rehearsed his part right, he's holding up the CASE. "And you LET. US. GO. Alive. Unharmed. We never touch a Stargate or any of the parts involved for it EVER again."

"Xefros, you little shit!" Dammek obviously is buying it enough to feel betrayed, so hopefully that's selling it to the Heiress. "If we get out of this I'm gonna Punch You So Hard you'll need an Auspitice to stay alive!"

Ouch, much.

The whimper you hear Xefros make doesn't need to be acted. Holy shit was that brutal. You don't even know that much about TROLL ROMANCE and HOLY SHIT was that brutal.

Just.

Damn, Dammek, way to get mad at the rescue party.

"Alright, fine," Trizza says with a laugh, planting a leg up against Dammek's back and giving you a good look up- WOAH HEY NOW JOEY WHAT ARE YOU DOING. "Toss me the Crystal, and I'll toss you your little Moirail. Though, I doubt you'll be quadrant mates in anything but Ashen after tonight."

"Deal!" Xefros says, winding up to give a toss.

"Why you little-!" Dammek doesn't get that sentence out, as he's kicked over to Xefros.

The Crystal Case flips through the air, and Trizza catches it with ease. "Pleasure doin' business with ya!" She chuckles. "Mierfa, show them out the door."

Likely she means an Airlock, if your LIMITED VIEW OF THE WINDOW implies what you think it implies. Even so, both Xef and Dammek are half-way down the stairs, escorted by the PEOPLE IN FANCY RED ARMOR, when you hear Trizza crack open the case and shout out- "WAIT. JUST WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS??"

And thus, Trizza is holding up the SHEET OF PAPER with a TOTALY FAKE COORDINATE SET written on it.

"Oh? That?" Xefros laughed. "My Insurance Policy to make sure you keep your word. That's where I burried the Control Crystal. You didn't think I was actually THAT stupid to bring it with me, did you?"
"...Nicely played," Trizza's no doubt scowling. "But also worthless. You see, you made one mistake, Little Rustblood."

"...And what's that?" Xefros asks, a bit hesitantly. This definitely wasn't part of the plan.

"I already HAD a Control Crystal," Trizza says, and then SNAPS HER FINGERS TWICE.

As if by PRE-MADE COMMAND, the STARGATE over there WHIRLS TO LIFE- inner track of CARVED GLYPHS SPINNING as CHEVRONS begin to LIGHT UP in no discernible sequence like a DANCE FLOOR.

Well, until CHEVRON ONE LOCKS, anyways.

"I just wanted to make sure you weren't going to use yours against me first," Trizza continues, grinning brightly. "Throw them infront of the Event horizon, Mierfa. The GATE will do the rest."

As the other guards begin to menacingly move into position, you figure, either you MAKE YOUR MOVE NOW, or THE MOLE DOES.

And right now as Chevron TWO locks, you think YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE FIRST.

"HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!" You yell- pointing the STUNNER UPWARDS through the railing at TRIZZA, and triggering the device's HIGH PITCHED WHINE INTIMIDATION MODULE. "NOBODY MOVE OR THE HEIRESS BITES IT!"

The GUARDS WITH GUNS all turn to point at you, leaving themselves wide open for the MOLE TO TAKE ACTION... you guess. Or for Xefros to do SOMETHI- Wait, no, there's still that girl with the NUNCHUCKS keeping him wary of doing anything.

CHEVRON THREE.

"Who. The Fuck. Is this??" Trizza asks, glaring down at you. "No. Seriously. Who the fuck are you!? How did you even get on this ship!?"

It should be noted, at this point, that the way you're CONCEALED beneath the STAIRS, CLOAKED IN SHADOW, it helps obscure the fact that you're wearing your JACKET'S HOOD UP OVER YOUR FACE, and that said HOOD has been MODIFIED by Callie to have a pair of FAKE TROLL HORNs on it. All they CAN SEE is that you're wearing one of CALLIE'S LIME BLOOD SIGN SHIRTS beneath your jacket. You think, actually, now that you're standing next to the gate, that it might be one of the CONSTELLATIONS carved into it but- AH! That's besides the point.

The point is: None of them can tell you're an alien, so you're gonna play that up like the PRIMADONNA BALLERINA YOU ARE.

"Name's CLARISSA!" You introduce yourself, borrowing the name of one of your FAVORITE TV STARS even as CHEVRON FOUR LOCKS. "BONNIE CLARISSA! Pleasure to meet you! And if you don't let my pal CLYDE and best bud Dam-damz go, I'm gonna shoot your Heiress up and she'll look like that window out there- except all the little stars are gonna be holes in her body!"

You feel like you throw up a little the moment you finish saying that sentence.
"Dam-damz?? The hell??? The fuck is this shit?" Dammek asks, mostly to himself. "No. Seriously. What the Fuck is even going on today?? Is this some freaky ass nightmare? If so, ha ha, very funny, Clowns. Can I have my regularly scheduled nightmares of death and gore now instead?"

You just have to buy time. Come on, Callie. Come on, Mole. One of you do your thing already.

Chevron FIVE locks and that's when the LIGHTS FLICKER.

"The hell?" Trizza frowns. "That's not supposed to happen."

CHEVRON SIX locks, and that's when THE SHIPS SHAKE DRAMATICALLY... like... like SOMETHING EXPLODED.

There's A FLASH OF LIGHT out the window, and this time you HEAR AN EXPLOSION, timed to the SHIP SHAKING.

"AW FUCK!" Trizza yells- the Gate grinds to a HALT, and the LIGHTS ALL GO OUT.

Also, so does the GRAVITY.

"WOAH WHAT THE--!?" Dammek cries out as he starts FLOATING INTO THE AIR along with everyone else.

"SHIIIT!" Trizza yells out, "EVERYONE TO BATTLE STATIONS! I DON'T CARE IF YER A REBEL OR NOT!!! WE ALL DIE IF WE CAN'T FIGHT BACK!!"

You suddenly get the feeling this ISN'T CALLIE'S WORK.

---

You are now briefly CALLIE OHPHEE, and YOU ARE UNDER ATTACK.

Damned CLOWNS. Taking offense at the HEIRESS' PERSONAL SHIP just because it was POWERING UP SOMETHING HUGE and taking POT SHOTS along the bow to DISABLE A LOT OF STUFF.

And now instead of SABOTAGING THE ENGINES you're rapidly trying to GET THEM REBOOTED.

It's KIND OF HARD TO DO with the Artificial Gravity disabled.

"AWOOOO!" Wolf-mom cries out, floundering in the air just as she does when you TRY TO GIVE HER A BATH, and you FEEL MUCH THE SAME.

"I don't like it either!" You yelp. "I'm trying to get it working again! Just- Stay over the decks!!"

You get the feeling today might be a VERY SHORT DAY.

---

"Who's firing at us!?" You ask- throwing yourself with TRAINED GRACE into the air to vault over the railing to fall into position at a CONSOLE. You can't read ANYTHING because this console
DOESN'T HAVE POWER.

BOOM. The ship shakes.

"Damned Laughsassins!" One of the ARMED GUARDS yells, throwing off her helmet to reveal the most beautiful face you've ever- NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR THAT, JOEY!!! "They must've picked up us Dialing the Gate!" She swears. "Engines are down! Looks like they hit us right in a power conduit! We'd have to space walk to fix it!"

WHAM. The ship shudders.

"You didn't install a signal blocker, DID YOU!?!" Dammek yells, accusingly at the HEIRESS as he straps himself into what seems to be a SELF CONTAINED GUNNER STATION, going by the MANUAL CONTROLS he's reaching for.

KABLAM. There's a FLASH OF LIGHT way too close to the BRIDGE WINDOW than you're comfortable with.

"Why the hell would I need a Signal Blocker!?!" Trizza shouts back, managing to barely get herself seated into A CAPTAIN'S CHAIR. "I'm the Fucking Heiress!"
SPLAT. They.... did they just THROW a PIE at the windshield?? There's all sorts of STICKY, GREEN OOZE stuck to it now.

"Oh, gee, I don't know!" Xefros says with a forcefully cheerful grin on his face, as he drifts over to you, and guides you over towards a still barely functioning CONSOLE- showing what looks to be SHIELDS, WEAPONS, and HULL INTEGRITY for THREE ENEMY SHIPS. "Maybe because the Emperess declared Stargates illegal on Alternia??" he then takes off towards one of two PILOT'S CHAIRS.

BLAM KA BLAM! And suddenly you're FIRING BACK at the enemy.

"AAAAH! SHUT IT!" Trizza yells. "Salazl, try to get us power to secondary systems! Okurii, get us out of here the minute he does!!!"

"AYE AYE!" Okurii chimes out, sliding themselves into the CHAIR NEXT TO XEFROS.

BLAM! SHWA BAM! There's a distant flash, and your SCREEN UPDATES ITSELF. "Left most ship's weapons damaged! Their fire rate's down by ten percent!"

Dammek says nothing, shifting his GUNNER'S CHAIR AROUND to take more shots at the other two ships.

WHAM! Your ship shakes again. And the CUTE ONE with the SWEPT BACK HORNS announces, "We lost port side stabilizers five through eight!"

And then THE LIGHTS COME BACK ON and you hear the wonderful sound of the STARGATE SPINNING AGAIN, seemingly having to start all over in REDIALING WHATEVER PLANET Trizza had pre-programmed it to do in the first place.

"Power's back!" Salazl yelled out, and Dammek gives a rather enthusiastic HOOT as MULTIPLE HOLOGRAPHIC SCREENS show up infront of him.
"LAUNCHING ALL BATTERIES!" he yells, and you WATCH IN AWE as dozens of TINY GOLDEN LIGHTS shoot out from the ship, splitting off into three directions. Explosions LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY and the SCREEN INFRONT OF YOU.

"All three've lost shields and center's lost main weapons!" You confirm. "Left most has lost engines, right's lost stabilizers! It's going down!"

And thus, you watch as the RIGHT MOST SHIP teeters dramatically and begins FALLING INTO THE ATMOSPHERE. Without shields or stabilizers, it's GOING TO BURN UP IN THE ATMOSPHERE, your screens are telling you.

And then there's A SECONDARY THUMMM of power as something else happens.

"What the-" the one girl you're trying not to look at exclaims. "ENGINES! We've got engines back!"

GO, CALLIE! GO!

"We've got an open path back to the planet!" Xefros calls out.

"Punch it!" Trizza orders.

"Punching it!" Okurii confirms, and your VIEW TILTS AWAY from the three ENEMY SHIPS, briefly FACING THE SUN, before turning completely towards the PLANET BELOW.

Your screen tells you that DAMMEK IS GIVING NO MERCY even as the ship turns to escape, continuing to SHOOT AWAY.

The RIGHT MOST SHIP seems to have the same feeling, opening up with ALL BATTERIES even though it's crashing through the atmosphere.

Your Ship SHAKES DRAMATICALLY with MULTIPLE IMPACTS, and you hear a cry of "STARBOARD STABILIZERS SIX THROUGH ELEVEN DOWN!" But it's worth it, because as RIGHT BREAKS UP in the atmosphere, exploding dramatically, your SCREEN CONFIRMS that CENTER IS EXPLODING as well, and due to its proximity to LEFT, is taking IT OUT WITH IT.

You let out a whoop, and INFORM EVERYONE ELSE of the success.

In that moment, the STARGATE ACTIVATES, giving off it's WAA WAA KAWOOOSH beneath you.

You'd completely lost track of time, there.

Of course, the GATE OPENING seems to DRAW IN A LOT OF POWER from elsewhere on the ship because the LIGHTS GO OUT AGAIN, and the VIEW OUT THE WINDOW begins to SPIN.

Spinning! SPINNING IS NOT A GOOD TRICK!!!

Especially not when the SHIP'S ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY NEVER CAME BACK ON TO BEGIN WITH!!!
"Hah! Well as much as I'd love to see how this turns out!" Trizza yells, unbuckling her seat and then THROWING HERSELF OUT OF IT. "I'VE GOT PLACES TO BE! LATER, SUCKERS!"

"Wait what!?" Okurii cries out, startled, trying to get out of their chair as well- only to find that their BUCKLES WON'T COME UNDONE. "HEIRESS! WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?"

"PLAN B, DUH!!" Trizza swipes up her TRIDENT from mid air and then uses it to FLING HERSELF at the stargate.

"OH NO YOU DON'T!" Cute girl throws herself after Trizza, only to get a ROUNDHOUSE KICK to the chest that sends her flying straight AT YOU!

You hurriedly catch her, and you both HIT A WALL. You're dazed for a moment, and as you come to again, you watch as TRIZZA and a few of the UNNAMED TROLLS you didn't catch the names of escape through the STARGATE.

"NO!" Dammek cries out, trailing but mere INCHES BEHIND THEM, reaching for the GATE...!

But it's too late.

The wormhole SHUTS OFF and Dammek HITS THE WALL BEHIND IT with a THUD.

Without the Gate draining POWER, Lights begin to come back on, and, funnily enough, so does the ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY.

You hit the floor with what would probably have been a GENTLE DESCENT if not for the fact that you're not being SUBJECTED TO THE SHIP'S SPINNING MASS.

"SHIIIIIT!" Okurii cries out. "WHAT DO WE DO!?!"

"We fucking CRASH LAND and pray we don't DIE!" Salazl yells out.

"ENGINE ROOM! THIS IS BRIDGE! DO YOU COPY!?!" Dammek yells out as he clambers back up the stairs and throws himself into TRIZZA'S ABANDONED CHAIR.

"Uh- Engine Room, Copy!" Callie's voice is a welcome relief.

"What do we need to land?" Dammek asks of Xefros and Okurii.

"How fast can you get us maneuvering thrusters!" Xefros asks. "BECAUSE WE COULD REALLY USE MANEUVERING THRUSTERS!"

"Uh--" Callie hesitates. "I CAN DO THAT! JUST A MINUTE!"

"Shields would be nice too!" Okurii adds.

"WORKING ON IT!!" Salazl responds to that.

The ship begins SHAKING from RE-ENTRY, and thankfully not GUN FIRE, but even so. You're starting to feel SEA SICK.

It probably doesn't help any that you're PINNED BENEATH ANOTHER GIRL who's out flat cold
from the impact. How the hell did you stay awake if she's knocked out?

Then again, she did take a kick to the chest so maybe-

"Is it getting hot in here?" You ask aloud.

"Why yes it is!" Okurii yells. "WE NEED SHIELDS, SAL!"

"I SAID I'M WORKING ON IT!!" Salazl yells out.

"Engine room to Bridge!" Callie yells. "You've got power to maneuvering thrusters!"

"STABILIZING DESCENT!" Xefros yells, and you feel A SUDDEN JERK to the ship's movements that sends you, the cute girl, and anything else NOT STRAPPED DOWN tumbling across the floor.

You fortunately manage to grab onto the back of a CHAIR with one hand, and grab CUTE GIRL'S UNIFORM by the back of the neck with the other.

You're staring straight at Dammek, and he gives you an unimpressed look as you smile nervously at him.

"We are so talking about this horrible rescue attempt if we get out of this alive," he says rather calmly despite all the chaos.

"Oh! No complaints there!" You say, and then you finally feel like GRAVITY IS STABLE ENOUGH that you can get to your feet again. You pull yourself up behind the chair that Xefros is sitting in, and look out the window.

IT'S NOT A LOT TO SEE, mostly just FLAMES dancing across the FRONT OF THE SHIP, and slamming against the WINDOW. You can also kind of SEE THE SUN. Wow. It's kind of pretty with the PROPER FILTERING in place to keep you from BURNING YOUR EYES OUT.

For a moment, all there is but YOU, and the SUN, and the FLAMES OF RE-ENTRY.

"SHIELDS UP!" Salazl yells, and then a BLUE FILTER OF ENERGY cuts between all of it, and now the flames are OUTSIDE THE SHIELD.

"What are the chances we survive this in one piece?" Dammek asks, now that there's SOME HOPE OF SURVIVING between you and UTTER DEATH.

"Not high!" Salazl says, "but hey! As long as we land belly down we should be good anywhere! Though, probability's higher if we touch down on water."

"Can we get a water landing?" Dammek asks of the pilots.

"Uhh- NO??" Okurii yells in a panic. "Angle we're at we'll be lucky to avoid scuttling ourselves on a mountain and crash in the desert!"

"Desert's better than anywhere else!" Dammek decides. "What do we need to get us past 'luck' and into that as a fact?"
"About Ten percent more engine thrust?" Xefros answers.

"CALLIE?" Dammek inquires. "You get that!?"

"WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM ME!?!" Callie sounds like she's near crying. "DO YOU WANT ME TO TURN THE ENGINE INTO A MINIATURE SUN!? BECAUSE I COULD DO THAT AND THEN WE'D ALL BE DEAD!"

"If it gets us ten percent more engine thrust then TURN THE ENGINE INTO A FUCKING MINI-SUN!" Dammek orders, and Callie actually does start to cry audibly over the speakers.

You take your turn next, actually speaking up for a change. "Callie! Don't worry about how you're going to do it!" You CHEER HER ON, and the sniffling pauses. "Just do what you've BEEN DOING ALREADY! Keep doing it! Keep doing what you do best and don't worry!!"

"Though sooner rather than later would be nice!" Okurii chimes in.

"I- I'll try!" Callie answers, and you can only smile, though she can't see it.

"That's all we ask, Callie," you say. "That's all we ask."

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS, and you're COMING BACK AROUND to the sounds of A SHIP IN CHAOS.

You're pulled to your feet by the REBEL GIRL ... CLAIRE? Was that her name? Doesn't matter, cause the moment you take one look out the FRONT WINDOW all you can see is MOUNTAINS coming up sharply below you. Mountains that are HIGHLIGHTED DRAMATICALLY BY THE SUN.

You've come down on the entirely OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE PLANET.

And then there's a SUDDEN JOLT, as the MOUNTAINS RUSH BY FASTER- wait, no, that's the SHIP. The SHIP is flying FASTER.

And then suddenly the mountains are gone and all there is...

IS DESERT.

Miles and MILES of open desert, ABANDONED HIVES, ANCIENT RUINS, and.... THE OCCASIONAL DORMANT VOLCANO. But it's mostly DESERT in a CLEAR STRETCH AHEAD OF YOU for several miles until...

Well, surely they'd stop before they wiped out some ANCIENT MONUMENT to FROGS, right? You mean, there are at least THREE OF THE THINGS in close proximity to each other so who cares if you hit one? Right??

"You want to bring us in gently!" Salazl informs the Pilots. "Like a leaf on the wind, gently touching down and kissing a pond!"

"Don't say shit like that!" Okurii yells, "This is CLEARLY hurricane grade winds here, Idiot!"
You feel the Ship DUSTING DOWN against the desert floor, and you watch as SAND FLIES OVER THE SHIELDS through the window.

It's like cutting a HOT KNIFE through LUSUS BUTTER, you think.

"SLOW US DOWN!" Salazl yells. "SLOW US THE FUCK DOWN!!!"

"Callie, full reverse on engines if you can, please!" CLAIRE says, and you turn to look at her.

The SUN, gleaming against her face, reveals it to be of a skin tone of an UTTERLY ALIEN HUE to Alternia. She's not Grey. She's more... well, a bit of wash out by the sun's harsh coloring aside, she's very...

VERY SOLAR.

You've heard that there are alien worlds out there among the Empire whose SUNS are not as HARSH as Alternia's. The people who live there often live during the DAY rather than the night. Miss Claire here looks much the part of one of those sun dwellers you've heard about.

You're not entirely sure how long you're staring for when the SHIP JOLTS and you have to look out the window again.

Through the dust and sand, you can see that ONE OF THE GIANT STONE FROG THINGS IS LOOMING EVER CLOSER.

"Shields are NOT going to hold if we hit that!" Salazl helpfully informs everyone.

"Callie!" Dammek's tone is warning.

"We're at full reverse! I can't give us any more than---" Whatever Callie is going to say is cut off as the ship PLOWS THROUGH THE FROG TEMPLE THING, and as the FROG'S HEAD FLIES OVER EVERYONE'S HEAD, THE SHIELD FAILS, and all the LIGHTS GO OUT.

There's a moment of FEELING SUSPENDED IN THE AIR before the ship's belly BRUTALLY TOUCHES DOWN AGAINST THE SAND on the other side of the temple complex area.

"We lost power!" Salazl yelps- helpfully- as sand flies around the EDGES OF THE SHIP and comes CRASHING UP AGAINST THE WINDSHIELD along with a few ROCKS AND SKELETAL REMAINS. (It's rather disturbing to watch a MOTHER GRUB SKULL crash against the windshield and SHATTER into pieces.)

Finally, after a few moments of STRESSFUL SHAKING AND GRINDING TO A HALT... well, the SHIP GRINDS TO A HALT.

Everything remains still for several critical moments, seemingly like an eternity, and then...

"Well..." Dammek breathes out. "That was a WONDERFUL attempt at a Rescue Mission, guys. One hundred percent top notch WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING!?" And then, after yelling that, he starts laughing. "Holy shit this has got to be either the best or worst nightmare I've ever had."
You don't want to break it to the guy that this most definitely was NOT A DREAM.

Chapter End Notes

That was entirely too much fun to write.
SG1:01X15: Singularity

Chapter Summary

In which many people's plans do not go according to plan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

APRIL 13TH, 1996.

Your name is JUDE HARLEY. In No particular order you are a SEMI ORPHAN, a LITTLE BROTHER WITHOUT A BIG SISTER, an AVID CONSPIRACY THEORIST, and... ah...

Well. Now it seems you're A PART TIME BABY SITTER for your FORMER BABY SITTER'S KID, the FOSTER CARE KID your PA TOOK IN, and... some ADORABLY CUTE MUTANT CAT-GIRL that belongs to SOMEONE ELSE ON BASE. You WERE going to go on your first OFF WORLD MISSION today to go with your PA and SG-1 to see a BLACK HOLE SINGULARITY on another planet! It wasn't meant to be anything special.

But then SG-7 FAILED to make their scheduled CHECK IN, and so SG-1 went on ahead of everyone else and then there were SIRENS and people carrying around HAZMAT SUITS and now you're basically STUCK IN YOUR PA'S OFFICE keeping THREE ROWDY INFANTS ENTERTAINED while he goes to help sort out WHATEVER THE HELL IS GOING ON.

"Goode!" ROSE gabbers from your lap, trying to get your attention by tugging at your shirt and then pointing at her book.

"Jude," you correct her. "JUH, not GUH."

"Goode!" Rose insists, and then points at a word she doesn't understand. You sigh, and explain the word. CHRYСALIS - an object Caterpillars go into and Butterflies emerge from.

"Kyzalyz!" Rose repeats, and you sigh, trying to help her get through the word properly.

She's... You're honestly surprised that Rose is picking up LANGUAGE SO FAST. If it were JADE, you'd say it was because she had a LINGUIST FOR A BIOLOGICAL FATHER, but...

"Gaarr!" JADE play-growls, crawl-stomping around in a circle like a PUPPY.

Mostly she seems to like making loud noises without any real form behind them right now, even when there are words you KNOW she KNOWS and has USED but just refuses to USE THEM.

"Mrrrow!" NEPETA MEOWS in response, fluttering her ADORABLY TINY WINGS as Jade CIRCLES AROUND HER.

And then there's the little furball. At least she'd figured out how to TURN OFF THE NEON GLOW to her hair once it was KEEPING HER UP AT NIGHT- or so you were told. She's certainly not
"Seriously," You sigh. "Joey, why did you leave me behind to be the Baby sitter?"

"Knock Knock!" There's a knock at the office door, and a moment later, in comes one DAVIS STRIDER, parental guardian of the ADORABLE CAT-GIRL. "You look like you could use a hand here."

"I really could, yes," You say, handing off Rose to him and putting her BOOK on the desk so you can get up AND STRETCH YOUR LEGS. You've been stuck in that chair for FAR TOO LONG. Comfy as it is normally, it's not SO MUCH when you've got a LITTLE GIRL sitting on it for hours on end.

Rose doesn't even complain- instead gabbering out a "DAVISH!" and grabbing at his SUNGLASSES to put on her own face- book forgotten under the allure of SHINY PLASTIC.

"Careful with those little lady," Dave says, in that half-warning tone one should always use with kids of this age when telling them to be safe when handling something, even as Rose yanks the SOLAR WEAR off of his face.

It's a tone you've not quite gotten used to yourself, in all honesty.

"So what's going on with the black hole stuff?" You ask, going over to your NOTEBOOK and grabbing a pen so you could DOODLE for a little bit.

"Unfortunately," Dave sighs as he sits down in PA'S CHAIR. "It looks like some kind of fast acting plague swept through Hanka overnight. We've sent a UAV around out past the immediate village to the next one over and saw a lot of the same thing."

You gulp, getting the not so pretty picture. "Is everyone...?"

"SG-7's gone, most of the immediate village's population's been wiped out, though there have been a couple of survivors. Either people who were immune or avoided it somehow." Dave sighs again as he stares down at Nepeta for a moment. "Damned Nirrti. Playing god like this."

You're not entirely sure how to respond to that.

You realize you've been standing there pretty still for a while when you feel a tug at your pant legs and find that Jade is trying to get your attention by grabbing at them.

How long has it been again? A few months since these three were born?

Crawling, talking... it seems impossible to you. But then again, you've never been around BABIES BEFORE the last few months. This is the most interaction you've had with any form of INFANT since...

Well.

Since you WERE one, you suppose.

You bend down and pick Jade up, bringing her close to your chest so she can lay against you.
You really wish Joey was here.

Then, as there's a SIREN accompanying an announcement of 'INCOMING WORMHOLE!', you get the feeling today is going to be a VERY LONG DAY.

Your name is JANE CROCKER, and you've been doing your best to FINISH PACKING UP your old JOKE SHOP.

While you'd LOVE to keep running it, in this market you're just not making ENDS MEET like you used to, and especially with you SON and his WIFE on a HONEYMOON right now...

Well, you've decided to take up your LONG ESTRANGED BROTHER'S offer to move down to COLORADO and RETIRE there. Your decision lead to your Son and his Wife certainly making THEIR decision to move down there as well. So it's all going to work out, you feel. As you're busy BOXING UP some UNABRIDGED SASSACRES GUIDES, you hear a BELL RING at the shops' entrance.

"Oh! Just a moment deary!" you say, making sure this BOX isn't going to fall down on anyone's feet or heads, and then head into the front of the shop through the store-room's door.

You see there's a GIRL meandering around the EMPTIED STORE FLOOR, checking what few displays are on LIQUIDATED CLEARANCE.

She seems to have a YOUNG CHILD resting in a CARRIER she's holding.

There's... something familiar about this lass. She's wearing a FEDORA, amusingly. Maybe that's it. You USED TO WEAR THOSE ALOT when you were a teenaged lass yourself! Especially after your Brother had gone off to make his own fortunes in the world.

"Hello," You say, and you see her jump a little. "Can I help you any?"

The girl turns to look at you and you're STRUCK by FAMILIARITY. There's something in her FACE. Her EYES. You ALMOST think for a moment that maybe it's YOUR MISSING NIECE, but then you realize... No. Her eyes are the wrong color for that.

This girl's eyes are FAR TOO DULL of a BLUE HUE to be JOEY'S MINT COLORED EYES...

There's also something... DISTINCTLY FELINE about them as well, and you're not sure why you think that.

"I'm sorry, but my parents won't let me keep my child," The girl says- and her voice, why does her voice sound familiar too? "I have to give him up or else- or else they'll kill us both."

"My word, that's horrible of them!" You say, turning to find a phone. "Just give me a minute, I'll call the cops and we'll have them come intervene and you won't have to give up your-!"

DING.

You turn towards the door and watch as the girl ABSCONDS DOWN THE STREET.
You're tempted to run after her—even despite your old age—but that's when the CHILD IN THE CARRIER CRIES, and you realize that this girl has given the child to YOU.

You go over to the carrier, carefully kneeling down to look inside. And startlingly, does he remind you SO VERY MUCH of Jake, and of his son JUDE as well. His eyes are the DEEPEST, RICHEST SHADE OF SKY BLUE you've ever seen. There's a SMALL NOTE stuck to his BLANKET, reading, "My name is JOHN. Please take care of me."
"What in blazes..." And so you take that phone in your hand and start DIALING A DIFFERENT NUMBER.

In the background, you hear that box of UNABRIDGED SASSACRES falling to the floor, but you'll deal with that later.

Right now, you need to find out if your SON is willing to cut his honeymoon short, and if not, if your BROTHER can make it up here within the next few hours. Jake did take in some kid as a foster parent recently, after all. Maybe he'd be willing to look after this one until you can find that mother.

You remember feeling that helpless once, and YOU WON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

Your name is JAKE HARLEY and MOTHER OF GOD is today going all WRONG.

You've spent MOST OF THIS MORNING setting up a DECONTAMINATION CHAMBER around the Stargate, and then actively helping DR. FRAISER run checks on the VERY FEW SURVIVORS brought back from HANKA.

The poor town. The poor world, it seems like. Not to mention the whole of SG-7.

Oh, and as if THAT wasn't enough of a problem to worry about, now you've got your SISTER calling and informing you that some woman dropped off an INFANT KID at her old joke store. Ironic, really, considering that minutes before that call you'd been talking with GENERAL HAMMOND.

"You know," you'd lamented to HAMMOND as you watched CARTER, TEAL'C, and A SMALL HANDFUL OF SURVIVORS come through the Stargate. Your eyes focused in on ONE OF THEM in particular—A YOUNG GIRL about JUDE'S AGE. "I get the strangest feeling we're collecting kids left and right these days."

"Agreed," Hammond said with a nod, even as Frasier and A COUPLE OF OLDER WOMEN stepped through the gate next. "It's a little disconcerting. This is a Military Base, not a daycare."

"And yet..." You motioned out the CONTROL ROOM WINDOW as the Gate shut down and the DISINFECTANT SPRAYS fired off.

And now here you are, on the phone again, talking to your sister.
"I can't even get out of here for another few hours," you sigh. "We're dealing with a situation here that might require me to stay over night. Bah! Such lousy timing. It's like the universe is taunting us with this."

"I see. I'd hate to drag Alec and Roxy into this while they're on their honeymoon..." Jane says.

"Don't, just yet," you say. "See if you can keep the kid okay for the day, and I'll be out first thing in the morning."

"I appreciate that, Jake," Jane says. "It's the damnedest thing, though. She looked like Joey at first. And this boy looks ever so much like Jude."

"I can't imagine why Joey would say those things if it were her, though," You say. Or why the hell she wouldn't come directly to you to begin with the MOMENT she got home... Which really would have been through the GATE, you'd think, which just leads credence to the idea that it wasn't her at all. But that doesn't erase the possibility that this is the same girl who gave the STRIDERS their recent troubles. "There's a possibility I know who it is who did this, though, but I'll need to check the kid's DNA to be sure."

"That's going to need you to get here first, though," Jane remarks.

"I know, I know," You shake your head. "This is just... the worst possible day for something like this to happen."

You are ONCE AGAIN Jude Harley.

Wait, what? No, You've always been JUDE HARLEY. Gah, the sheer chaos of today has been getting your brain all OUT OF WHACK, you suspect. Thankfully, your PA came to take a BREAK from the stress of the day and he claimed that WATCHING BABIES BE BABIES for a few minutes would be a WONDERFUL DE-STRESSOR.

You caught that look in his eyes, though. That wild, storming look that he's had since Joey went missing. The one that he always gets when he's thinking about THE SITUATION. The ONGOING situation, you mean. The one that seems to sprawl all the way back to the day the Stragate was buried in the first place. The one involving GRANDMOTHER, and NIRRTI, and the MAGIC GENETIC MODIFICATIONS done to several KIDS.

So you go to the CAFETERIA, and try to get some LUNCH while you're not saddled to the teeth with THREE ROWDY GIRLS. You think you saw some advertisement on TV recently for a cartoon about THREE SUPER POWERED GIRLS, but you never saw the ad again and you're not sure if you imagined it or not.

You've been too busy to bother doing an internet search, but even so, you figure, HEY, SOMEONE'S PROBABLY ALREADY making a TV SHOW about your FUTURE LIFE as it stands, so you'll probably not watch it anyways.
As you're waiting in line to get some MAC N CHEESE, you spy that the person ahead of you is CAPTAIN CARTER and is presently loading up MULTIPLE TRAYS with food. You wave to her in greeting.

"Oh, hey, Jude! Good timing!" She says, distractedly, upon noticing your presence. "Would you mind helping me carry some of this to the infirmary?"

You look to your own presently empty tray, and say "sure!" Your lunch can wait, after all.

So Carter hands you a TRAY, and she leads you down the FAMILIAR PATHS to the Infirmary.

As you walk, Carter talks, "I was actually hoping to run into you."

"Oh?" you ask.

"There's this girl who we found on Hanka, about your age," Carter explains. "She's pretty shaken up from it all. Hasn't said a word since we found her. I was hoping maybe some food could get her out of it, and if not, maybe a kid around her own age could maybe get her to open up a bit?"

Ah, so that's it. You've gone from BABY SITTER to LOCK PICKER.

You want to say, "No way, Joey was always way better at making friends than me!" But then you remember... Joey never really did seem to have her own group of friends back in Hauntswitch. She mostly just hung out with YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS alot.

Friends whom you've also left behind during the MOVE TO COLORADO. You're still in contact with them OVER THE INTERNET, but... it's not quite what you're used to. You LIKE TALKING FACE TO FACE. And gosh, did you have a LOT OF FRIENDS you're trying to keep up with using this new and usual way.

You realize, almost shockingly, that rather inversely, you WERE the Social Butterfly your big sister was not!

"Okay," you say, "I can give it a shot."

And so you enter the Infirmary a short while later, and you're INTRODUCING YOURSELF to this girl while Carter parades a LIMITED SELECTION of CAFETERIA FOODS to her, trying to entice her into eating.

When she shows disinterest in the MAC N CHEESE, you make your excuses to swipe it up and HAVE SOME LUNCH. Half out of a desire to maybe get her to realize it's safe to eat now, and half out of the fact that IT'S LUNCH TIME AND YOU ARE HUNGRY!

After watching you eat a few bites and not immediately die, the girl finally takes an interest in a BANANA. Carter helps her open it and soon enough, you three are having a quiet, shared lunch in the INFIRMARY, with Carter herself snacking on an APPLE.

That's when there's a CLATTER from across the room, and you all turn to see one of the OTHER SURVIVORS- a girl who would probably be ATLEAST TWO YEARS older than Joey would be right now- has fallen out of bed, clutching at her HEART.

One of the OLDER WOMEN SURVIVORS is hurrying over and trying to comfort her by
STROKING HER HAND THROUGH THE GIRL’S HAIR, looking just as FREAKED OUT as everyone else is.

Carter goes over to help DOC FRAISER help the girl who just collapsed back up to her bed. The girl continues to complain about her HEART HURTING, and in a RUSH, Fraiser and Carter take her off to perform an EMERGENCY EXAMINATION in one of the Isolation rooms.

The Older woman who had been stroking the girl's hair looks worried about more than she should be, and you feel like she KNOWS MORE THAN SHE’S LETTING ON.

"Excuse me for a moment," you say to the girl you were brought in to talk to, and you NONCHALANTLY slip over to the other side of the room. "Hey, um, Miss?" You ask.

The woman turns to look at you and you SWEAR she looks like she's seen a ghost for a moment. "Oh, hello there. What can I do for you?"

"Were you a nurse or something on the other planet?" You ask.

"Wha-" She looks startled. "Why, yes," she finally answers. "I was. What gave it away?"

"You got that look on your face my Pa gets when he's worried over Jade's health," you lie, bold faced, to her.

"I see," The woman says, nodding. "Yes, I'm quite concerned. We had a few people fainting like that in the days before the plague struck. I'm worried it's a warning sign."

She's not worried at all, you can see it in her eyes. At least, she's not worried about THAT particular possibility.

You don't let on, and say, "But what if it isn't? Is there something else it could have been?"

This. Oh THIS question gets the concern to doubly manifest on her face. She KNOWS. This woman KNOWS what caused that fainting spell and isn't telling anyone what it really is.

"No idea," she lies, and you're not buying it for a second.

But you pretend you have.

"Huh, well, if you do think of something," You say, "maybe you should tell one of the other nurses or Doc Fraiser."

"I will if I think of something," the woman lies to you again.

And with that, you return to the side of the girl you were supposed to be talking to instead. She looks just about as BELIEVING in that yarn of a tale as you are- that is to say, NOT VERY.

"I don't like her," you whisper. "I need to go tell someone about this. Do you want to come with me?"

The girl nods to you, and together you head out the infirmary's doors. Nobody from the MEDICAL STAFF stops you- after all, why should they? They're much too busy tending to other people. And there are a STARTLING LACK OF GUARDS anywhere nearby. After all, why should they? These are REFUGEES that just survived a PLANET WIDE PLAGUE, not HOSTILE AGENTS.
As you make your way through the halls, you pass by the CAFETERIA, and take a look inside, trying to see if you see any FAMILIAR FACES, someone who will BELIEVE YOU when you tell them about your concerns.

And you hit PAY DIRT when you see a certain STRIDER feeding a certain KITTEN some baby food on a spoon.

"Dave!" You say, hurrying over.

"Oh, hey Jude, who's your friend?" Dave asks, sparing a curious glance at the girl.

"She's one of the survivors from Hanka," you say, leaving a gap open for her to say her name if she wants to.

And she does.

"Cassandra." Her voice is a bit weak and dry from not being used, but it's a good start.

"Okay, and you brought her up here for...?" Dave pauses as Nepeta bites down hard on the spoon and refuses to let go of it. "C'mon, give it back, Nep," he whispers to her, tugging lightly.

The little girl gives him a CAT LIKE BLINK, indicating she has no such intention of letting go of the spoon.

"One of the survivors collapsed in the med bay," you say, "and I'm pretty sure one of the other survivors knows what's going on but isn't telling anyone."

"...Okay?" Dave frowns, gently tugging at the spoon again. Nepeta giggles, but refuses to let go. "What do you want me to do about it?"

"Put someone on this woman and keep an eye on her!" You say.

"And does Cassandra here agree?" Dave asks, looking at said girl.

Cassandra- and it's GOOD to have a name to her face now- nods. "I don't-" she stumbles over her words, mouth not quite wanting to work. "Uneasy. She makes me uneasy. Since before we left for here."

Dave turns fully to face you "Uneasy HOW? Exactly?"

Nepeta, seeing that her food-giver is now neither giving her food or trying to regain control of the spoon, lets the object fall from her mouth.

It'd be adorable, if you weren't distracted by Cassandra explaining how it feels like her BLOOD IS ON FIRE whenever she's around the other woman.

Your name is JANET FRAISER and you're HORRIFIED BY WHAT YOU'VE FOUND.
"There's something attached to her heart," Carter is saying as she and you look over the X-RAY results. "It almost looks like a pace maker, but there's no surgical scars."

"We need to do a Biopsy," you say. "We need to see what the hell this thing is."

As you're putting the paperwork into motion for that, STRIDER, the YOUNGER HARLEY, and the girl from Hanka come into the room.

"Doc," Strider says, "I'm putting a security detail on one of the survivors."

"What?" You turn to face him. "Why?"

"Jude and Cassie here both got creeped out by her for different reasons," Strider says. "Cassie specifically, saying that just being around the woman makes her blood feel like it's on fire- and yes, I checked. It's ONLY the one woman she has this reaction with."

You and Carter lock eyes at that.

"It can't be the Naquadah in her bloodstream," You say. "Every single one of the survivors has it in them."

"But what if it's something else?" Carter asks. "What if... what if it's like what we saw with Jade reacting to Kawalski?" She then asks, "Janet, have you run any of the tests for Nirrti's genetic manipulation on any of the survivors?"

"No, I haven't," you frown. "Sam, you go run everyone's DNA through those checks while I perform the Biopsy on our patient. I've suddenly got a very bad feeling about today."

---

You're now JUDE HARLEY again. Whoo! The weird way your mind is jumping into these perspective shifts despite the fact that your perspective hasn't shifted at all are QUITE FUN.

That is to say, you really wish today would be over already.

But it's not.

You and CASSANDRA follow Carter into a lab, where she brings up some DNA PROFILES on a computer, and tells the computer to compare for IDENTICAL EXTRANEOUS STRUCTURES.

"What are you doing?" Cassandra asks, and Carter smiles upon hearing the girl talk.

"Well, a while back there was an incident with Jade Harley where she identified a Goa'uld agent just by screaming at him," Carter explains, and you briefly interject to say:

"Jade's a foster kid my Pa's taking care of."

Cassandra nods in understanding of that.

Carter continues, "Anyways, Jade's mother is... was descended from people who were experimented on and genetically modified. It's entirely possible what you're feeling in your blood is either a cousin
of that ability or the exact same one, since, well, Jade's just a baby and can't tell us how she felt when she made that identification."

"If I were a baby and my blood felt like it was on fire I'd scream too," you remark, mostly to yourself.

"So... you're looking to see if I have it in my blood?" Cassandra asks.

"In a sense," Carter nods. "There's a lot of strange code in Jade's D.N.A. that's nowhere near baseline human that we're sure is a result of direct modification. If some of that shows up in your blood- it's pretty likely that's what you're feeling, an identification of a Goa'uld possessed person."

"Haven't you guys been really good about checking for that, though?" You ask. "West, Kawalski... Shouldn't we have seen that at some point?"

"With how hectic today's been, I think we've slipped up on protocol a few times," Carter admits.

"Fair enough," you say.

After a minute, though, you hear a voice over the intercoms, "CAPTAIN CARTER TO SURGERY BAY ONE. CAPTAIN CARTER TO SURGERY BAY ONE."

"Crap," Carter swears, getting up from her chair. "Jude, stay here and keep an eye on the screen. If the search finishes with positive results, wait for me to come back. I shouldn't be too long, but if I'm not back in an half hour, find an Airmen and tell them to find me and say... ah..."

You've got this.

"I'll tell him to say 'Volcanic Activity Confirmed.'"

"That'll work," Carter nods, and off she goes to save the day, you guess.

And so you and Cassandra are left standing on either side of an empty chair.

"...So," you begin. "Uh... Today's not been a very fun day for anyone, I guess."

"Nope," Cassandra simply replies, staring at the computer screen and watching the data fly by. "It hasn't been fun since the sun started setting last night."

"I..." you take a moment, trying to figure out what to say. You suppose... a topic you don't like to talk about will do. "I haven't really had a fun day in over a year, really."

"Why?" She looks at you now, away from the screen. You recognize that look on her face. It's the same one ROXY had when she realized that Joey was gone.

"My sister disappeared through this really, badly made Stargate," you explain. "She got this gate address from someone and even though I told her not to use it, she used it anyways because-"

Because of West. "Because it was an emergency. It was the only address we had to use and she was getting shot at and then there was just this explosion and she was gone and the Gate was dead and Pa hasn't even been able to get it working again and OUR gate can't use that address because the symbols don't even Match it and-!" You feel a little light headed and so you TAKE A DEEP BREATH.
Your EYES FEEL WET, your NOSE FEELS RUNNY.

"I miss her so much," you sob, trying to KEEP COMPOSED. "I don't even know if she's alive."

There's a moment's pause, and then Cassandra says, "I watched my parents die while we were eating dinner. It wasn't even a meal I liked so I just was picking at it and barely eating and then they- They just started choking and then-" She sobs too.

Chair forgotten, you both sit down on the floor and just... cry. You both just cry and let it out and these are really not emotions any kid your age should be feeling.

The only solace you have is when the computer finally bings, and gives you both a chance to put all of that behind you and focus on something more important.

...Like stopping a Goa'uld spy.

Your name is GENERAL GEORGE HAMMOND, and you're NOT QUITE SURE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING AT.

"Best as we can tell," Carter says, showing you a picture of a strange object on the conference room projector, "it's some kind of half Potassium, Half Naquadah device, separated into layers by a film of Iron."

"The whole thing seems to be decaying rapidly, as a matter of fact," Fraiser adds. "It looks like whatever this thing was meant to be, it's unstable, and is falling apart even as we speak."

"Is it dangerous?" You ask.

"We'll have to run a test to see what happens when microscopic amounts of Naquadah and Potassium interact to be sure what the intent was," Carter says, "but the kid themselves? No. They shouldn't be a danger... but what is a danger," she adds, "is that there might be a Goa'uld hiding in among the survivors."

You're about to question what she means by that when the GATE DIALS IN with its usual KAWOOSH.

"SG-1 IDC RECEIVED!" The IRIS opens, and as you all go to look at the gate, suddenly there's an explosion of DIRT AND ROCKS flying through the gait accompanied by TEAL'C and COLONEL O'NEILL.

You head down to the Gateroom to talk to the Colonel even as the disinfectant sprays go off.

"Colonel O'neill!" You call out, "What the hell happened?"

"Apophis, Sir!" O'neill says as he takes his hazmat mask off. "We were observing the black hole when Teal'c spotted one of his ships coming into range."

"His Ships? They're functional?" You ask. Teal'c had mentioned that Apophis had been having two
ships built off world, but they weren't anywhere near completion when Teal'c had left.

"Correct, General Hammond," Teal'c says. "It seems that at least one of them has been finished and was sent to Hanka for unknown reasons."

"What happened after that?" You frown.

"Apophis sent Gliders into the village and started blowing everything up," O'neill explains. "We just barely got out of there, Sir."

"Why the hell would Apophis want to attack Hanka?" You ask.

That's when Strider comes strolling into the room, "Hey! Carter! Jude said that the results came in, confirming 'Volcanic Activity' or something?"

You look at Carter as she goes pale. "Sir, I think I know why."

"Care to let us in on the situation?" O'neill asks. "I feel like we just came in halfway through an episode of the Simpsons and missed all the setup for a punchline."

"I too am unsure of why Apophis would physically attack a planet already wiped out by plague," Teal'c agrees.

---

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, and you're going to enjoy this just a little bit.

"Excuse me," you knock on the door to the Infirmary, and head over to the woman Jude and Cassandra identified. "I need to talk with one of you nice ladies." You smile at the woman in question, "If you don't mind, Miss?"

She gives you a coy look, even as her fellow survivor seems confused. "Very well, I suppose I've got a lot to answer to, don't I?"

You lead her to an INTERROGATION ROOM, and sit the woman down at a table.

"So," the woman says, "it was that girl, wasn't it? She could sense me."

"You're not surprised?" You ask.

"No," Then the woman's eyes FLASH, but her voice remains normal. "My real name is Ka'turnal, I'm a research assistant for Lady Nirrti, but please, do keep calling me by my host's name outside of this room. I'm of no danger to anyone, I swear."

"Ah," You aren't surprised by that at all. Still, she seems pretty CORDIAL for a Goa'uld.

"Please, you have to understand that none of what happened today was supposed to happen like this," Ka'turnal says. "Our operations on Hanka were meant to be hidden away, safe from prying eyes. Observation only, strictly so. We'd modified the people there ages ago, I was just supposed to see if any peculiar abilities had surfaced in the intervening years."
"Something changed, though?" You supply.

"Yes," she nods, frowning. "Apophis requested one of Lady Nirrti's specialty weapons, a Naquadah bomb to be carried within a person's body. She asked why he wanted such a thing.

"Why did he want such a thing?" You ask.

"To blow up Earth's Stargate," Ka'turnal answers. "Lady Nirrti... as you're very well aware, I'm sure... had ties with Lady Ra, and they both had many plans for this planet that required it to remain intact for the most part. Lady Nirrti, more so than Ra."

"Ra did try to blow us up once, about two years ago," you remark.

"Yes, I'm well aware. Lady Nirrti thought it was a mistake as well, at the time," Ka'turnal answers. "She was both pleased and dismayed that Ra died in the attempt. Pleased that Earth remained intact, dismayed that without Ra, her protections from the other System Lords would one day expire."

"Protections?" You ask. "Ra was protecting Nirrti?"

"Most of the System Lords have never been any of Lady Nirrti's fans," Ka'turnal answers. "Even going back so far as the days when we all lived on this planet together, Nirrti's pursuit of evolution-of the perfect host form- has... rubbed them the wrong way."

"When Khepri became Ra's new host, she took an interest in Lady Nirrti's work. She funded it, offered protection, and a few isolated worlds, for our work to be carried out in."

"We're aware of that part," You say. "So what happened on Hanka that caused everyone to die?"

"A combination of things," Ka'turnal answers. "The first is the fact that Apophis... decided that he would take the bomb design from Nirrti by force. He began sending people to raid our decoy labs. Of course, that project he so desperately wanted was stored on Hanka. Somehow he found out, and we were alerted that a Ship was being sent to tear the planet apart for resources."

"That ship arrived today," you note. "Colonel O'neill and Teal'c of SG-1 saw the ship arrive and barely escaped being blown up by a death glider."

"That's incredibly fast. It's no wonder then..." she trails off.

"No wonder what?" you press.

"I was preparing to move all of our research off world when Lady Nirrti decided to scuttle the entire base," Ka'turnal says. "I thought we still had days left to safely move everything. But... no." She shook her head. "Lady Nirrti decided it was too risky of a chance that if Apophis got his hands on the people of the world that he might be able to find the genetic coding for the Naquadah bomb he'd been refused within someone."

"So the plague then...?" You trail off, fearing the end results.

"Half a plague and half..." She chuckles. "Well, Ra called it the 'Vast Glub'. I have no idea what went into the actual design work of it, but it's apparently a biological reproduction of some kind of natural disaster from an alien world. Our notes describe it as a 'violent psychic attack designed to scramble the brains of everyone within distance'- of course, complete hogwash designed to hide its true intentions should anyone read it that shouldn't be."
"Of course," you say, completely understanding of that fact.  

"The pathogen doesn't target the brain at all, not directly," Ka'turnal continues. "It instead starts as a blood infection. That's for security reasons. Namely, if Naquadah is present in a person's bloodstream, the pathogen is designed to decay rapidly upon contact. That's why there were a few survivors other than myself. One of the experiments I was observing was the long term effects of Naquadah in the bloodstream without a Symbiote."

"So... what are the chances Nirrti would ever use this pathogen on Earth?" you ask.  

"A Flat Zero Percent," Ka'turnal answers. "Lady Nirrti does not want this planet destroyed. If she did, she would have let Apophis buy his bomb and we would have been done with it... As it stands though, Apophis very well may have nearly got what he wanted anyways."

"What makes you say that?" You ask.

"During my moving of the lab materials, there was a break in," Ka'turnal answers. "I'd found one of the survivors we brought back with us outside of the lab, unconscious, and I thought they might have gotten in somehow. However, when that same girl fainted in your Infirmary earlier, I risked doing a check and found-"

"This?" You slide forwards a photo from the Biopsy.

"Yes." Ka'turnal nods. "I sensed the active Naquadah bomb forming, and risked sending a deactivation code. I actually had to send several in a row before it told me it'd been disabled. Tell me, has it started disintegrating and being absorbed back into her bloodstream by now?"

"Yes, it has," you say, nodding.

"Oh thank Lady Nirrti for her hard coded over-ride codes," Ka'turnal sighs in relief. "Most of the standard ones refused to work, except for the last resort code. I think one of Apophis' spies had broken into the lab, taken a prisoner, planted the bomb in them, and then left them behind to be found when the planet was scuttled. Or maybe it was an attempt to blow up our entire station before Apophis' ship arrived."

"It's possible Apophis has got this naquadah bomb device then?" You ask. "That they can implant it in people and use them as bombs?"

"It's a terrifying possibility," Ka'turnal says. "And it's not one I'm happy with, nor will Lady Nirrti when she finds out... if she's even still alive at this point."

"What makes you say that?" you ask.

"The timing of all of this seems..." She shakes her head. "Apophis very well might have ordered the Scuttling intentionally, having sent that message pretending to be Lady Nirrti."

"And then blowing up the town afterwards?" You ask.

"...Sanitation," Ka'turnal answers. "The plague digs deep into the dirt and water and lasts for a good year on its own without infection, however, it is incredibly weak to intense heat. Burning the planet's surface would be a good way to cleanse the plague out... Which unfortunately leaves the unpleasant
thought that Apophis knows far too much about Lady Nirrti's plots and plans."

There's a few moments of silence as you both take in that possibility, mulling it over in your heads as, no doubt, Hammond and the others on SG-1 are as they listen in from another room.

And then Ka'turnal looks to you, saying, "Please, if this is the case, none of us Hanka survivors have anywhere to go, let alone me. I request sanctuary for all of them, if not me, here on this world."

"I'll have to take that up with my superiors," you say, "but if they're willing to accept a deal for your safety, are you willing to offer anything else to earn your keep?"

Ka'turnal nods, very enthusiastically. "I know of a way that doesn't involve genetic modding that will allow you to remotely deactivate any internal Naquadah bombs within range. I can also help you maintain or repair the modifications of anyone my Lady Nirrti has modified, in case you come across someone who is unstable. We always try our best not to leave someone in danger of death, but sometimes, things go wrong."

You nod, understanding that.

"Also," she says, "if Lady Nirrti IS alive somewhere out there, and she is on the run from Apophis' forces..." there's a moment as she gulps. "I know what she looks like in her current form, and what aliases she might use here in hiding along with it. And if she's changed forms, I know what she prefers. I can help you track her down."

"I'll take that to my superiors," you say. "If I allow you to return to the Infirmary, do you promise not to cause any trouble?"

"I promise," Ka'turnal says, nodding. "By Nirrti's name and reputation, I promise that I will stay here and cause no trouble."

With that secured as well as you could manage, you let some guards escort her back to the Infirmary while you head upstairs to talk with General Hammond.

You've got the feeling that today is going to be a really. REALLY. Long day.

Like it hasn't been already?

________________________________________________________

APRIL 14th, 1996.

You're once again JANE EGBERT, and you've never been so glad to see your BROTHER in your life.

He's come accompanied by a young doctor named JANET FRAISER, who he says wants to confirm something with the D.N.A. of the kid you had dropped on you in the middle of your Joke Shop.

While she's dealing with that, JAKE helps you pack up the rest of your OLD HOUSE.

"So many memories in this house," you say, sighing as you put away a LARGE PHOTOGRAPH
of you and your long dead husband at your wedding.

"I'll gladly pay to keep it in the family, if you want me to," Jake offers.

"No," you shake your head. "I've lived here long enough. It's time to move on and let some other people make some happy memories here."

"Mmh." Jake nods. "I can understand that sentiment."

"Speaking of sentimentality," you say, holding up an EVEN OLDER PHOTOGRAPH taken of YOU AND JAKE AND HALLEY. "What ever happened to that dog of ours?"

"...He died," Jake answers, sadly. "I think mother had her claws behind it, but he... well. I don't like to dwell on it."

"I see," You smile, sadly, putting the framed photograph away. "Was it a kind death, at least?"

"In his sleep," Jake replies. "The Vet said he likely never even felt it."

As you finish packing, Janet Fraiser comes along and delivers some news that your brother finds startling!

"Wait. What? What do you mean there are no genetic modifications to him?"

"Exactly that," Janet says. "Besides some bizzare, striking resemblances to Jude, this John kid is a baseline, completely normal human. None of Nirrti's trademark mods are present in his D.N.A. as far as my scanner can pick up. It might be worth while to run better tests back at the SGC, but..."

"But it's almost certain that he's not one of Nirrti's projects?" Jake asks. "Like Nepeta?"

"I'd give it a 90% certainty he's not."

You really have no idea what any of that means, but... it sounds good to you!

---

APRIL 16th, 1996.

Your name is CASSANDRA.

In no particular order you are an ORPHAN, apparently either descended from a genetic modification or actively was modified in some way during your life (That you can't remember at all), and have WATCHED EVERYONE YOU KNOW AND CARE ABOUT DIE.

It has not been a good last couple of days.

While the other HANKA SURVIVORS have decided to stay together and take up an offer of RELOCATION elsewhere on the planet ("Preferably Far, FAR away from the Stargate," the girl who had a bomb growing in her heart had said), you've decided to stay LOCAL.

You think you might have a FRIEND.

Sure, JUDE HARLEY is... Rambly, and he might go on about EARTH CULTURE that kind of
don't get at all... but are still trying to learn and understand. (You'll be living on this planet for the foreseeable future, after all.) But you think he's...

You believe the proper earth term is "Cool."

At the very least, he's helping you avoid focusing on ALL OF THE BAD that's happened. He's...

You're not quite sure what the right EARTH TERM for it is, but it's that feeling that, when you're sitting at a bench in a park, just hanging out as Jude lays out a bunch of COLORFUL DISKS with PICTURES ON THEM called POGS and you're just talking about the various characters depicted on them and there's no need to worry about anything else that's bothering you.

It's the feeling that you can FORGET, even just for a few hours, that you've lost EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER KNOWN, and just... LIVE.

It's the feeling that there's someone there who knows what you're going through, and is there just to listen.

To keep you...

You think the word you're looking for is "GROUNDED."

Despite the swirling chaos of everything around you being pulled into a black hole's SINGULARITY; You feel GROUNDED.

And that's really all you can ask out of life at this point.

...Well, that and a DOG. Jude's PA and COLONEL O'NEILL pitched together and got you a DOG. You're told it's an EARTH RULE that every kid has to have a dog (You get the feeling they're just being silly, though, with how Jude laughs) and that THIS WILL BE YOUR DOG.

They both have UNIQUE IDEAS as to what he should be named, though. O'neill suggests TORONTO, Jude's PA suggests BECQUEREL. Jude points out that they named their own dog TESSERACT and that Becquerel's a better name for their next dog rather than for YOURS and that the decision for the dog's name should be entirely up to YOU.

You decide to name the dog HANK, after your planet.

You think that's a good name for a Dog.

"A good name for a good dog," Jude remarks, smiling, "A best friend."

You just hope MISS FRAISER, who will be taking you in as a FOSTER PARENT for the foreseeable future, doesn't mind dogs.

Your name is JAYNI, FIRST PRIME to LADY NIRRTI, and as you SETTLE IN back at the LAB, you hear the SUBSPATIAL COMMUNICATOR DISGUISED AS A LANDLINE PHONE ring.

Only one person has this "number," and so you answer it.
"Hello, Lady Nirrti. How was your trip?"

"Very last minute. Apophis got greedy and tried to blow us ALL up. I almost nearly didn't catch the bomb in time." Your Lady sighs. "Such misfortune. I suspect Apophis will be sending his ships to raze Earth after he finishes with Hanka."

"Will you be returning to base?" You ask.

"Not for some time. Things are complicated here. I might have to play the long con to ensure Earth manages to beat that upstart of a so called Chaos God down to where he belongs." Your Lady answers. "How goes Project Heir?"

"Delivered to Jane Egbert as planned," you answer.

"Good, Good." Your Lady pauses, then says, "In other news, I've seen your work first hand, Jayni."

"OH?" You ask, trying not to sound HOPEFUL.

"Neon Hair? Crow Wings?" Your Lady sounds pleased. "She's beautiful, ignoring the eye strain. They asked me for my opinion of her, and I gave them the honest truth. She's very stable. Stable enough that I felt proud of you enough to say that it was definitely the work of a Master Geneticist. Whether they misunderstood me to mean it the work of Nirrti doesn't matter, because I know you've done the work. I believe you might very well have created an entirely new species. Save that template, I want to see more of it in the future."

"Thank you, Lady Nirrti," you say, genuinely grateful for the praise.

"Ah, one more thing. No more of that, Jayni," she says. "If circumstances have us run into each other here on Earth, you'll have to refer to me as the Assistant Alias."

"Ah, I see," you say. "Miss Ka'turnal, then?"

"That's the one."

"I see. Thank you, Miss Ka'turnal."

"You're very welcome," she says. "Now, I have to get going before someone notices the subspace transmissions I'm putting off."

"Farewell, then," you say.

"Farewell." And then the line goes dead.

Your name is JAYNI, and now that you'll be MOSTLY LEFT TO YOUR OWN DEVICES for the foreseeable future, you get the feeling this is going to be a VERY LONG YEAR.

Chapter End Notes

SG NOTES: Next SG-1 chapter will be probably merging Politics and In the Serpent's
Grasp a little.
Yup. That's a huge change. Nirrti's hiding on earth and in plain sight too. Goa'uld's got guts to try this, that she does. Especially with Apophis on the war march.

Yeah, Cassie didn't have the bomb in her this time, some other poor kid did. Nirrti, fortunately, didn't even WANT to blow up Earth's Gate this time around, and was at risk of getting blown up HERSELF.

Oh, and at least one of Apophis' ships is ahead of schedule, too. Hooboy.

On another note, can anyone tell me if the good Doctor's name is spelled FRAISER or FRASIER in canon? I'm finding it hard to figure out which is which. Spell check seems to like FRASIER, but FRAISER seems to be what's used *most* of the time on the SG-wikis, and I can't tell if the times it's spelled FRASIER is because of someone's autocorrect changing it. Going forwards I'm gonna keep using FRAISER, but it's bugging me that I don't know which is the right spelling.

HS NOTES: Welcome to the PLAYABLE CHARACTERS LIST, Jude! It occurred to me while planning the timeline for this story that Jude and Cassie are roughly the same ambiguous age, that is to say, 11~12-ish. So yeah, of course they'd become friends. Whether they end up being closer to <> or <3 won't matter for SEVERAL YEARS IN UNIVERSE; for now, they're just friends.

Also, though it didn't get mentioned this chapter (Mainly 'cause I couldn't smoothly fit it into the narrative flow), Roxy took the Egbert last name, so Rose, as she appears here, is Rose Egbert. John, who Nirrti has PLANS FOR, will also grow up an Egbert. Though... those plans might come undone as time moves forward.
Chapter Summary

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS, and you get the feeling this could be the BEGINNING OF SOMETHING REALLY EXCELLENT.

Chapter Notes

Warning: Emergency Auspitization in Progress this Chapter. c3<

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS and you're PRETTY SURE the YELLOW WIRE does NOT cross with GREEN. That is to say, METAPHORICALLY, LITERALLY, AND FIGURATIVELY. All at once.

Salazl Captor is not the Troll you'd like to be stuck with on a LONG TERM BASIS, but damn if he doesn't know how to reroute broken power lines and other such SHIP RELATED ISSUES. He's got a blood color of the YELLOW PERSUASION, enough to have some MODERATELY IMPRESSIVE TELEKINETIC ABILITIES- mostly regarding the FINE DETAIL WORK required in HEAVY WIRING JOBS- but nothing quite like the MUSTARD COLOR that is well known for the rather impressive feats of people like THE PSIIONIIC of old lore.

Callie Ohphee, on the other hand, is quite the nice troll and you'd be FINE spending hour after hour with her on a mission, you think. The problem is that the stuff she DOES WITH TECHNOLOGY has no basis in HOW THINGS SHOULD WORK, and instead more in how SHE THINKS IT WORKS. Salazl is NOT HAPPY when he sees the state of the engine room, and Callie... well... she ashamedly admits that she honestly was just jury rigging everything together in an attempt to get that LAST BIT OF TEN PERCENT POWER. You're honestly impressed she got SO MUCH DONE so fast.

Of course, another problem that Salazl has with the girl is that her LUSUS is currently curled up and NAPPING on a BED MADE UP OF SCRAPPED WIRING.

Honestly, YOU HAVE NO IDEA how that's even remotely comfortable, but hell, you've heard rumors that LIME BLOODED WOLF LUSII have a tendency to BURROW INTO ROCK on occasion, so...

Power to her? You guess, if only you three didn't need to get BEHIND HER to get at an ACCESS PANEL.

"I can't just wake her up!" Callie says, nursing an arm in a sling- apparently she hit it during the crash landing. "She was oh so ever stressed out during our crash landing!"

You hope the others are having better luck than you are.
Your name is OKURII LEIJON. In no particular order you are a (FORMER, now, you guess) MEMBER OF THE HEIRESS' ELITE ARTIFACT RETRIEVAL SQUAD, a HELL OF A PILOT, an OLIVE BLOODED Troll, and IN *SO* WAY OVER HER HEAD that you're not even laughing.

Where are you exactly?

LOST in the ALTERNIAN DESERT, where your SHIP CRASH LANDED in the middle of an ANCIENT CITY COMPLEX who had a FASCINATION WITH FROGS for some reason.

Seems like EVERY RUIN within the next HALF MILE has some kind of GIANT FROG on top of it. Hell, even right NEXT TO THE SHIP are TWO STILL INTACT STATUES of giant frogs. There used to be a THIRD, but it kind of got RUN OVER during your crash landing.

And right now, you're pretty much being FORCED TO WORK with a couple of REBELS, one of which is an ALIEN!!

You're not much of a MECHANIC, so while your TEAMMATES MIERFA AND SALAZL help the LIME BLOOD who kept your entire ship from CRASHING INTO THE MOUNTAINS get POWER RESTORED to the ship, you, THE ALIEN GIRL, and the two LOW BLOODS have head out into the BURNING HOT ALTERNIAN SUN in an attempt to see if there are any traces of CIVILIZATION ABOUT.

These ARE ruins, after all. Surely there are some ARCHAEOLOGISTS hanging about?

You left the ship TWO HOURS AGO.

And already, BRONZE BLOOD and RUST BLOOD are getting on your and the ALIEN'S NERVES. Namely Bronze is acting like SUCH AN UNGRATEFUL DICK to his Moirail, Rust. You know that's not their names, but you aren't sure how long this TEMPORARY TRUCE is going to hold out and you'd rather not GET ATTACHED.

Thankfully, the Heiress bought ENOUGH SOLAR GLARE RESISTANT JACKETS for your team if they wound up in situations like this, so you're all, FOR THE MOST PART, shielded from the Sun.

Doesn't mean that everyone's happy with how freaking HOT IT IS, though.

Alien Girl seems only slightly less inconvenienced than the rest of you, and you ask her, "Hey... outta curiosity, how bad a heat is this for you?"

"I'd rate it at about a seven out of ten," she replied. "Probably close to about 100 Degrees with the jackets."

"Huh," you say. "Good to know."

What's not good is the fact that Bronze Blood's decided to take it upon himself to "finally" berate his Moirail (Again. This is like the tenth time this hour alone).

"BUT SERIOUSLY!? SERIOUSLY. Bargaining for my life was NOT WHAT YOU WERE
"What else WERE we supposed to do!?” Rust asks back, trying to figure out where he went wrong. "You didn't give us orders and Callie had no idea what to do either! She was just about ready to give up and die before Joey and I told her we had a plan!"

"SOME PLAN!" Bronze spins around, gesturing wildly at the sandy expanse around you. "SOME FUCKING GREAT RESCUE PLAN, XEFROS! REALLY! TOP NOTCH!"

"THEN WHAT WERE WE SUPPOSED TO DO!? TELL ME! BECAUSE IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU WANTED ME TO LET YOU JUST DIE, DAMMEK!!"

"I DID!" Bronze- Dammek, you suppose- shouts back. "I WAS CAPTURED! THERE WAS NO TELLING IF TRIZZA WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO PUT THE GATE BACK TOGETHER OR NOT AND GUESS WHAT- SHE DID ANYWAYS! I COULD HAVE MAYBE ESCAPED ON MY OWN BUT WHAT'S THE POINT!?" He kept shouting, voice growing hoarse from a lack of water and repeated shouting bursts. "TRIZZA'S OUT THERE IN THE GALAXY SOMEHWERE! WE'RE LOST IN THE DESERT! ANY PLANS THE REBELLION HAD ARE COMPLETELY FUCKED UP BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION! AS LONG AS YOU WERE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, ALIVE! THAT WOULD'VE BEEN A WIN FOR ME!"

"BUT WE ARE ALIVE!!" Xefros yells. "WE'RE OUT HERE IN THE DESERT RIGHT NOW! WE'RE ALL FUCKING ALIVE SO WHAT THE HELL IS YOUR POINT!?"

"YOU WOULDN'T FUCKING GET IT, XEFROS!!!" Dammek yells, and then storms off in the completely wrong direction for what any of you were hoping for civilization.

"JUST TRY ME, DAMMEK!" Xefros yells after him. "DAMMEK! DAMMEK!!"

"...Is this normal for Moirails?" the Alien girl asks you in a whisper, even as Xefros stares off after his Moirail.

"Not usually," you whisper back.

"Oh, okay, I was worried there for a second it was just me not understanding," the alien replies. "I'm kinda new to this whole thing."

"I could tell," you say, watching as Dammek sits his ass down on the ruins of a COLLAPSED WALL, and sulks in the heat. Finally, you sigh, and the call out louder, "Alright, let's take a break for a minute, okay?" Alien girl nods, but the other two barely seem to hear you.

Ugh. Boys.

"Okay then," you say, mostly to yourself, and then find a BIT OF SHADE behind a DUNE and park your ass down there.

Alien girl sits down next to you, and you take in her appearance. She's a total MISHMASH of clothing styles. Shoes and WEIRD SOCKS just as ALIEN as she is, A PAIR OF SHORTS and a SHIRT -apparently borrowed from the LIME BLOOD-, a GREY JACKET resting TIED AROUND HER WAIST by the sleeves like some kind of HALF-SKIRT, topped off by the BRIGHT RED SOLAR JACKET WITH HOOD and SUN GOGGLES that you're all sharing. That's all not counting the DEEP, SUN KISSED COLORING on her skin, which is still PALE AS
FUCK by Alternian standards, and the RELATIVELY NORMAL black hair.

Really, the HAIR is the thing that you find the LEAST ALIEN about her.

"Is everyone on your planet like you?" You ask, not even sure why you are. "Do you all share the same skin tone and hair color like we do here on Alternia?"

"Nope, we're all pretty different," she answers. "Do you guys on Alternia really have different blood colors?"

"Yup," you nod. "You don't?"

"It's all one single shade of red," the alien girl says. "So do most animals, too!"

"Like... Rust red or...?" Dare you ask. "Kind of fruity candy cherry red?"

"Hmm... I think it's pretty close to kind of candy red?" She shrugs. "I think it looks a little different depending on the lighting."

You think on that for a few moments, and then you realize, "Wait. Even the animals?"

"Yup," she nods.

"...Freaking weird," you say, astonished. "Even the Lusii have blood colors matching the various tiers of the Hemospectrum."

"Weird," she says, similarly astonished. "I can't imagine animals all having different colors to their blood."

"I'm similarly stunned by the idea of a whole world having the same color," you agree.

"YOU! IDIOT!" And then Xefros has had enough and is roaring over towards Dammek. Oh joy. MORE OF THIS SHIT.

"IF YOU WANT TO DIE SO BADLY--!" he roars, rearing back to throw a punch that would hit squarely in the back of Dammek's skull.

Aw. SHIT.

Alien girl doesn't quite realize what's happening but YOU AS HELL SURE DO.

"I'LL GLADLY--!"

You're throwing yourself forwards even as Dammek doesn't even so much as move.

"OBLIG-OOOF!!"

And thus you stop this from GETTING MURDEROUS by auspitizing your FOOT between XEFROS'S FEET. He hits the dirt face first, and that sound is FINALLY enough to get Dammek to turn his head around ever so slightly to finally look.

"THAT'S FUCKING ENOUGH!!!" you yell. "I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH THIS SHIT!"
You grab Xefros by the back of his jacket collar and haul him to his feet. "YOU! GO OVER THERE BY ALIEN GIRL! AND PLANT YOUR ASS DOWN ON THE SAND!"

"...Fine," Xefros grits out, and goes to do such.

"AND YOU! WITH ME!" You then grab DAMMEK by the same place, and haul him up to his feet, spin him around, and then begin marching him over next to Xefros and Alien girl.

"Aw for cryin' out loud, seriously?" Dammek laments. "Auspitized with my Moirail by one of the Heiress' flunkies. Today just keeps getting better and better."

"And it WILL if you two can manage to suck it up and TALK FOR A FUCKING CHANGE instead of yelling at each other!" You then force Dammek to sit down on the ground across from Xefros, and then you PLOP YOURSELF DOWN in between them.

"NOW!" you raise a hand, and point it to Xefros. "What the hell set you off?"

"He wants to die like the Sufferer and the Summoner!" Xefros half-yells, half-cries. "That's all he cares about! He doesn't even care about rebelling properly! He just wants to do something that'll get his stupid ass title down in the history books!" He points, accusingly at Dammek. "THAT'S WHY HE'S SO MAD WE RESCUED HIM! Because that means we not only ruined his stupid fucking suicide plan, we also followed him out here to the middle of nowhere where he thinks we're all going to fucking die and that means NOBODY IS GOING TO KNOW WHAT HE DID AND HE'LL NEVER! GET!!! FAMOUS!!!!!!!" Xefros huffs, and then settles back down.

"That true?" you look to Dammek, who hasn't really moved much since you sat him down.

"...Kinda?" He shrugs. "I mean... I... I guess? Maybe? I- I don't even really kn--."

"OH SHUT IT!" Xefros practically snaps at that, leaning forwards, aggressively. "You know DAMN WELL what you've been doing, Dammek! You know damn perfectly well what it is you've been doing!!! Did you ever even really-" You stop him from getting any closer, and sadly, you see that Dammek just isn't even moving away. "I bet you never even wanted to be my Moirail for any reason other then so you'd have your little scribe to tell your story to everyone. Like the Disciple. Like Mindfang."

Those two names make the Bronze blood flinch.

"Well guess what, TETRARCH," Xefros continue, spitting out that title like it was soured blood. "I won't be your fucking scribe. I just wanted you SAFE!!! I wanted you- I wanted my MOIRIAL to actually give a fuck about me!!"

"I do care," Dammek protests- but it's a meow-beast's infantile mewling compared to the mighty roar that he had before.

"THEN PROVE IT TO ME!" Xefros yells, and you keep your arm out to keep him from pushing even more forwards. "NAME ONE TIME YOU'VE TAKEN CARE OF MY NEEDS! MY WANTS! ONE TIME! TWO! THREE! NAME AS MANY AS YOU WANT BECAUSE I-" he hiccups, red tears brewing in his eyes. "I- I sure as hell can't think of any." He then says, "All I can think about is how you had me recreating action scenes from YOUR favorite movies. How you had me sleep outside of the Recuprecoon for WEEKS without telling me why until after you were 'satisfied.' How you dragged me into a fucking BAND but didn't even like my voice enough to let
me try singing naturally! NO! You Just fucking give me an Auto-tune Mic and force me into it and make me sing all those lyrics and- and-! AND You had me doing ALL OF THIS at the expense of the things *I WANTED TO DO!!!*" he huffs. "So... Go ahead. Tell me. Tell me you care."

And Dammek sits there. He sits there quietly.

And then he says:

"I can't."

"That's what I fucking thought," And with that, Xefros uses your arm as a spring board to push himself away from all of this- storming off in the direction you were all supposed to be traveling in together.

Alien girl gets up, and starts chasing after him- having been silent this entire time, wisely deferring to your somewhat-more-useful experience.

"And there he goes," You narrate, mostly to punctuate how much of a mess Dammek's made of his pale quadrant. "Off to continue the mission you didn't want to continue." You sigh, getting up to your feet. "You're welcome to come along with us if you want to, Dammek. Just stay way in the back, and let's let Xefros stay up ahead and maybe between me and Alien Girl here, we'll keep him from killing you." You pause, then add, "Your only other options are back to the ship or out into the desert, and I get the feeling both of those are death sentences... just not those glorious ones you were seeking out. Death by desert dweller, or death by angry Salazl. Your choice."

And with that, you start walking along after Alien girl and Xefros.

After about half a minute, you look back, and see Dammek following after you like a lost puppy.

Good boy, you think tiredly.

And then you realize that you've gone and fucking gotten yourself ATTACHED.

Well done, Okurii. Well. Fucking. Done. Salazl's gonna cull you the minute he finds out.

"DON'T MOVE!!"

Or... Uh. Maybe the HORDE OF WILD TROLLS with CHAINSAW SWORDS that just jumped out of the desert dunes to SURROUND YOU WITH DEATH.

Either one's a guaranteed quick death if you say the wrong thing. Whoo!

"Uh... Hi?" Alien girl says, raising her hands non threateningly. "Do you guys happen to know where the nearest water source is? We're kinda lost."

Alien Girl, come on, these are rabbit, angry, wild trolls who CAMP OUT IN SAND DUNES ready to attack anyone who goes by with CHAINSAW SWORDS they're not going to-

"Lost, huh?" one of the MASKED TROLLS inquires, almost CASUALLY despite the angry stance they and everyone else are saying. "You wouldn't happen to know anything about that giant fireball that crashed into the desert a few hours ago, would you?"

"Yup!" Dammek chipperly chimes in. "That was us!"
Oh for crying out loud!

You, Xefros, and Alien girl all whirl around to glare at him, not that he notices, with your goggles covering your faces.

Damned Bronze blood's looking ENTIRELY too cheery for someone surrounded by Chainsaw Swords.

Did you neglect to mention the CHAINSAW SWORDS???

"Well that changes things," Lead Mask Troll says. "We take them to the Matrons."

"The Matrons?" You ask, having no idea what the hell they're talking about.

"Get moving!" One of the more SURLY TROLLS points their chainsaw sword at you. "The Matrons won't like it if you cut yourselves on our blades!"

And thus, your merry little band of DESERT WANDERERS are escorted to these enigmatic MATRONS you've heard nothing about.

Wild Desert Trolls are REALLY WEIRD.

You're HIRED ACROSS a few more yards of Desert until you come to an ANCIENT ROCK QUARRY that seems to have been the source of all the STONE BUILDINGS in this desert. You get the feeling you'd NEVER HAVE FOUND THIS PLACE without PROPER GUIDANCE.

That feeling mostly has to do with how one second you're walking through DESERT and then the next you're STANDING AT THE EDGE OF THE QUARRY WALL. Like there was some kind of CLOAKING FIELD around it or something. Plus, it's surprisingly cooler all of a sudden, and also, you suppose the TINTED COLOR the sky's taken on has a fair bit of HINTAGE that there's something FUNKY GOING ON here.

You're all lead down to the bottom of the quarry, and then into some OLD AND ANCIENT CAVES.

This is where you start to get an even bigger idea that SOMETHING WEIRD IS GOING ON HERE.

There are TROLLS HERE. So MANY TROLLS. Ranging from WIGGLER GRUBS to FULL FLEDGED ADULTS. How the hell? How are Adults still on Alternia? Didn't they get kicked out?

Also, NOT A ONE seems to fall above TEAL BLOOD, going by the CRUDE SIGNAGE painted onto their RAGGED, DESERT CLOTHING. All of them aren't symbols from the STANDARD ALTERNIAN CLASS/SIGN ALPHABET, either. They're STARGATE GLYPHS.

What have you stumbled into here?

Your group is taken to a LARGE STONE CHAMBER, in the center of which is an equally large CIRCULAR STONE TABLE, surrounded by a MULTITUDE OF CHAIRS.
"Hunter!" One of the few occupants of the room— all of them TALL, IMPOSING, FULLY GROWN JADE BLOODED WOMEN— turns to look as the Leader of that little group brings you in. "What are you doing back so soon? And why have you brought these outsiders into our sanctuary?"

"Matron Porrim," The lead troll— HUNTER, you suppose— says, removing their mask, revealing him to be a him. A fairly handsome HIM at that. "It's just as the Blind Prophets foretold. The Fireball in the Day Sky brought with it Wandering Souls, lost in the Desert."

"I suppose we'll have to confirm this, then," This MATRON says, stepping towards you all. "Remove your masks, tell me your names." It's a demand, not a request.

"Okurri Leijon," You say, taking off your headgear.

"I'm Joey Claire," Alien girl says, removing her head-gear. "I'm not from around here, actually, so... Please forgive me if I say something weird."

"I'm Xefros Tritoh," Xefros also removes his head gear. "That asshole back there with the death wish is Dammek."

"Sup!" Dammek waves, not even bothering to do anything with his headgear. The Matron looks at him pointedly, and HUNTER goes to remove it by force. "Ow! Hey! Watch the horns!"

"Okurri, Joey, Xefros, and Dammek," The Matron replies back, looking at each of you in turn, before focusing in on Alien— JOEY— specifically. "Tell me, Joey. What is the name of the planet from which you come?"

"Earth, Ma'am," she says.

"Earth..." The Matron rolls the word over her tongue, then whispers "Tau'ri?" to herself. After a moment, she speaks louder, "I see. Would the phrase 'Abydos' God Falls' happen to mean anything specific to you?"

Joey seems completely surprised. "Wha- Yes! How do you know about that?"

"Our Prophets foresaw it several Sweeps ago," The Matron says, frowning, then suddenly turns to the other occupants in the room. "Go, fetch the other Matrons and the Prophets. The time has come."

"As you request, Lady Porrim," the others say in unison, and then go off to do as they're requested.

"What's going on here?" You ask. "I thought all Adults were exiled off of Alternia after the Summoner's revolt."

"That, too, was foreseen by our Prophets," The Matron says, "we prepared accordingly."

"But nobody saw that coming," you protest. "Not even the Emperess!"

"You have heard of the Blind Prophets, have you not?" The Matron says, motioning for you all to take a seat.

You all do such, because once again, it's not a request. Dammek even complies without force this
time. Hunter and a few of his group of desert trolls take a few seats as well, though most seem to prefer to remain standing.

"But they're nothing but Legend and Superstition," You say. "Myths!"

"People would say the same thing about the ancient gods back on my world," Joey remarks, "but then it turned out that they were all aliens with those specific names just pretending to be gods." She smiles at you and says, "Myths have a bit of truth in them, like my Pa always says."

"And in this case," The Matron says, sitting down at the head position of the table, "The Blind Prophets are a truth the Emperess wishes to keep shrouded in Myth."

"I... I guess that makes sense." You concede the point.

"So... what did they see?" Xefros asks.

"Oh, a vast, great, many things," The Matron says- You'll start referring to her now as PORRIM, because another Matron has re-entered the room, accompanied by a couple of ROBED INDIVIDUALS. "But of the most important of important things, they saw today. And they saw your arrival in our desert, heralding the future with the bright Flames of Rebellion, streaking across the day sky."

"Our ship crashing?" You ask. "I'm not really sure how that counts as a flame of rebellion."

"Well, we DID just come off of blowing up three Purple Blood Cruisers," Xefros remarks.

"Oh." You blink, having completely forgotten about that. "OH."

"'Oh' Indeed, young Leijon," one of the ROBED INDIVIDUALS says, her voice CRACKING with amusement. "You comprehend now, yes?"

"We fucking blew up three Purple Blood Cruisers with the Heiress' ship," You summarize. "If they got a message out to any Commanding officers in the area, they're going to take that as a sign of rebellion. Open rebellion. The kind we haven't seen since the Summoner's Revolt."

"The kind of rebellion we weren't wanting, by the way," Dammek points out. "We just wanted to kill Trizza and the Condesce with a Stargate wormhole in a single shot. Open and done before anyone realized what was happening. None of us wanted a prolonged war."

"But it's war that fate demands!" That same robed individual says, and you're starting to suspect given how you haven't been able to see ANY OF THEIR FACES, that these might be the BLIND PROPHETS. "And it's a war that you can WIN!"

In that moment, MORE MATRONS enter the room, filling in the rest of the table's seats.

"Good," Matron Porrim says. "We're all here. We can now begin." She looks to the Robed individual who had been speaking, "Altair, please, recite the prophecy."

The robed individual- ALTAIR- stands up, and begins speaking from memory.

"After the Abydos God Falls, and to Alternia, the Westward Winds calls," they begin talking. "A Fire of Rebellion will Spark across the Daysky, bringing with it change only few daring ever try. A Lion,
a Green Sun, a Sloth, and a Grimalkin will gather here at this table, and receive guidance towards breaking loose of the Empire's Stables." They then sit down. "That is the first stanza of the Prophecy foretold, come to pass."

Xefros chuckles a little. "The timing for the rhymes are a little off, but I like it."

"Yes, the Prophet who foresaw today was not the best of lyricists," Altair agrees. "There is more, but we would rather cover it in less rhyming detail, so as to better answer your questions."

"A green sun..." Joey muses. "You really saw me with that symbol?"

"Indeed," Altair nods. "A pitty you're not wearing it right now. Such a lovely symbol, made of love."

"I was wearing that shirt when I got the Gate Address for Alternia," Joey says. "So I'll count it!"

"So," Xefros says. "What's the next stanza about?"

"It's taken us time to properly decode what events are to transpire, but we've come to believe they're tied to the current Heiress abandoning Alternia for a Mission only she thinks she knows the full details of." Altair speaks, "We believe her mission is to recover an ancient partly ceremonial artifact that is traditionally used in Challenges for the throne, an artifact that has since vanished."

"So Trizza's done her homework," Dammek muses.

"That explains all the ruins she had us searching," you add. "Thinking back on it, a lot of those would have been good hiding places for some kind of Ceremonial artifact." You frown. "But only Partly Ceremonial?"

"You are aware of what creature the Emperess and Heiress are said to share as a Lusus, yes?" Matron Porrim inquires.

"Th... that thing's real?" Xefros asks, looking a bit scared. "I thought it was just made up to terrorize people!"

"It's real, but it is no eldritch god. It isn't even truly alive," Matron Porrim continues. "The Lusus in question was a 'gift' from the God the Clowns worship, or so the legend goes. We believe it to be a form of highly advanced machinery and technology, one that prepares for the reign of a given Emperess by modifying them from birth, to ascension attempt. Inhanced Life Spans, and healing abilities, increased Psychic Powers... But none of it is truly unlocked until the proper challenge criteria is made, and even then, only permanently if the previous Emperess is disposed."

"The Artifact the Heiress seeks is an item every previous Heiress wore when successfully challenging the current Empress of the time," Altair picks up from there. "After Her Imperial Condescension took to the throne, she, rather than allowing the artifact to return to its usual hiding place, kept hold of it. The reason the Summoner's Revolt was nearly so successful was because the Heiress of the time almost managed to steal it from her and issue a proper challenge. To prevent that, the prophecy tells us that the Empress broke the artifact up into eight pieces, scattered them across the galaxy, and banned Alternia from having access to a Stargate, to prevent another attempt."

"So that's what Trizza's after," Joey says. "What is this artifact look like?"
"Traditional artwork depicts it as a Crown," A different Matron chimes in, saying, "however, we believe that's an exaggeration, a conflagration of it's size with importance. In every depiction, the challenging Heiress is holding the artifact in hand, holding it above her head. It's more likely that it's a bracelet."

"Retrieving that Artifact before the Heiress is YOUR mission," Altair says, pointing at all of you. "This Artifact's connection to the Royal Lusus... we believe it's not just a key to properly becoming Empress, but a Key to the Lusus's powers and abilities as a supposedly 'Divine Creature.' We foresee nothing but the total annihilation of all life in this galaxy if Trizza Tethis becomes Empress."

"So, this bracelet's less the keys to the empire," Joey says, "and more the keys to a giant weapon?"

"The Vast Glub," you, Dammek, and Xefros all say at the same time, much to Matron Porrim's grim amusement.

"Indeed," she nods. "But on a wider scale. Not just targeted at Trolls, but at all life in this Galaxy. We think Trizza will attempt to control her Lusus as a war machine against the Empress, and in doing so, will push its powers beyond any control she may have."

"So we get the bracelet, stop Trizza, and get home in time for the Empress to cull us all," Dammek says, sounding way more interested in that last part than he should be.

"Yes, Yes, and No, Dammek," Altair says.

"...Say what now?" Dammek asks.

"If we play our cards right, we might be able to dismantle the Royal Lusus safely," Altair says. "However, that hinges on one thing alone."

"And what's that?" You ask.

"Who you choose as allies," Altair says. "Your choice of allies will be critical in the fights to come. Which worlds you visit, who you interact with, and how you deal with the situations on each planet you search. And it all starts with us."

Obviously, you think to yourself. "So... what do you want us to do?" You ask. "Obviously it has to be something big otherwise you wouldn't be asking us."

"Help us relocate to another world," Matron Porrim says.

"That... can't be that hard, can it?" Joey asks.

"It's going to be harder than you think," you answer her. "You all have a Mother Grub hidden away down here, don't you?"

"More than that," Matron Porrim smiles, "we had a miracle."

You're then lead down some hallways, past some security measures, and then you're shown the most incredible thing imaginable from a balcony overlook...

Down in a small cave below the balcony, a brood of TROLL EGGS, all of which are RAINBOW COLORED... WITH THREE of them being CLEARLY ROYAL. All of the eggs are nestled into
the MOTHER GRUB'S NEST, and all are being tended to by JADE BLOODS.

"Our Mother Grub gave us a bounty of all Blood hues this time," Matron Porrim explains. "We here in the caves have never gone beyond Teal before in all our time here. We're not quite sure how this happened, or why... but the presence of an impossible Royal Egg, let alone three..."

"And this is on top of the other Royal Egg we've been hearing rumors about," Xefros says.

"Yeah," you add. "Trizza got really anxious when she heard there were Royal Eggs from the recent broods."

There'd been SCANDALOUS TALK of potentially finding out which MOTHER GRUB NEST held it, but Mierfa had managed to talk Trizza out of that idea. But... But the minute this grub hatches the Royal Lusus will KNOW. And she will demand all but ONE of the Royal Grubs be SLAIN. And people are going to LOOK for this second or third grub the moment they realize they only have ONE visible. And that'll mean there's a ROGUE BROOD somewhere. And that'll mean people will come HERE, eventually.

If you can get these people off of Alternia, though...

"We'll need to find a planet that has a gate and isn't in any database as having an indigenous population," you say. "But finding one is easy enough... it's moving the Mother Grub and the brood that's the problem."

"Indeed," Matron Porrim says. "And it's why we can understand if you don't want to help us in this task."

You look to Joey and Xefros, who seem willing and wanting to help, then to Dammek, who seems... kinda interested in the FAME AND GLORY you suspect. But... Salazl and The Lime Blood. You're not sure. Mierfa might be up for the challenge- no, she'll almost certainly be up for the challenge. It's Salazl you're worried about, and you don't know the Lime Blood all that well yet.

"We'll have to get back to our ship first," You decide. "Talk it over with the rest of our team. But..." You smile at the Matron. "I think we can help."

"Hunter will escort you back to your ship then," The Matron says, smiling.

And thus, you soon began a LONG ASS HIKE back to the Heiress' crashed ship.

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS and you're not quite sure how long you've been at work, but the SUN IS CERTAINLY STILL UP. It's also getting A LOT HOTTER, as the sun climbs through the sky.

But, if Salazl and Callie have done their jobs right...

You grab your FIELD MISSION RADIO, and tab to talk, "I'm at the bridge ready to monitor power flow. Kick start the engines on your mark."

"Right," Salazl answers. "Starting engines in three..."

You close your eyes.
"Two..."

You take one last breath of hot, stale air...

"One..."

CLICK. Bwwwwrrrrrrr.....

And then you exhale as you feel a COOL BREEZE blowing the hair stuck to your face via sweat well away from it.

You open your eyes, and watch as the screen in front of you gives a read out of everything wrong with the ship.

"Salazl, Callie, we've got good news and bad," you say.

"Bad first," Salazl decided.

"Looks like our crash landing ruptured a few power conduits on the belly of the ship- mostly regarding lighting it looks like, but there's a few errors coming up on the artificial and anti gravity systems. We're missing most of the air-space stabilizers; it looks like we've got a bunch of hull breaches on the front half of the ship; aand..." You sigh. "We're not going to be flying any time soon. Booster sensors are reporting a total burnout. Also, we're not using the Rings any time soon either. Looks like the entire signal antenna's either busted, or tore off during the fight. Damn it." So much for transmatting somewhere else.

"What's the good news then?" Callie asks.

"Good news is we've got power to most of the rest of the ship, including the Stargate. The shield generators seem to be... about forty-five percent functional? Top half of the ship, mostly, has intact emitters bar a few places." You run through the diagnostics. "Looks like we've got weapons and ammo manufacturing online, so we'll be able to fight back for a few minutes, it looks like. Water purifiers and ambient gatherers are running, so we won't be dehydrated to death. Oh, and we've got air conditioning, so we won't boil to death."

"Well at least there's that." Salazl replied. "What about long range transmitters?"

"Umm..." you check. "Looks like we've got short range working, but orbital range is dead. And we've got no network signal of any kind."

"Damn it all," Salazl complains.

"But at least we've got Air-conditioning?" Callie offers,

"For now," You say. "Until the batteries give out, that is. Fuel tanks are dangerously low and battery reserves are... miraculously charging with how long we've been parked in the sun."

"So what now?" Callie asks.

"I don't know," you frown. "I'll try calling Okurii's away team and see what we've got to work with on that end."
"Sounds like a plan," Salazl says.

You put your radio down, and try to activate the ship's broadcast systems.

"This is All Your Base to Away Team," you say, "come in, Away Team. Over."

There's a moment's pause, and then Okurii's voice bursts over the line.

"Glad to hear your voice, Base. What's ship status? Over."

"Not good," You report. "We're not flying anywhere and we're not dialing out any time soon either. A lot of things are busted. How goes the hunt on your end? Over."

"Met some Desert Dwellers," Okurri replies. "We're on our way back to the ship now. Will be at your doors in a few minutes, actually. Over."

"We'll talk more then, I guess. Over," you say.

"Yeah. Away team Over, and Out."

You then radio Salazl and Callie and tell them to return to the bridge.

You take a breath of the nice, cool, refreshing air, and then quickly begin work shutting down power to the broken systems. No sense wasting it, right? Once you've finished, you sit down and wait for the other two trolls to arrive, wondering which group will arrive first.

It's Salazl and Callie, naturally, and you inform them that the away team was on their way back in.

Almost as soon as you say that, though, you hear a WOOSH of air as someone opens an external door, and closes it again. Within a minute, the Away Team, plus one unfamiliar face, come up to the bridge.

"Who the hell is this?" Salazl asks, glaring at the newcomer.

"Salazl, meet Hunter. Hunter, Salazl, our resident grumpy ass yellow blood," Okurii says, making the introduction.

"Yo," the troll gives a wave. "Don't mind me, I'll just wait over here admiring the Stargate while you all talk." And thus, he goes over, plops himself down in front of said Stargate, and... yeah. Just sits there.

Okay. Good. One less thing to worry about for the moment. Your eyes drift over everyone else, then focus in on the alien girl, CLAIRE, for a moment.

"So what's the situation out there?" You ask as you then look to Okurii, trying not to stare too badly at the Alien. Gosh, how embarrassing if anyone noticed.

Thankfully, Claire seems to be too distracted taking off her headgear.

"Well, apparently our crash landing was predicted by the local Prophets a few sweeps ago," Okurii answers. "They had us written down in prophecy as the Lion, Green Sun, Sloth, and Grimalkin,
three out of four of our Lusi respectively, and the third being a shirt our friend here was wearing when she got the Gate Address that sent her to Alternia."

"They also mentioned things that happened in the days just before I came over, too," Claire says. "Names like 'Abydos' and 'West' that they shouldn't have known."

"...So?" Salazl asks. "Could just be a lucky guess."

"Doubt it," Okurii says. "They also knew the Heiress was gonna skip off world and have a pretty good idea what she's after, one that fits in with what we were searching for all these last few months."

"What exactly is she after, do they say?" Callie asks.

"A Bracelet," Xefros says. "Apparently something that The Empress didn't want any potential usurpers getting their hands on, and threw away across multiple planets."

"Basically, it's a key to a giant doomsday weapon," Claire summarizes. "One that could kill everyone in the galaxy."

"Well, shit," You say. "That sure is a thing that we didn't know was a thing."

"Yup," Claire nods, smiling at you.

You quickly look away to Okurii, "So, do you believe it?"

"Even if I didn't, I do believe one thing I saw down there," Okurii says. "They've got a Mother Grub."

"They- What?" You stare, and Callie and Salazl are likewise stunned.

"They ALSO have a bit of a problem," Xefros continues. "Three Royal Hued Eggs."

"...What?" Callie asks, flatly. "That's not possible."

"They also didn't have any blood colors personally present above Teal," Okurii notes. "Every blood color in that brood past that point is impossible. But their Mother Grub's given them a LOT of eggs. More than it should have, even."

"They want us to help evacuate them to another planet," Dammek finally speaks. "Using the Stargate."

"Well, we've got power to dial out to one planet right now," you say, "but I wouldn't risk more than one outgoing trip a day with how screwed up the power conduits are right now. We'd need to fix a lot of stuff to get it working to the point we could dial out on a day to day basis."

"The locals are willing to help us on that front, actually," Okurii says. "Hunter and I were talking on the way back and he said they've got spare parts from other ships that have crash landed in the desert over the years. We might be able to jury rig enough stuff together to make it work."

"Mmmmm." You consider it- and then Salazl opens his big mouth.
"Wait, we're seriously considering this?" He asks. "We're seriously considering helping a bunch of people off of Alternia??"

"Not just that," Okurii says, "but we're considering going after the Heiress too. If the seers're right about what Trizza will do with that Bracelet... It doesn't matter what we do or who we help, EVERYONE is dead."

"Are you mad?" Salazl asks. "If we go against the Heiress we'll be lopped in with these Rebels!"

"We're already in deep enough shit, Salazl," Okurii reminds him. "We blew up. THREE. PURPLE BLOOD. CRUISERS. Remember?"

"...Shit. We did, didn't we?" He considers that. "If they got a read on our ship's serial number and transmitted to a nearby base-"

"We're all fucked anyways," Dammek says. "I say, if we're gonna die, we die doing something worth dying for."

"Oh shut up with that," Xefros and Okurii snap at the same time, and Claire just plants both of her hands against her face, muttering something that sounds like 'Not again.'

"He's not completely wrong, though," Callie muses. "If we're all going to possibly die at the hands of the Heiress' mad plans regardless of what we do... we really have no reason to NOT stop her so we might as well give it our all in stopping her." She puts her hand out, flat, like a piece of paper. "Count me in."

Xefros, Claire, and then Okurii all do the same. Dammek puts his hand down a moment after them.

"This is insane..." Salazl says... then he adds his hand to the pile. "But fuck it, you're right. This isn't about Rebelling or Submitting at this point. I wanna live, Damn it!!"

"What about you?" Claire asks, looking at you with a sly smile and...

"I'm in." You add your hand...

And then as a team, you all raise your hands into the air.

"Wonderful!" Okurii smiles, and then runs down towards the Gate. "Hunter!"

"Yeah?" The troll calls up from downstairs.

"We'll do it. We'll help your people get to a new world."

You can't help but smile as you hear this random ass troll you've never even properly met yet give out a joy-filled cry.

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS, and you get the feeling this could be the BEGINNING OF SOMETHING REALLY EXCELLENT.

Chapter End Notes
So Yeah. That's a thing. Dammek and Xefros had a biiiit of a blow out. Just a tiny one. Nothing major!
*/BlatantLies*

I'm working on the interpretation that Dammek's trying to just make his mark on the history books. He's not exactly Suicidal, per say, but he's come off as very... Wanting of HISTORICAL attention. Whether he succeeds or fails as "THE TETRARCH" doesn't matter- as long as people *remember* him as being important and up there among the greats like THE SIGNLESS SUFFERER or THE SUMMONER.

He's basically the mastermind of the whole rebellion in canon, according to Xefros, and from what we see of Xef's perspective of the guy... he comes off as someone who does things because that seems to be what's expected of him from a HISTORICAL STANDPOINT.

I think he really does care about Xefros, but he's just too distracted by the idea of going down in history among "The Greats" to properly convey that.
ALT:01X04: Gone Arai

Chapter Summary

A unique perspective on an Alien World.

Chapter Notes

Surprise! Second chapter for today!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You are the SENTRY, set to watch the RING.

The CANYON the RING rests in is but part of a LARGER WHOLE- canyons and canyons and canyons more. There are MACHINES, there are TEMPLES- all of them ABANDONED.

You do not have a concept of "BORING" - no, but if you did you would sure be feeling it. Sitting, staring, down at the RING.

The Ring is the Ring. It just SITS THERE. It does NOTHING.

It has been FOREVER AND A DAY since there have been PEOPLE around to use the Ring.

The people are gone. You and yours are all that are left and one day you might vanish as well.

And so you sit and watch the RING.

It sits there, SILVER and PURPLE among the GREY AND BLACK STONE. It sits, and it, too, waits for the day that it would open again for use.

Occasionally, it does activate, but nobody comes through. Just THE AUTOMATED SYSTEMS keeping the planets in alignment.

Today seems to be one of those days. It HUMS with power, the PURPLE PARTS GLOW BRIGHTLY.


WAA WAA- KAWOOSHI!

The CONSUMING VOID emerges from the RING, and then collapses down into a VOID WALL.

The water is the void as the void is death. You wait for the RING to shut down... But it doesn't.

SCLORP. SCLORP. SCLORP SCLORP.
Four PEOPLE step through, and then it does shut down. The RING is now off again.

Already, your observations have been noticed by the others. The others are INTERESTED.

"Atmosphere readings look stable," says the one with WHITE HAIR on her head. She's busy looking at a device of some kind. "Definitely a world that could host life." She looks up, and spots you on the cliff. "And it does, to some degree."

"Aww, that's cute," Says the HORNLESS GIRL. "What are they called?"

"Unimaginatively, Glow Bugs," White Hair says, frowning. "This whole planet is pretty unimaginative, or at least, that's what the person who composed its entry in the database would have us think."

"What'd they call this place in the Database, again?" says the one with the RED X on his chest.

"PS4-OBD," says the girl in the BLUE ARMLESS JACKET.

"Yeah. That's pretty unimaginative," Red X says. "Is it because the place is uninhabited?"

"Probably," Blue Armless says.

"Not likely," White Hair says. "It looked like the entry had been pretty well and thoroughly scrubbed of relevant data."

"So... they renamed it from something else?" Hornless one asks, staring up at you. "That's kind of sad. And calling them glow bugs isn't nice either! I'll think of something better."

As they walk along, you remain still, sitting, watching the RING.

Another will follow them. Others will observe. You are but the Sentry, and yet...

You are also THE ESCORT.

You wait as the visitors walk down the canyon's side path, and then lift off ahead of them, showing them the safest routes to walk along.

"More of them!" Hornless One says. "Wow! Look at those wings! I don't think I even saw the shell open!"

"Path is a little bit precarious from the Gate," Blue Sleeveless says, and you can see from the perspective of an Observer that she is looking down over the edge into the VOID BELOW. "We might want to consider putting in railing if we move people here."

"Or move the gate," Red X says. "There's no way we'll get a Mother Grub across these paths."

"Yes, that will be the hardest part," White Hair agrees. "Already this world isn't looking too suitable for that job aspect."
"Well, that isn't why we came here, though," Blue Sleeveless says, relaxing a bit once the path widened a little. "We're looking for the piece of the artifact that the Empress supposedly hid here. The whole inhabitable prospects were just a side mission in this case."

"True, true," White Hair nods. "Still, it'd be nice to get that job done first, wouldn't it?"

You lead them up a pathway onto a large plaza, and thus, land on a STONE STATUE, part of one of the TEMPLES.

"OH- Wow." Hornless says. "Look at this place!"

"Whale Lusii?" Blue sleeveless asks, looking at the statue you landed on. "That's a bit... weird."

"Take a look at those banners," White Hair says, pointing upwards. "They look like they're made out of purple scales!"

"Ah... guys?" Red X begins. "I'm feeling something weird over this way," He says, heading into the temple.

You are also an OBSERVER.

"Oh... Oh god." Hornless covers her mouth upon seeing the MULTITUDE OF DEAD SKELETONS lying in piles on either side of the ABANDONED MACHINERY. "What the hell happened here?"

"Looks like a battle of some kind," Blue Sleeveless is on edge, taking out a pair of ORANGE STICKS connected by a chain of some kind. "Some of these bodies look Alternian."

"What about the others?" White Hair asks.

"Natives, likely," Red X says, frowning, kneeling to touch one of the bodies. "Yeah... there's a few death echoes here that aren't quite... matching what I know from Alternia's ghosts. It's alien."

"What about the Alternian ones?" White Hair asks.

"Long gone. The Handmaiden's got them now," Red X says, standing up. "This whole planet's a tomb."

"Except for these little guys," Hornless says, trying to distract herself from the scene by looking at you. "How long have you all been living here, huh?"

"If Dammek had come, we'd probably know that by now," Red X says, grumpily. "But I'm not so eager to drag him down here just to find out."

"C'mon, Xefros, remember what Okurii said when we left," Blue Sleeveless quotes, "Don't think about it! Get lost in the adventure!"


"Hey!" White Hair says suddenly. "My Scanner's picking up some weird energy readings." She
takes off towards the HIVE PATH. "This way." The others follow, squeezing through a tunnel door and out of sight.

You are also A HIVE SENTRY, crawling along the ceiling after the VISITORS.

"So, which part of the bracelet do you think it'll be?" Hornless asks. "We know there are seven parts to it besides the base frame."

"I'll bet you it's the orange part, Joey," Xefros says. "Loser has to... Has to help feed the newborn grubs for a solid month!"

Hornless- New Designation JOEY- smiles. "I'll take that bet, and counter..." She pauses for a moment, then says, "If it's either one of the green ones, that, plus scrubbing the sand off of the front window during the middle of the night for a solid week!!"

"You drive a hard bargain, Joey," Xefros laughs.

"Signal's getting stronger," White Hair says. "Looks like we're almost to the source!"

"Hey," Blue Sleeveless mutters, "Does anyone hear buzzing? Like, a lot of it??"

And thus, they exit through the tunnel, and come face to face with THE LOCAL HIVE CORE- surrounded on all sides by the LESSERS of your kind along the walls, multiples of your kind BUZZING AROUND, and the GREATEST at the center.

"Oh... wow..." Joey begins. "What is that, Callie?"

"I have no idea," White Hair- New Designation Callie- says, staring in awe. "It's... it's some kind of nest hive."

"It's so pretty..." Joey says, staring up, and meeting the EYES OF THE GREATEST with her own. The GREATEST pulses across the network, AMUSEMENT, GREETINGS, WELCOME.

"...She's been watching us this entire time," Joey says.

"Wait, really?" Blue Sleeveless asks. "How??"

You buzz, flying over to land on Joey's shoulder at the GREATEST'S COMMAND.

"Through the Beetles, Mierfa," Joey says, idly reaching up and giving you a PAT along the top of your head. "These... these guys are all connected somehow."

Blue Sleeveless- New Designation MIERFA- stares up at the GREATEST and--

You are now the POLYARCH, FEY.
You take in all the information seen by your CHILDREN, and you look at these VISITORS.

Three ALTERNIANS, and... something NEW.

The Trolls have their PSYCHIC WALLS up firmly, resisting against your inquisitive pulses, but this hornless girl- JOEY- her mind is open and receptive.

She does not view you with WELL RESTRAINED FEAR like the other three have been raised to view PSYCHICS with, but with... CURIOSITY. She wants to learn more about your kind and so you will TEACH.

[HELLO, JOEY.] You pulse to her. [I AM FEY.]

"Hello, Fey." She greets, much to the other's surprise.

"Joey?" Mierfa asks. "Is... everything okay??"

"This connection thing..." Joey explains. "I think I'm just barely on the same wavelength with them, somehow."

[YOUR MIND IS OPEN. THEY ARE CLOSED.]

"Th...My mind's open more than yours, I think?" Joey frowns. "Why?"

[BLOOD TYPES.] You inform her. [NATURAL RESISTANCES, AND ENFORCED TRAINING.]

"...It's because Trolls have psychic resistances depending on your blood?" She looks towards the others. "Enforced training? What?"

"That..." Callie blinks. "Of course. The higher up the Hemospectrum, the more resistant to Psychic energies a Troll gets. Me and Mierfa are high enough up that we aren't hearing what you are."

"What about me?" Xefros asks. "Why aren't I hearing them?"


"It's because you're tuned to the Spirit Chanel?" Joey repeats. "The- The souls of the dead?"

"Oh..." Xefros considers that, then nods. "I get it. Yeah. Okay."

"What are these things?" Mierfa asks. "I've never heard of anything like them before."

You pulse your species' name to Joey, and she translates with the word that she hears.

"Arai," She says. "They're called ARAI."

"What... what do they want?" Callie asks.

[REVERSAL,] you state, and Joey says...
"Uh... they're asking me what we want first?"

"Did the giant alien bug seriously just pull a 'you first' on us?" Mierfa asks, quietly, and mostly to herself.

[AMUSEMENT.]

"Yes, they did," Joey answers.

"We're here for an object, part of an ancient artifact that someone might have hidden on this planet," Callie says, tapping on her device, and bringing up a picture to show. You send a BEETLE over to get a close look.

You see a depiction of a SMALL METAL RING, upon which SEVEN GEMSTONES of varying COLOR reside— all arranged in a RAINBOW PATTERN. Unfortunate that you recognize what they seek.

[CONFIRMATION.]

"They- They know what we're looking for!" Joey says, excitedly. "It's here?"

[CONFIRMATION.]

"Can we have it?" Xefros presses.

[DENIAL.]

"N- No!?" Joey seems surprised. "Why not?!"

[YOU ARE NOT READY YET.] You pulse, [YOU MUST PROVE YOUR WORTH.]

"They- Fey says we can't have it until we've proven ourselves," Joey says. "We're not ready for the piece they hold yet."

"Look, we're hunting down these pieces of this bracelet for a reason," Mierfa says, taking center stage. "Trizza- the Heiress- is scouring worlds to find the pieces of this bracelet. If she gets hold of all of them first- we're screwed. Everyone is. We NEED that piece or everyone dies."

[AWARE OF THAT FACT, YES THANK YOU.] To that, Joey giggles a little, and repeats the statement.

"So if you know how bad it is," Mierfa asks, "what do we have to do to get this piece of the bracelet?"

[COMPROMISE.] you suggest. [TRAINING.]

"T-Training?" Joey asks. "What kind of training?"

You look at Joey carefully. You SEE THE SUN within her. You see the GREEN, calling out for the Crystal you hold and keep safe.
"They want me to learn how to use the bracelet before we find all of the pieces for it," Joey says.

"Why?" Callie frowns. "As far as we know none of it works before it's put together."

"The- Every part of it has its own power. It's only together that they make up the key," Joey translates. "The part Fey has is the lynch pin. It's the most important part. It's... Communication? No, Administration."

"The- They want me to learn how it for the same reason we're trying to keep it out of Trizza's hands," Joey says, as she finally understands. "Trizza doesn't have the training to USE it right! That's why if she gets her hands on the whole thing it's going to blow up in all of our faces."

"There must have been some kind of training ceremony disguised as a test to retrieve the bracelet originally," Callie realizes, snapping her fingers. "One that's defunct now that the Condesce broke the pieces up."

"That's exactly it," Joey nods.

"If I can learn how to control the part that Fey has, we have a chance," Joey says, smiling. "We can safely put it all together!"

"I... guess that's the best we can do for now," Xefros says. "How long will this training take?"

You honestly have no idea.

"I... guess it all depends on how fast I pick it up?" Joey shrugs.

"I suppose that's reasonable," Callie nods. "I think I should go return to the Gate and report back. Before I do, though..." She looks to you. "What's the name of this world?"

You pulse the name to Joey, and she translates. "Kaptar."

"Kaptar, Lovely," Callie says, writing down the information on her tablet. "I think I'll go back and report in. Anyone want to come with me?"

"I'll stay here," Joey says. "Get a head start on this training."

"I think I could use some more time away from Dammek," Xefros admits.
"I'll..." Mierfa shrugs. "I'll come with you, Callie."

"Okay," Callie nods, and thus, the two girls head off to the gate. You stick an OBSERVER with them however and then settle in to begin teaching Joey how to properly control the fragment of the artifact she and her team so desperately seek.

You are the ARAI POLYARCH, FEY, and you have the feeling that while today was not what any of you expected... this was almost certainly the right course of action to be taken.

Chapter End Notes

The concept of the Arai Beetles and the world of Kaptar come from the CYAN VIDEO GAME, OBDUCTION. For the moment I'm not tagging that game/fandom category in, because I'm not sure how often I'll even use this world in the story. If I use it a second or third time, I'll tag it in for sure. But for now... This feels like a one off so I'll leave it as a one off.

SO! Yeah. A little cameo/nod to a recent favorite game, as well as some minor foreshadowing as to what the hell this Key Ring even is.
JUNE 27th, 1996.

Your name is CAPTAIN SAMANTHA CARTER and you've just had the most HARROWING SITUATION IMAGINABLE.

You touched A STRANGE MIRROR and found yourself in a PARRALEL WORLD under ATTACK by APOPHIS. You'd found out that he'd used HANKA as a staging ground for COMPLETING HIS SECOND WARSHIP, harvesting the ALREADY DEAD PLANET for resources.

And then the two ships had flown to earth and begun SEIGING IT.

When you'd finally returned home to YOUR EARTH, you'd tried to explain the situation to everyone, only to have THE DAMNED SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITY get involved and start TRYING TO SHUT THE GATE PROGRAM DOWN, which makes... actually DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THIS all the harder.

You've each just finished spending the last SEVERAL HOURS trying to defend the program to the Senator who, and you quote, called the Program a "Colossal waste of money" that the Government was spending on the program.

Even Harley's suggestion that he fund it with his own money was shot down out with a snide "Like you'd have the cash to even keep the lights on in here!"

And now, while Harley, Hammond, and even miss LANGFORD, who came in after being informed of this shut down, try their best to convince the Senator to let the program continue, you and SG-1 deliberate what's to happen.

"I do not understand," Teal'c began. "If Senator Kinsy knows Apophis' ships are real, that one is already complete and the other nearly so, and that they're coming for us... If a Goa'uld themselves such as Ka'turnal claims we need to fight back or else we die.... why is Senator Kinsey trying to close the Stargate now?"

"It's about burrying their heads in the sand, Teal'c," Skaara says. "I've seen this a lot of times in the novels Harley loaned us to read on Abydos. The people high above and in power think they know better than the people actually dealing with the threats they try to dictate actions over. But that's usually their downfall because the people who know better usually pull off a miraculous stunt that saves the day."
You're still honestly surprised every time Skaara breaks out an analogy like that. It shouldn't be surprising, given how much time he spent around Daniel, but at the same time...

"I see," Teal'c muses. "But why ignore the advice of those who know the situation best? That is foolish, and I know of no-one who acts in such a way and is not swiftly and publically punished for their failings."

"Ya see, Teal'c," O'neill says, "Kinsey is the kind of person who can look at a giant pair of spaceships coming to kill us, say 'Only our God can save us from this completely impossible to stop calamity!'-" Here, he's clearly mock-quoting the Senator- "while also condemning and preventing the people trying to STOP it from doing their jobs with a cry of 'You haven't collected enough alien technology that we can exploit!' all in the same breath."

"That's also completely ignoring the fact that we already know how to beat ships like this," You add. "We just need to get a bomb onto one of the ships and blow up its power core before it takes off. The first explosion will be enough to destroy the second ship if they're parked close enough together."

"Can't do that if they take off," O'neill agrees. "I'm not even sure how we'd get a bomb onto one of those ships if they reach Earth orbit. We don't exactly have a Ring platform on hand."

"So what do we do?" Skaara asks. "If they close the SGC-"

"Senator Kinsey is an utter Ass!" JAKE HARLEY practically bellows as he blows into the Conference room out of Hammond's office, where Hammond and Langford are still trying to talk to the Senator.

"He's still trying to close the Gate Program down?" You ask.

"Worse, he seems to be doing it because of those NID folk!" Harley snarls. "He practically flaunted it in my face that if we'd done the MORALLY WRONG THING and let the Tollan get taken, we wouldn't be having this situation!"

"So it's Revenge it's about; damn the planet ending consequences, eh?" O'neill muses.

"Exactly," Harley shakes his head. "And what's more, he's ordering the damned thing be sealed up even while we still have teams off world!"

"What?" You nearly shout. "But that's-"

"And not only that..." There's a dangerous glint in Harley's eyes. "Not only that, he's threatening that if we keep fighting this, he's going to round up every single person who's stepped foot through that Gate or knows about it and lock them up just for knowing about it."

"That's Blackmail," Skaara says.

"And illegal," You say. "There's no way the President, or anyone else on the Appropriations Committee would approve of any of that."

"I wouldn't be so sure," O'neill frowns. "How much time do we have before the Gate's sealed?"

"He's already posted guards at the doors to the control room to keep people out." Harley says, lowering his voice to a conspiratorial tone. "We could Zat our way through them, but..." He smirks.
"I actually have a better idea than that. Follow my lead." He winks, takes a deep breath, and then yells. "WELL I SAY IF WE'RE GOING TO GET ARRESTED FIGHTING THIS! WE MIGHT AS WELL DO IT ON A FULL STOMACH! TO THE NEAREST GOURMET BURGER JOINT!!"

"Aye Aye, Sir!" O'neill yells out just as loudly, and the rest of you all from SG-1 chime in.

This, you notice, is enough to get the Senator to look out the window of Hammond's office, scowling for a moment, before smirking as if he thinks he's won, and then turning back to the argument as Catherine Langford nearly slaps the bastard to get him to pay attention.

Your name is JAKE HARLEY and you feel YOUR HEART BEATING LIKE MAD over the next few minutes as your CAR FULL OF SG-1 MEMBERS drive away from Cheyenne Mountain.

"So..." O'neill begins. "Does this plan of yours happen to involve the DHD to that Second Stargate we found in Antarctica that the Not-So-Good Senator said 'arrived broken'?”

"Did he say that now?" You chuckle.

"Harley, did you Steal the Antarctic Gate's DHD?" Carter asks.

"More like... Borrowed?" You admit with a minor shrug. "Honestly, I wasn't expecting them to check the DHD so soon after it arrived. I was going to put them back once I'd finished comparing everything to Mother's Attic Gate's DHD."

"And that's where we're going, isn't it?" Carter asks. "I known when we all moved back down here to work at the SGC full time, you'd moved that Gate from Hauntswitch to keep working on it."

"And with a working set of DHD crystals," Skaara smiled as he caught on, "we can go to Hanka and stop Apophis!"

"Exactly my thoughts," you nod. "Infact, I've even managed to get that gate to connect to our Local Network already. It turns out what I thought was this random spiograph shaped cookie cutter I stole when I made my escape went to the switch between this galaxy and Mother's the entire time."

"Have you managed to connect to the Gate Joey dialed?" O'neill asks.

"Not as of yet, no," You shake your head, signaling to turn off the road onto the highway. "I'm fairly certain it's a power issue. Even with Jude telling me what glyphs she pressed, I can't get a lock."

Of course, you leave out the fact that Joey just HAD to have chosen one of those three eight symbol addresses you found on Abydos. You're not sure how she memorized the sequence so quickly off of but a single minute's glance at Carter's recorded footage, but... She did it anyways.

"I'm working on rebuilding those generators that West shot up, but there are some components that were made out of the Gate Mineral, and I haven't figured out how to remake them locally yet," you continue. "But that's besides the point. Local, Seven Glyph Addresses work, and that's what we're going to use tonight."

"Kinsey doesn't know where that gate is, or that it even works," O'neill smirks. "We can go save the
world, come back, and he'll never be the wiser."

"Exactly," You say. "Also, even if he does have an Inkling of what we're doing, it doesn't hurt that I've always been a bit of a hoarder and it'll take hours and days for him to track down where exactly I've kept the Gate."

"While I am certainly eager to put a stop to Apophis' plans," Teal'c starts, "how are we going to execute this plan without an explosive device?"

"I have that covered as well," you smile.

And indeed, Harley did have it covered - behind two doors locked with NUMBER PADS and PADLOCKS, and at least ONE STRANGE PUZZLE involving MARBLES and a TROPHY ROOM to get access to a KEY.

You're now COLONEL O'NEILL, and you'd never thought you'd see such a LARGE STOCKPILE OF C-4 in a civilian basement ever in your entire life.

You also never thought you'd see a STARGATE being kept inside of someone's basement, even if it looks like it's been run through a few DIS-ASSEMBLIES AND RE-ASSEMBLIES and seems to have a FEW WORRYINGLY SPARE PIECES lying on the floor nearby.

"Harley, are you SURE this is going to work?" You ask, even as you help the man pack up enough C-4 to blow up a small meteor. "That gate's missing a lot of parts."

"As sure as I can be," Harley says. "I mean, those things are completely superfluous, as far as I can tell, and do nothing to actually aid the formation of the wormhole. Actually, it's connected a lot smoother since I removed some of that Junk!" he pauses, then says, "Though I can't deny the possibility that they may have some other function in connecting to the other Galaxy, but I'll put that to the test once I have the power generators for it."

"...Okay then," You say, hefting the backpack onto your back, and then picking up one of the MANY GUNS that Harley apparently has been squirreling away since... You check the OBVIOUS PRICE TAG that seems to have never been removed... Since atleast 1969, FOR THIS PARTICULAR GUN.

You remove the price tag and let it fall to the floor.

Sure, Harley has a few MORE FAMILIAR WEAPONS that are more modern, but these ones that you'll be using this mission he claims use his SPECIALLY MODIFIED ARMOR PIERCING ROUNDS, tested and guaranteed to pierce through a JAFFA WARRIOR'S ARMOR faster and with fewer wasted shots.

STEALTH IS KEY, he said, but honestly...

In another life and time, you think Jake Harley would be a very frightening person. Hell, even in THIS life and time, he still is. You honestly wonder how the hell he stockpiled so many guns and hasn't gotten put on any watch lists.

He's probably been at this for a better part of the last century, you guess.
Who would have thought beneath that kindly, near-grandpa like exterior lay the heart and mind of a cunning hunter?

Of course, there was a reason he went to Abydos in the first place, after all, and while you've put thoughts of it behind you... suddenly it's all in your face and you realize that you've SORELY BEEN MISJUDGING the old man.

"Now, if you'll excuse me," Harley says, "I have to go write a note to my son I'm breaking the promise I made to him not to go off world into a dangerous situation."

"See you in five," You say, and watch as Harley goes upstairs to do just that. And luckily enough, he CLOSES ONE OF THE DOORS BEHIND HIM. You quickly shove an unloaded gun up into position to bar it closed, then you turn to Carter. "Dial it up."

"What? But what about-?"

"Just do it," you interrupt her interjection. "It's for the best if it's just the four of us."

Carter considers that, then nods, going to the DHD and pressing the symbols for HANKA'S GATE ADDRESS in rapid fire sequence.

It seems that with a PROPER CONTROL CRYSTAL, the Gate LIGHTS UP INSTANTLY, without any of that spinning that it seems built for. You have to give Harley props for that. Always seemed like a waste of time in emergency situations, to you.

It's only when the gate keens out it's WAA WAA, KAWOOOSH, that you hear Harley yelling from upstairs.

"O'NEILL! DON'T YOU DARE!!" He's running for the basement doors again.

"Let's go!" You say, and then hurry your team through the Stargate.

There's that standard moment of disorientation that you'd gotten used to not being there- and then you realize you're not on Hanka.

Skaara and Teal'c go towards the LONE ENTRANCE to the room, and peer out into the hallway.

"Carter...?" You warn, glancing about the VERY CLEARLY A STORE ROOM of a GOA'ULD SHIP. "What happened? Why aren't we outside the town?"

"I dialed the right address!" Carter says, turning around to face the gate just as it shuts off. "I think the Gate might have been-" She paused. "Sir, we definitely dialed the right address. The Gate's been moved."

You glance up at the gate's POINT OF ORIGIN glyph, and SURE ENOUGH, it's HANKA'S GATE. You can even see some SCORCH MARKS on it where a stray GLIDER BLAST seems to have hit it.

"This is a Store room on board one of the Ships," Teal'c says. "It seems Apophis has moved the Stargate into storage for some reason."
"Well, that makes sneaking onto the ship a whole lot easier," You gripe. Damn it, this makes you even more mad at KINSEY. If you'd sent a MALP in you could have seen this and just sent a bomb through and have been DONE WITH THIS.

"O'neill," Skaara hisses suddenly as he and Teal'c come away from the door, "Jaffa!"

"Hide behind the gate stairs," you order, and your team HIDES, just as you finally hear the TELL TALE THWUMP THWUMP of metal boots on stone floors.

From behind the Gate, you watch as a SMALL SQUAD OF SERPENT GUARDS come into the room, seemingly checking for disturbances, as they start opening up a crate to-

No, they're not searching for you, they're RETRIEVING A LARGE GLASS ORB of some kind, and SETTING IT UP on a nearby PLATFORM.

There's a moment's pause, and then the ORB CLOUDS OVER, before suddenly CLEARING UP, revealing a FAMILIAR FACE within.

"My First Prime," the image of Apophis smiles, "Status?"

"We are just about to set off for the Tau'ri world, my lord," one of them says, in a voice that you CAN KIND OF PLACE. "Amaunet has given her all clear for the second ship's launch, and all is to her liking."

"Good," Apophis says. "Report back when you are within orbit and about to prepare the final assault."

"As you command," The apparent First Prime says. And damn it you feel like you should know his voice from somewhere. Did you meet them recently?? When was the last time you fought against Apophis' forces directly?

And then, the orb goes cloudy again, and then turns off.

That's when THE ENTIRE BUILDING SHAKES for a moment, and you hear a FAMILIAR GROWL OF AN ENGINE, but the Jaffa seem prepared for it, as the Jaffa squad all TURN TO LEAVE, not even bothering to put the COMMUNICATION ORB back in its box.

"...Well," you say, quietly, once the Jaffa are all gone "I guess that means we're not dialing back to Earth any time soon."

"If we succeed in destroying these ships in transport, we are very likely going to die, Colonel O'neill," Teal'c remarks. "The Stargate will not connect while we are in transit."

"Figured that out myself, Teal'c, but thanks for the confirmation," you say, as there's ANOTHER SHAKE to the ship, but THIS TIME WITH A DIFFERENT SOUND.

You've got the feeling this mission just got a WHOLE LOT MORE COMPLICATED.

You are now GEORGE HAMMOND, and you're smiling on the inside as SENATOR ROBERT KINSEY tries to order SG-1 back to base. They've been gone for HOURS, supposedly at "Dinner."
"The second Gate," Kinsey suddenly growls. "They used that Second damned Stargate to go somewhere." He turns to you, near yelling, "WHAT PLANET WOULD THEY GO TO!?" Scratch that, he's definitely yelling.

Catherine Langford chuckles. "Where else would they go?" Kinsey turns to look at her, an expletive on the verge of slipping from his mouth. "Off to save the world from death and destruction yet again."

"What's that mean?" Kinsey asks, not even fully understanding what she just meant.

"They've gone to Hanka," you provide, "that's the planet Captain Carter was telling us the Goa'uld invasion fleet was launched from in the other reality she visited just before you came here to shut us down."

"...What a load of bullcrap, alternate realities don't mean anything to-"

You're going to relish this.

"IF," you say, cutting over the Senator's ramblings, "the threat is credible, there's one easy way to confirm that's where they've gone."

"And how's that?" Kinsey asks, still confused.

"We send a probe through to Hanka, see if there are any ships in sight," you say. "If there aren't, SG-1 is likely on the other side of that Gate waiting around cooling their heels. If there ARE ships there, then SG-1 is likely already infiltrating them in an attempt to blow them up and save us all from a miserable death."

"And what if there ARE ships?" the Senator asks. "What then?"

"If there are Ships," you say, "we send SG-2 as backup and help save the world. If there aren't,..." You shrug. "We can still send SG-2 to haul them back here for a Court-Martial."

The Senator seems to like the sound of that, as you figured he would.

"But," you say, "if there is a credible threat to Earth, and SG-1 is in the midst of saving the world. And IF they succeed in saving us, then... well." You play out the BET. "I think the SGC has proven it's well deserving of continued funding."

Senator Kinsey frowns. "I..." But even he knows if there is a legitimate threat to Earth, and it got out that he PREVENTED you all from saving the planet? His career would be shattered. "I suppose that's a valid point, General."

You look to Catherine, and say, "Get me Major Ferretti and his team."

"I'll be right back," Catherine says, smiling as she exits your office.

Your name is MAJOR LOUSI FERRETTI, and you're GEARED UP for either one of two
possibilities. The FIRST is that you're going to help SG-1 save the world—again. The SECOND, much more unpleasant one, is that you're going to be dragging them all back to Earth for COURT-MARTIAL.

There's a PROBE at the base of the Ramp, and your TEAM is standing at the ready behind it.

"CHEVRON ONE, ENCODED," You hear the GATE TECHNICIAN, WALTER, call out over the gate room's radio.

"So," Strider asks as he checks his gun. "You think we're going to get a chance to blow up some alien ships?"

"CHEVRON TWO, ENCODED."

"Almost certainly," you say.

"CHEVRON THREE, ENCODED."

"Sure hope we get to keep the lights on in here," Strider says.

"CHEVRON FOUR, ENCODED," Walter interjects.

"I really don't want to end up raising Nepeta on a fry-cook's salary, that's for sure," Strider continues, as if he wasn't interrupted.

"Hopefully," you pause for a "CHEVRON FIVE, ENCODED" before continuing, "we'll all get promotions out of this."

"I could go for a promotion," Strider agrees. "More money for diapers and formula, that way."

"CHEVRON SIX, ENCODED."

"Hah! Yeah. That'll be worth the money, alright." You tense up, waiting for the Gate to Activate.

"CHEVRON SEVEN..."

And then the STARGATE STALLS OUT, and the CHEVRONS ALL TURN OFF.

"Will NOT Engage!" Walter calls out.

"What the hell happened?" You turn to look up at the window.

"The Gate's returned the error, 'No Response From Network,'" Walter answers.

"Well try it again!" You order.

"Dialing again..." Walter begins.

Up in the Control Room, you see Hammond growing stony-faced, and the STUPID SENATOR growing VERY CONCERNED.

"What does No Response from Network mean?" You read the Senator's Lips.
Hah. Even you know what that means.

It's the error message Carter programmed in for Stargates that had DRIFTED OUT OF RANGE of the previously used ADDRESS.

"Well," Strider remarks, "I've suddenly got a bad feeling about this."

"So do I," you say, turning back to watch the Gate dial again. "So do I."

You've got the feeling that you MISSED YOUR WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY to go help. Damn these Political Shenanigans.

Chapter End Notes

Everyone's fave WALTER makes his appearance, finally!

Oh, and let's not forget everyone's MOST HATED ENEMY, Senator Kinsey.
Chapter Summary

In which I, the author, commit to adding the Obduction series tag.

Chapter Notes

Since I'm officially adding Obduction to the crossover roster here, I'm going to get THIS out of the way:

IF YOU'VE PLAYED OBDUCTION: THERE ARE NO MAGIC TREES OR SPACE PINECONES in this crossover. Sorry! Cyan just made some Tasty World Building for the individual species that I'm borrowing here. ^^;

IF YOU HAVEN'T PLAYED OBDUCTION: You don't need to have played the game. I'll be linking pictures as reference where needed, and explaining things when they're needed to be explained.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

JUNE 27th, 1996.

Your name is BRA'TAC, and in a very specific order you were a LONG SERVED FIRST PRIME of APOPHIS until you were REPLACED BY TEAL'C, who then TURNED TRAITOR, leading you to FILL THE VACATED POSITION once again.

Right now, you're WEIGHING YOUR OPTIONS.

You're QUITE SURE you saw SG-1 in the CARGO HOLD hiding behind the HANKA STARGATE. If that was them, while you're not sure HOW they got onboard, you're certainly...

Well, glad is not the right word. You're certainly CONSIDERING CHANGING YOUR PLANS.

You WERE going to lead a charge of DEATH GLIDERS against the two ships, hoping to ENCITE INFIGHTING by claiming you were working under Klorel's ORDERS- surely a DEATH SENTENCE- but now...

If SG-1 is here, they're certainly planning to do SOMETHING EXPLOSIVE.

After all, that's pretty much how things WENT back on Chulak when Teal'c and them showed up to try and save Teal'c's SON from becoming a JAFFA.

So... what to do... what to do...?

You've done nothing but patrol the ship since you thought you SAW THEM, and you think you've
got an IDEA. You search the ship, keeping careful note of the time as you approach EARTH. You find them in the most obvious place of all: THE ENGINE ROOM.

They've been planting strange CLAY BLOCKS all over the place- especially on the CRITICAL CONTROL CONSOLES and they seem to have INCAPACITATED THE GUARDS for the room using ZAT GUNS.

You Remove your helmet, and then call out to them. "So we meet again, Teal'c?"

SG-1 all turn around, ZATS raised, and you recognize the MARKINGS ON THEM as having come from the STORE ROOM.

"Master Bra'tac," Teal'c seems surprised, and lowers his weapon first.

"Bra'tac?" the one you remember is called COLONEL O'NEILL says, astonished, as he, too, lowers his weapon. "What are you doing here?"

"I could be asking you all the same question!" You say. "Imagine my surprise when I see you out of the corner of my eye, hiding behind the Stargate!"

"We got a tip off from another universe," the woman, CARTER, says. "We came to investigate if it was true here and... uh..."

"Let me guess, you Gated on board right before take off?" You chuckle. "Such luck."

"You could say that," O'neill says.

"So..." The Boy, SKAARA, asks, "what happens now?"

"What is your plan here? How can I assist?" You ask, and they answer.

It's certainly a good one, you'll say that much.

Very... Explosive, as you expected.

__________________________________________

Your name is JUDE HARLEY and you've come home after a LONG DAY of HANGING OUT IN THE PARK with Cassandra and a COUPLE OF OTHER KIDS you've become ACQUAINTANCES WITH.

And right now, you're staring at the OPEN BASEMENT STAIRWELL, which is NEVER LEFT OPEN UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.

But you hear your PA YELLING in frustration, and so you go downstairs to see what's up. SO MUCH SECURITY is left unlocked, you're just about to wonder what he has hidden down here when you find him, angrily pounding in THE SAME SEVEN SYMBOLS into that DHD from the house in Florida. And there is the SAME STARGATE- refusing to connect.

You HAD YOUR SUSPICIONS it was down here. But... seeing it is a whole other matter.
"Pa?" You ask, meekly, and your PA turns around, the wild look in his eyes fading into sadness. "What happened?"

"It keeps happening, Jude," PA whispers. "People keep going through this gate and then I can't get them back."

And then you're told that the WORLD MIGHT BE ENDING.

Well, your PA certainly doesn't do anything by half measures, it seems.

That's when the HOUSE PHONE RINGS.

As your PA goes back to stubbornly trying to dial the same Address- to no avail, the 7th glyph just won't lock you go upstairs to answer the phone.


And so you write down a message, go downstairs again, and hand it to your PA.

He laughs bitterly upon reading it.

"Oh, sure," he says, "NOW the Senator wants to use what my money can buy."

You're not sure what that means exactly, but it sounds oddly hilarious out of context.

Your name is SKAARA, and -- PCH-ZYU! PCH-ZYU! -- Before either Serpent Guard guarding the BRIDGE can even notice your presence, you and O'NEILL have STUNNED them both, sending them collapsing to the floor.

Bra'tac leads you all into the room, gesturing wildly for any people who might be on the bridge. "Jaffa! I found intruders in the lower decks and captured them!

With that kind of intro, O'neill nods.

You all ZAT everyone as they turn away from their consoles or stations to look at the intruders.

Within seconds, the entire BRIDGE CREW is down for the count.

Teal'c goes through and ensures that every one of them receives a SECOND SHOT EACH- to ensure they'll stay down for a lot longer than a few minutes.

"Setting the Auto Pilot to send us on a slow collision course with Amaunet's cruiser upon dropping out of Hyperspace at the edge of the solar system. It will speed up considerably once we reach Earth's orbit," Bra'tac says as he manipulates the console. "I'm setting a new password lock to prevent changes in course... Any suggestions?" He asks, pausing to look around the room at the team.
"Jade Harley," Carter suggests, and O'neill gives her a look. "What? It's not like Apophis or any of his Jaffa know who she is. We didn't tell Daniel who'd be her Foster parents before he was captured, and Weeterings never met her personally, so..."

"It's a good password," O'neill says, "but it's just... weird associating the name of a baby with a spaceship that's about to explode." He pauses, then says, "Is it weird that I'm suddenly envisioning her at Cassie's age, grabbing meteors out of thin air and crashing them into each other?"

"A little," you say.

"It is a very weird thought, Colonel O'neill," Teal'c agrees. "But it is an amusing image none the less."

"Weird is what the Goa'uld will not expect," Bra'tac says, setting the passcode. "Jade... Har... Ley. There, we're set." He turns away from the console. "Let us make haste to the Ring Room, it will only be a few minutes before we drop out of Hyperspace."

Sneaking through the hallways of the spaceship- a HA'TAK, as you've been informed it's called- you can't help but voice a question:

"Did you find out what happened to Daniel?"

"The man who became Klorel's host?" Bra'tac shakes his head. "Unfortunately, no. His fate remains just as much a mystery to me as it did back on Chulak. Apophis and Amaunet have remained very secretive about where he is, and what he's been doing. Suspiciously so, in fact. It's almost as if in between their leaving of Chulak, and in the hours that they next made themselves know, Apophis and Amaunet disowned Klorel."

"Well, unless we run into Amuletta over on the other ship," O'neill says, "we're not going to get any answers to that question."

"So why is Apophis not on board right now?" Carter asks. "You'd think he'd want to be here to witness the destruction of Earth personally."

"That is what the Stargate is for, he wishes to arrive only once the battle has been won," Bra'tac says. "I suspect Apophis' current whereabouts are tied to Klorel, but I have not been able to confirm anything."

You slow as you approach the corner leading to the Rings, and then get ready to ZAT any guards...

...Strangely, there aren't any that aren't already UNCONSCIOUS... by way of SEVERAL LARGE GASHES in the chests, that is. They're DEAD. And you can smell something BURNT in the air.

"...Okay, that's not us, right?" O'neill says. "None of us brought a knife to a Jaffa fight, right?"

"No," Bra'tac says, kneeling to inspect one of the wounds. "This wound is not a knife wound. It's much to long. It goes clean through the bodies. A sword? Impossible- come look at the armor, Teal'c."

Carter goes to look at a different body while Teal'c goes to the one that Bra'tac was inspecting.

"The metal's melted," Carter exclaims. "And the wounds to the body are cauterized!"
"Did someone Ring onboard before take off?" You ask.

"No," Teal'c says, shaking his head. "The metal and bodies are still warm from whatever attack did this. If their attacker has staged the scene to be discovered before now, it would be to lead us to believe he either Ringed in or Ringed out during Hyperspace."

"Okay," O'neill says, "you say that like it's impossible."

"It is," Bra'tac says, standing up. "It's why I haven't said to forget this scene and go over to the other ship already. Transporting across while in Hyperspace is nearly impossible. The ships are moving much too fast for the matter stream to move properly. Their murderer likely either Gated aboard like you did, or found some other way onto this ship... The only way for that to be possible is if our ship intercepted a wild transmission by sheer luck."

You all are silent for a few moments, considering this puzzle, before saying... "It doesn't matter what did this or who. They've saved us the trouble of taking out the guards."

"Skaara's right," O'neill says. "It's a mystery that we'll either solve later, or gets blown up with the rest of the ships."

There's a moment's pause as the ship feels like it's suddenly JERKED TO A HALT, and you realize you've DROPPED OUT OF HYPERSPACE.

"Okay, let's get moving and sabotage the shields on the other ship," O'neill orders. "Dial us up!"

Bra'tac heads over to the control panel, presses the buttons in the right order, and then quickly joins the rest of you on the ring platform as it activates.

BWRRRRRM MMMM- VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM.

As the Rings descend, you all take up ready positions to fire... But as you do, you think you see something moving in the hallway- like a shadow.

"Wait-" you start to- VWROOOOOSSSH! -say only to realize you're now on the other ship. "Damn it."

"What was it?" Bra'tac asks as the rings ascend. "Did you see something?"

VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM- WR MMMM MMMM... SHKT."

"Yes, I--" And whatever you were going to say ends abruptly, as you see that you're SURROUNDED, both by LIVE SERPENT GUARDS, but as well as A FEW MORE IMPALED ONES.

There's also an ANGRY GOA'ULD WOMAN standing there among her guards.

Staff weapons charge, and you all wisely lower your Zat guns.

"Bra'tac," She growls. "You had better hope to tell me that those four traitors are the ones who killed the guards and that you've captured them."
"Unfortunately, that's impossible," Bra'tac says, "because when I encountered them it was to find that the guards of the other ship's Ring Room were similarly murdered, and not by them."

"Zats," O'neil says, holding up his as non offensively as possible. "We've been stun-shooting only even though we did bring some more conventional deadly guns. It's just more stealthy that way, you know? Dead bodies tend to attract attention."

"I see." Amaunet says, considering the situation. "So we have an Assassin on board the ship."

Suddenly, the RINGS ACTIVATE AGAIN, and everyone of Amaunet's guards wisely dont fire as you, SG-1, and Bra'tac quickly jump off of the platform to avoid being sent BACK to the other ship.

Even Amaunet doesn't protest as you take aim at the Rings with the LETHAL GUNS instead of the Zats.

The VWROOOOOSSSSH comes, but when it does such... there's nobody in the center of the rings.

There's several moments of tense silence, as everyone, Jaffa, Human, and Goa'uld stands wondering what the hell just happened.

Your eyes immediately dart to the floor and LOOK...

There's nothing to indicate that someone's standing there.

"WHOEVER YOU ARE!" Amaunet roars, "SHOW YOURSELF!"

Then there's this ALIEN SORT OF CHUCKLING SOUND, before AMAUNET'S VOICE suddenly echos back through the air.

"WHOEVER YOU ARE! SHOW YOURSELF!"

"I. AM. NOT. AMUSED!" Amaunet roars again.

"I. AM. NOT. AMUSED!" her voice taunts back.

"Is it just me or is anyone else getting the insanely overwhelming desire to run like hell?" O'neill asks.

There's another CRACKLE OF SOUND, and then- "Is it just me or is anyone else getting the insanely overwhelming desire to run like hell?" his voice suddenly echoes out.

You look to Teal'c and motion with your eyes towards the RING CONTROLS. Teal'c nods, and begins subtly maneuvering his way over to the Rings.

"Hello, World!" You say.

"Hello, World!" your voice echoes back.

"The Quick Brown Fox Leaps Over The Lazy Dog!" Carter calls out, catching on and stalling for time.
"The Quick Brown Fox Leaps Over The Lazy Dog!" And her voice repeats itself.

"Whatever you do," O'neill says- "Don't press the red button!"

"Whatever you do," his voice repeats- "Don't press the red button!"

Teal'c, in position, looks to you, and you give a signal for "ON 3."

"In Three seconds," you begin, as Teal'c begins pressing the buttons, "the rings will drop in two beats and then we'll have one second to RUN!"

"In Three seconds-" As your voice begins to repeat your words, the RINGS DESCEND and send WHATEVER IT IS back to the other ship. "-the rings will drop in two beats an---"

VWROOOOOSSSH!!

The rings ascend, and quickly, everyone evacuates the room to take up position outside the door.

Amaunet gives a nod, and a Jaffa hits a button to close the door.

After a few moments of silence, the RINGS ACTIVATE AGAIN, and after they're gone, you start hearing RANDOM SAMPLES of the various sentences said being called out into the empty room.

"...What the hell was that?" O'neill asks.

"I have no idea," Amaunet says. "Jaffa! You are not to open the door under any circumstances! As for you Tau'ri... consider us under a temporary truce until we deal with this... problem. Or we reach Earth. Whichever comes first."

Well, you think with a slightly grim smile. This could have gone... worse? You suppose.

Your name is SAMANTHA CARTER, and you're now looking at a THERMAL IMAGE of the Ring Room, being projected from a console on THIS SHIP'S BRIDGE.

Amaunet's taken a huge risk letting you all in here- but you'd like to think that's Weeterings inside subtly influencing things.

At any rate, that's not the problem.

The problem is that the THERMAL IMAGE shows a COMPLETELY UNKNOWN ALIEN LIFEFORM stalking around the Ring chamber, wielding what looks like it could be A KNIFE, judging by the ABSORBED BODY HEAT.

"So, got any enemies with an axe to grind that have a tendency to turn invisible, Amuletta?" O'niell asks, not letting up on the nickname.

"No. I don't recognize this species either," the Goa'uld says, frowning as she ignores said nickname. "It's almost human, except... not. Why is it naked, for instance? If this is a
technological feat, where is the technology hiding?"

"It could just be a skin tight body suit for all we know," you say. "Thermals might not pick that up."

"Perhaps," Amaunet shakes her head. "It does not matter. How do we kill it?"

"...Are there any other ring platforms on this ship that we can access with that one?" You ask, a plan starting to form in your head.

"...One, yes," Amaunet frowns. "But why do you ask?"

"We wait for this Assassin to stand off of the Ring Platform, and send an explosive through the Rings from the second set, short delay timer," you say, "it'll explode, and take this Assassin with it."

As Amaunet weighs the options, the Alien, whatever it is, finally decides to make its move, and, on screen, extends the 'knife' into a 'sword' that suddenly heats up on the thermal like a SUN.

"Well," O'niell remarks, "I guess we know how those Jaffa died."

"Indeed," Teal'c agrees, even as they watch the Alien start cutting into the door keeping it out from the rest of the ship.

"...Fine," Amaunet decides. "We do it your way, Tau'ri."

"NOT. AMUSED!" the creature yells through the door, "NOT. AMUSED!" again and again "NOT. AMUSED!" as it cuts its way through the door.

BWRRRRRRM MM- VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM." VRM VRM VRM VRM VRM- KABOOOOOSSSH!

"...getting the insanely overwhelming desire to run like hell?" The alien inquires as it sees a SMALL, PLASTIC PACKAGE residing on the inside of the platform.

VRM VRM VRM VRM Vr- KABOOOOOOOOM!

For the Jaffa waiting outside of the Ring room, the small burst of fire escaping from the hole in the door was the only thing that signaled the end of the strange, voice mimicking creature.

They sighed in relief, conveniently forgetting that there had been two sets of murders at the exact
same time.

They paid for their forgetfulness by losing their heads at the exact same time.

Your name is COLONEL JACK O'NEILL and you LOVE THE SOUND OF EXPLOSIONS IN THE EVENING. Especially when it means a bad guy's just been PUT OUT OF COMMISSION.

"Sir!" You hear Carter's voice warn in your ear via the radio earpiece. "We've got a problem!"

"What KIND of problem?" You ask.

"There was a second one, and it just killed the Jaffa guarding the first Ring room," Carter says. "It gets worse."

"Worse, you say?" You say, sounding not at all worried by that.

"As in, after it did that, we literally watch it drop it's invisibility cloak to turn itself into a helmeted Jaffa," Carter answers.

"...It did what now?" You ask for clarification, glancing to Teal'c, who seems just as surprised.

"We're following it on the ship's internal tracking sensors," Carter says, "but it looks like it's heading your wa- wait! No! It just turned left!"

"Where's the left path lead?" You ask.

"The ship's power core."

"Shit," you swear. "We're on our way to intercept," and with that said, you shut off your radio. "Shapeshifter's had the same idea we did."

"Except where we just were going to disable the shields," Teal'c theorizes, "this alien will most likely attempt to destroy the entire ship with us on it."

"What a lovely gesture of meaningless suicide," You grimace as you and Teal'c begin a jaunty run through the ship's halls to the Power Core.

You were in that place once and took a lot of unnecessary risks- you don't want to imagine what risks an unknown hostile will take.

You and Teal'c reach the ship's Power Core room, and see TWO SERPENT GUARDS wandering around.

Shit. You never did like WHERE'S WALLY games. You're almost tempted to ask Carter which one it is, but Teal'c has a better idea, and a much more timely one.

"JAFFA, KREE!" he yells out, and one of the Serpent Guards turns to look at him, and then quickly ducks for the ground.
The one that doesn't, Teal'c shoots with his ZAT GUN.

Then there's this strangest moment as the entire suit of silver armor FLASHES RED before COLLAPSING in a burst of dark blue light.

The ALIEN stumbles from the Zat shot, and turns around, glaring at you angrily.

It takes its KNIFE, previously disguised as its STAFF WEAPON, and transforms it with a flick of its wrist- elongating it, and making it turn into a BRIGHT RED, ENERGY PULSING SWORD.

You snap up your RIFLE and take a single shot to where you guess the heart would be.

"KREEEEEE!" the creature shouts out in a warbling, half-twisted, high pitched mockery of Teal'c's voice before trying to take a step forwards.

You get off three more shots to center mass before the thing finally teeters, and falls over flat onto its back on the floor.

"Carter," you tab on your Radio. "I think we got it, just gonna double tap to make sure."

You start heading over towards the body.

"By Apophis!" The one Serpent Guard that you didn't shoot exclaims as he comes over to look. "What was that thing?"

"An intruder that got on board the ship during hyperspace, it seems," Teal'c says as you close in, and carefully put one more bullet into the back of the alien's skull- and that's the moment the strange energy sword changes shape again.

"What the-?!" You watch as it suddenly re-configures into a strange conglomeration of floating plates, that then reconfigure into- some kind of RED GLOWING, MECHANICAL HALF-SPIDER?!

You take aim at the thing with your gun and fire off a shot, but you're JUST TOO SLOW. Whatever the sword turned into, it MELTED THROUGH THE FLOOR in a split second and vanished.

"Colonel? What's happening?" Carter asks.

"The guy's sword turned into something and melted through the floor!" You say, kneeling down to observe the hole in the floor, and then through it after the creature. "Oh for cryin' out loud."

"What is it?" Teal'c and the Jaffa come over to observe.

"You tell me," you say, backing away.

Teal'c kneels down, observes, and then remarks. "That is not good."

"Sir, What's going on?!" Carter asks again.

"Captain Carter," Teal'c says, tabbing on his own radio. "It seems the alien's weapon has begun burrowing into the shield generator's casing. It's out of range of any of our weapons except for the grenade we were going to use to destroy the generator to begin with."
There's some reluctant, muted muttering over the line as Carter and Amaunet discuss the situation. And then Carter tells you some news that makes your day MUCH BRIGHTER.

"Amaunet's given you permission to blow up the shield generator. Whatever that weapon is, it needs to be destroyed."

Good. You get the feeling the longer that mech-thing is active, the worse today will get. Best to NIP IT IN THE BUD before the situation grows out of control.

Less than thirty seconds later, the shield generator is practically vaporized by the lack of containment caused by one relatively minor fragmentation grenade, and all is well in the world again.

Your name is BRA'TAC, and as you hear the good news over the ship's intercom, you PREPARE TO STRIKE.

Amaunet and Carter are standing with their backs turned to you, focusing on the screen as they do one more THERMAL CHECK of the ship for EXTRANEOUS VISITORS.

You raise your ZAT GUN.

You've got a choice now. Cement your 'loyalty' to the false gods imprisoning you... or to the humans who you are JUST A LITTLE BIT FOND OF.

It's an easy choice.

PCH-ZYU!

Amaunet collapses to the floor before she even realizes what's happening.

Carter spares a glance down at her, then sighs in relief. "Good timing, Bra'tac."

"You're very welcome, Captain Carter," you say. "Now then, if we are good to leave?"

"Yeah," she nods. "Colonel, we're free to go."

"Alright," Colonel O'niell says, "We'll meet you know where."

The Glider Bay.

As Carter drags Amaunet to the far end of the room, you pick up your STAFF WEAPON and take aim at one of the control consoles.

PCHOO! The first one explodes.

PCHOO! The second one catches on fire.

PCHOO! The third tears loose from the floor due to bad construction.
PCHOO! The fourth is no more, it is an EX CONSOLE.

"There," you nod. "Our course is locked in."

And thus, you and Carter work together to drag Amaunet to the Glider Bay.

Your name is JAKE HARLEY, and you're quite AMUSED at the fact that your BILLIONAIRE BADASS SELF has access to SATELITES that the SENATOR DOESN'T.

Sure, you know that the SGC has access to their own stuff, but you get the feeling that GENERAL HAMMOND is milking this for all it's worth and making that Idiot of a Senator realize that SHUTTING DOWN THE SGC just isn't on the table now, or ever.

Using your AMAZING SATELITES- which really aren't all that more impressive than the ones the SGC has access to, since you helped put THOSE UP AS WELL- you've been able to TRACK THE INCOMING TRAJECTORIES of two ALIEN HOSTILE SHIPS.

They're PYRAMID SHAPED, naturally.

While the US MILITARY prepares what you're told are GOA'ULD BUSTER TYPE MISSILES, normal things laid with NAQUADAH, you've got this aching, burning, twisting sensation of HOPE in your heart that tells you they're not going to be needed.

HOPE IS A PAINFULLY PROUD THING, especially when it's ROOT CAUSE is the fact that you've noticed that one of the two ships has been DRIFITNG EVER SO PAINFULL CLOSER TO THE OTHER as they emerge past MARS, getting EVER CLOSER to Earth's ORBIT.

In fact, they seem to be getting CLOSER AND CLOSER together. That's... not right. Especially since it's the ONE SHIP and not the other that's going off course.

YOU SMELL SABOTAGE IN THE AIR.

"Detecting a small dispatch of fighters from one of the ships," Walter suddenly reports, and you've got your fingers crossed. "Telemetry showing they're heading straight for the moon, and as far away from the other ships as possible."

"Why the hell would they do that?" You hear a certain Senator inquire.

"Three," You say.

"What?" He asks again.

"Two," you continue counting down.

"What are you blabbering on about now!?" He continues.

"One." you conclude, closing your eyes.
Your name is CASSANDRA, possibly FRAISER as a last name, and as you're sitting out on the PORCH of your FOSTER MOTHER'S HOUSE, your eyes are drawn UPWARDS towards the stars. They're so different from what they were on HANKA, but they're no less beautiful.

That's when A GIANT FIREBALL lights up the nightsky.

"Woah!" You stare upwards, wondering just WHAT CAUSED THAT.

A few moments later, the fireball BURNS ITSELF OUT... and then the HOUSE PHONE RINGS.

You're quickly rushing inside to answer it.

"Cassie! Did you see-?" Jude is already asking the moment you've picked up the receiver.

"A giant ball of fire lighting up the sky for a moment?" You answer by completing the question.

You barely notice that your foster mother is SMILING to herself as she hears you and Jude talk about WHAT IT COULD POSSIBLY BE.

You both soon come to the conclusion it was SG-1, though. Because of course it'd be SG-1.

"Reports are coming in across the country!" Walter reports. "A giant fireball lighting up the sky!"

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, and as you see GENERAL HAMMOND lock eyes with the STUNNED SENATOR KINSEY, and proudly answer his earlier question with "That was SG-1!" you can't help but smile to yourself and think....

'More like SG-WON.'

"Sir, receiving a radio signal from one of the incoming fighters," Walter reports. "It's set to one of the frequencies we use for talking through the Stargate."

"Put it through," Hammond says, smiling.

"This is Colonel O'niell to Stargate Command, come in Stargate Command. Over."

"This is Stargate Command, we read you Colonel," Hammond answers. "I hope you've got one hell of a story to tell us."

"Oh, just the usual, Sir," O'neill reports, "we came, we fought off an invasion of an invasion fleet, we kicked everyone's butts, and stole some tech." There's a pause, and then O'neill remarks, "Three Death Gliders are enough for the Appropriation's Committee's Return on Investment, I'd say?"

You see the SENATOR looking COMPLETELY SHOCKED OUT OF HIS MIND.

"Hell yes, Colonel," You interject. "I'd say that's one hell of a Return on Investment."

"Also," O'neill says, "you guys had better get Ka'turnal to design up a way to get a Symbiote safely out of an unwilling host."
"Repeat that, Colonel?" Hammond asks, confused by that statement, and also a little worried. "Did someone get infected?"

"Not recently, no." O'neill answers, and you just BET there's a smile on his face as he declares, "We captured Amaunet, Sir."

The immediate response that's made to that statement is the very LOUD sound of Senator Kinsey COLLAPSING INTO A CHAIR, looking for all the world like someone had KICKED HIM BETWEEN THE LEGS and then shoved a CREAM PIE IN HIS FACE.

"I'll have her notified ASAP, Colonel," Hammond says, smiling. "Do you have an ETA until touchdown?"

"Uh..." O'neill pauses. "Do we have a place to touch down at?"

"I'll have a flight path cleared for you at my private airstrip, Colonel," Harley interjects, typing at a keyboard. "Sending you the coordinates for it now."

There's a moment's pause, and then...

"Two hours and sixteen minutes until touch down," Teal'c answers.

"See you in two hours then," Hammond says. "Good job, SG-1."

"Thank you, Sir," O'neill answers.

"That said, Colonel," Harley interjects, "We are definitely going to be having some words about you paying me back for the door I had to break down."

"Just send me the bill, Harley," O'neill chuckles.

"Oh I most certainly will!"

You have no idea what any of that meant, but it sounds hilarious out of context.

Chapter End Notes

Meet a MOFANG, also from Obduction. This... will probably be one of the only times I have planned at the moment that they show up on the SG-1 side of things... they ARE going to be showing up a lot on the Alternia galaxy side of things though, because I have plans to use them as an Enemy there :33

...And yes, that WAS INDEED a Replicator. A Mofang Styled Replicator.

Those are a thing now.
Hello, new Journal!

It’s me, Joey Claire! I’d say it’s been a while, but the truth is that the journal I WAS writing in got left behind on a completely different planet! It's kind of scary to think that for a moment I was about to write "alien planet" actually. Earth is pretty alien to Alternia, but it's where I come from!

But you don't know any of that, huh? Well, that's okay. Long story short is, about... a Month ago by Earth terms, I had to use a thing called a STARGATE to escape a madman with a gun! I wound up on Alternia, and ended up helping the REBELLION to rescue one of its leaders! (That guy's name is DAMMEK. He's okay, I guess. Most days, anyways. Some days he can be kind of a prick.)

Long story even shorter, we crashed the Heiress’ space ship into the desert and have been hunting OTHER PLANETS for two things: (Well, technically 8+ things, but semantics)

The first is a NEW PLANET for a local group of DESERT DWELLERS to live on, and the second is to get THE MYSTICAL BRACELET OF FORGOTEN-NAME before Heiress Trizza Tethis does!

So yeah. Basically the standard status quo for about a solid Earth Month has been this: We don't go adventuring EVERY day. We've alternated between Gating out or using the ship's KINDA BADLY REPAIRED anti-gravity system to drag the ship closer from its crash site to the caves where our Desert Dwelling friends live! On days where a group of us- usually 4 to a team on any given day- go offworld, the ones who stay behind work on repairs!

Finally, all those repairs PAID OFF! Just yesterday we were FINALLY able to get the RING TRANSPORTER working again, and we've been able to ring out to a SOMEWHAT DISTANT but still PRETTY NEAR BY TOWN back and forth pretty reliably. Food isn't being rationed anymore, and we've been able to get some fresh clothes too! (As well as some laundry detergent to actually wash some things that have REALLY needed washing...) Also, we've been able to buy some BETTER REPAIR SUPPLIES so that means the ship should be MOSTLY livable sooner rather than later. Well... Okuri and Callie don't seem hopeful we'll ever be flying again. Too much damage to the hull, or something.

But, ignoring all the gloom and doom and focusing on the bright side of all of this that is YOU, DEAR JOURNAL!! That's right, I've finally gotten a journal now so that I can keep a record of everything that's happened so far, and will CONTINUE TO HAPPEN! As is the case.

Tomorrow we'll be gating out to a planet the ship's database calls "Cla'diâ” which sounds more like "Cloud-eeah" than "Claw-deeah" for any future historians reading this!

Now then, what else should I write abou
Nevermind Journal, it seems I have to go for now. Apparently Mierfa’s got the Long Range Radio working again and Dammek's going to try making a call.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE and as you step up onto the bridge, you see that the ENTIRE CREW has gathered. Callie is lounging in the CAPTAIN'S CHAIR, eyes closed in contentment as one of the ship's AIR CONDITIONING VENTS blows cooling air on her face. Salazl is looking nervous over in a corner. Xefros and Okurii are sitting down at the Pilot's chairs, though they're turned around to face the console that Dammek is standing at—currently trying to tune the long-range radios into some specific frequency.

And then there's Mierfa, who looks like she just came in from outside the ship, her skin and hair glittering with sand stuck to it by sweat.

You try not to focus on that fact.

"And... okay, if they haven't changed any of the frequencies yet," Dammek smiles, hopefully, and it carries up past his sunglasses. "We're ready to contact the rest of the Rebellion."

"Let's get this over with," Salazl says.

"Right..." Dammek presses a button, and STATIC FILLS THE AIR. "AHHEM. Hivekeep, this is Tetrarch, come in, over?" Silence, except for static, fills the air. "Hivekeep, this is Tetrarch Dammek, please come in." He sighs. "Fine. I'll say the stupid password. 'Beehives rule and Cornibuster drools.' There, I said it. Over?"

Then, the static drops, and then a female voice warily fills the air. "Well, Dammek, I wasn't expecting you to actually still be alive after Cornibuster showed up at my doorstep loaded up with crystals and shit. What the hell happened?"

"It's a very long story," Dammek says, "but the short of it is... uh... we crashed the Heiress' battle cruiser in the desert and have been trying to make repairs to get back in contact with civilization for... well, pretty much since we went radio silent."

"...You actually crashed the Heiress' ship and LIVED?" there's a very obvious tone of incredulity to her voice. "Seriously and legitimately?"

"Hi, yes, that is a thing that happened," Mierfa says, chiming in. "I'm Mierfa Durgas, formerly the Captain of the Heiress' Artifact Retrieval Team."

"...Nice to hear from you, Captain Durgas. And Dammek ain't fibbin' or exageratin'?" Hivekeep asks.

"Nope," Mierfa answers. "Cross my heart and hope to fly again someday. We crash landed pretty hard."

"...Well shit, that sure is a mystery the rest of us thought wasn't going to be solved." Hivekeep says. "What happened to the Heiress?"

"Trizza absconded through the Stargate," Mierfa explains. "Left me and two others from the Retrieval Team behind, too. Coward."

"...The gate WORKS?" Hivekeep asks, surprised. "Holy shit, Dammek, HOW?! We found the
"Control Crystal in with the supplies Cornibuster had on him."

"Trizza had her own Control Crystal," Dammek says. "As far as we can tell, she got it the same way we did. She's been planning this for a long time and... yeah, everything we've been doing this last month with the Gate confirms it."

"You've been doing stuff WITH the Gate too??" Hivekeep seems surprised.

"Heiress Trizza is looking for an artifact," Mierfa explains, "something that used to be part of the Heiress-Emperess Ascension Ritual that Her Imperial Condescension decided was to be done away with. The pieces to it are scattered across a bunch of different worlds. In between repairing the ship, we've been searching for those pieces too, using the Database. We've got a solid lead on one of the parts for it, and we're working on training up one of our crew to be able to safely handle another, which is the reason we don't want Trizza getting her hands on it."

"Dare I ask why?" Hivekeep asks.

"Um," You cough. "Hi. I'm Claire," you leave it at that, "I'm the one training for the part to the artifact. The thing is, this Artifact, when it's put together, is basically a mind-controlled key to a really dangerous weapon. If you don't have the right mental training to use it, it will run out of your control, and basically kill everything in the galaxy with a 'Vast Glub.'"

"...So is the weapon the Royal Lussus or-?"

"It's the Royal Lusus," everyone just about chimes in at once.

"...Okay then." Hivekeep takes that into consideration. "Okay. Well... Teal Commander isn't going to like this."

"What's her opinion got to do with anything?" Dammek asks, frowning.

"She's... uh, well... she's pretty much been gearing up for a huge campaign to stick it to the Empress and been sayin' we don't need a Stargate to do it. You called in just in time, I'd say. This is going to screw over her plans big time." Hivekeep pauses, then says, "Actually, I'm okay with that. We'd be throwing ourselves at the ship yards if she had her way. I think I'm gonna like watchin' her face squirm when she hears about this. Gate Transport to other worlds is gonna be a game changer that a lot of people have been behind since you first announced your plan, Dammek."

"I hate politics," Dammek sighs.

"Same. Look, Dammek, I think I can get you some resources, maybe some more exploration teams, but..." Hivekeep trails off. "Only what Teal Commander will let me get away with. It'll probably be volunteers, mostly."

"We don't need much, and we've been managing on our own. Honestly, it might be better this way if we remain mostly separate," Dammek says. "I'd just be butting heads with Teal Command and that's... yeah, that's not really what any of us need right now."

"Heh," Okurii smiles faintly, at that.

"The only thing I think any of us really need..." Dammek pauses, glancing at Xefros. "Are our Lusii. If you can find Xefros', and send Cornibuster and him along with the others... I think that'd make
everyone happier."

"Well, alright," Hivekeep says. "I think I can pull that off."

You smile, and move to exit the room as everyone who wants to see their Lusus again clammers to figure out what order to go in to talk about it.

As you head down the stairs, you hear Callie coming after you.

"Hey!" She smiles. "Wanna go get a snack?"

"Sure." You smile.

I'm glad the others are going to get to see their Lususes again. I really am. I've noticed how sometimes Xefros would get a little jealous that Callie has her Wolf-mom here. Dammek's noticed too. Even though they've pretty much remained stuck in this weird dance, halfway between Auspitices with Okurii, and halfway with her serving as their Moirail at any given moment.

But she's stressed out by it, I can tell. I've been trying to at least talk with Xefros, whenever I notice him sulking a bit. I'm not sure if I'm doing anything right, but... I'll get used to this Troll Romance thing eventually!

If there's one thing I'm not used to yet, it's living with no sense of what's properly 'day' and 'night' anymore. Gate travel to other worlds leaves me with just this strange, 25 hour sleep cycle that I feel like adhering to regardless of what the time of day locally is.

The Trolls, normally, are nocturnal. Nocturnal. Nauchurnal? How the hell do you spell that??

Night. They're up at night, sleep during the day. Usually. This is due to the SUN. It's super big. And it's super bright. Since we've crashed, we've mostly been keeping to the sunlight hours, if only to avoid being spotted by anybody who's looking for people causing trouble during the night.

On Kaptar, where I've been training for using the bracelet piece, is more like Earth with it's sun, but the schedule is like... 10 hours off of Alternia AND Earth, so it's almost always impossibly offset regardless of what I'M personally feeling like when I'm there.

A few other worlds have been like that too. It's really... REALLY. Confusing.

Cla'dia is the most Earth-like world we've set foot on yet.

Stepping out of the Gate, I could have sworn we'd wound up on Earth at first glance. The buildings around us were all, like... Venice and Paris all mixed together! I've never been to either place, but I've seen pics Pa's taken from his adventures there. Even the people looked like humans!

...At first glance, that is. Like the Trolls of Alternia, the devi differences became obvious after a closer inspection. Cla'dian's have WINGS. Their heads are covered with FEATHERS, not hair, and have sort of talon'y claws on their fingers and toes in-place of nails!

I knew we were in trouble the minute we arrived, though. There were guards waiting at the Gate,
"My name is Princess Millia Tura Cla'duran," the princes, whose golden wings ruffled in the breeze through the windows. "And you four, I suspect, are not actually members of Heiress Trizza's party, as she claimed would be coming to fetch the Hyperspace Engine she ordered."

"Uh, no," Callie says, stepping forwards. "We're just explorers."

"And Rebels, I suspect?" The princess smiles, however, looking to you. "After all, why else would you have a strange, wingless member of my species in among your team?"

You're not quite sure what she means by that. "I'm not wingless. I'm human."

"Ah, so you're alien even to the Alternians?" The Princess smiles, though it quickly fades. "But I'm not wrong, though, am I?"

"No, you're not," Dammek says, having chosen to come along this time. "How did you know?"

"Because Heiress Trizza already convinced me to go against Alternia's Empress already, but I had the feeling she didn't truly believe the words she was spouting," Princess Millia says, shaking her head of golden feathers. "She had to get the idea from somewhere, after all. I figured it was only a matter of time before you would arrive."

"So... what now?" Okurii asks. "We're obviously expected. What do you want from us here?"

"What I want is what Heiress Trizza so falsely promised," Princess Millia says, getting a determined look on her face, "Freedom for my people from the Empire's grasp."

The Cla'dians have been forced to put their impressive ship building skills to work building Alternia's massive Space Armada for countless Generations! To the point their population has started collapsing. All of the adults of proper age are stuck working the ship yards, and similarly to Alternia, kids rule the place.

And unlike how the Trolls use the phrase "Incestuous Slurry" without blinking regarding their own reproduction, the people of Cla'dia have had to start resorting to that just to keep their populations going to meet the demand of the Empire. It's started manifesting as unwanted mutations already- a lack of actual wings for the people to use to fly with.

Mostly, I guess it works for the trolls because there's the Mother Grub regulating the entire process like some kind of giant, biological gene filter that's keeping all the unwanted nasty stuff from resurfacing. Cla'dians seem to have similar reproduction to humans and birds on earth- they even lay eggs!!

The damage isn't SO bad right now that it can't be reversed, but in a few more generations, worse mutations are predicted to show up for them. The Princess is doing all she can to try and put better systems into place to help regulate everything and keep mutations from getting worse... but the only thing that will REALLY stop this is if they stop working overtime to build ships like they have been.
"Princess Millia!" a girl with silver wings runs into the room- odd, considering her hair is golden. You'd thought that it'd match everywhere, given what you'd seen of the people so far. "The Heiress! The Alternian Heiress is here!"

"Shit," the Princess swore. "I thought we'd have more time. Fam, go take our guests to the kitchen and wait there."

"Of course, Princess!" The girl, Fam, nodded, and then quickly lead the four of you into the kitchen, with you and Okurii peering out through the gaps in the door frame to observe what was happening.

A minute of tense waiting later, TRIZZA TETHIS entered the room, flanked on either side by a Troll wearing that Artifact Recovery armor.

"Hello, Princess! I've come for the Hyperdrive!" Trizza says, getting right down to business as she sat down on a chair across from Princess Millia.

If you had to guess just by her state of clothing- she'd recently gone through a TERRIBLE FIGHT to retrieve the SHINY WHITE STONE BRACELET resting around her LEFT WRIST. Her DRESS looks like it'd been through enough scrapes to tear in places, and thus, was FASHIONABLY REWORKED into a SHIRT and SKIRT. Her BOOTS are either covered in mud, or DRIED BLOOD. And her hair is...

Her hair looks messier than that time you fell asleep in front of a FLOOR FAN after taking a bath and it dried ALL OVER THE PLACE.

Also, is that a TWIG stuck in behind one of her horns? Weird.

"I'm sorry, but the Hyperdrives are all currently being put onto fighters and into ships at the dockyards," Princess Millia says, trying to reason, "I can't sneak any away for you." A lie. You were told she could easily do it within a heartbeat, but the Princess knows Trizza has bad things in mind for a hyperdrive and so has been stalling.

"I thought you said you'd have it ready by now," Trizza scowled, leaning forwards in her seat. "I need that Hyperdrive, Princess."

"And I need my people free," The Princess counters, narrowing her blue eyes into a glare to rival the fiercest of WIND GODS.

"You don't seem to understand that if you stop production of the ships you don't have to worry about that. Get me the hyperdrive." Trizza insists.

"I don't have THAT kind of sway, and considering you're HEIRESS and not EMPRESS, you don't either! This whole plan of yours hinges on Trust. Trust that I am not sure I can give."

Sure enough, the Heiress stands, glaring at the Princess. "I come here in good faith, and what do you do but-
"
"Fuck this shit!" And then Dammek blows the whole 'stealth' thing out of the water by pushing you and Okurii away from the door and shoving it open. "HELLO, TRIZZA!!"

"You!" Trizza twirls around. "You're alive!?"

"Yeah, no thinks to you," Dammek growls, posturing. "Thanks for running and abandoning us in orbit like that, by the way. You owe me a new pair of pants."

She didn't actually, but it was enough of a distracting comment that got Trizza angry enough to summon her trident from what you're guessing is her SYLLADEX, and then she LEAPS ACROSS THE ROOM.

You're throwing a freaking serving platter like a Frisbee in between them before you know what you're even grabbing for.

It hits Trizza on the head, and she's thrown off target.

Trizza's guards are stunned by this sudden turn of events, and are more so DOUBLY stunned by Okurii making use of the stun rifle you'd carried on board the ship what seems like ages ago.

"Come on!" Fam grabs the Princess' hand, and suddenly you're all running out of the room.

So... long story short, Trizza has the base for the Bracelet Artifact. Whoo. Guess what it does?

"RAAAAAARGH!" you hear Trizza yell as you escape down one of the Palace's hallways.

A moment later, all of the GLASS in the building seems to SHATTER. A moment later, YOU FEEL THE GROUND SHAKING beneath your feet. It's almost like Trizza's voice became a shock wave of some kind.

"I think we just figured out what the bracelet's base does!" Okurii yelps, dodging a falling piece of glass.

We're guessing, if in control, it makes her voice go SUPER COMMANIDNG. Out of control, though, it just makes her voice go SUPER SONIC. I think Dammek started to appreciate why Polyarch Fey is giving me training to use this thing properly.

We kept running for a while, and as we ran, we made a plan.

It wasn't a very GOOD plan, mind you, but it was a plan none the less.

We ended up borrowing a couple of the Princess' PERSONAL FLIGHT CAR THINGS- I didn't catch the name of what it was when we were stealing it though. But basically, think a 2-seater motorcycle that flies! We flew around, found an old, broken engine that looked similar to a HYPERDRIVE, and made Trizza chase after us for it all around town. Right back to the Stargate.
Fun fact, these personal little flight car things are just BARELY small enough to fit through a Stargate, and as such, they come with built-in DHDs!

We dialed up a set of coordinates for a planet we'd visited last week- one that we quickly realized had a biiiiit of a gravity problem. Namely, the ground infront of the gate had collapsed at one point, leaving a sharp, sudden downhill incline that looks like a naturally forming ramp. If you're going through the gate fast enough to not notice what little flat ground is right infront of you... you're gonna fall. And then you're gonna ROLL DOWN HILL for a couple yards. The DHD is at the bottom of it and will stop your fall. Once you DIAL the Gate, then you're gonna STRUGGLE to climb back UP that sharp incline just trying to get back to the gate before it shuts down.

It's not a fun experience at all... sooo, we decided to just send Trizza through it for funsies.

"YOU WANT A HYPERDRIVE SO BADLY?!!" You yell out, setting in a crash course for the Stargate. "GO FETCH!" And then you leap off of the flyer-car that's towing the broken engine behind it straight onto the side of the flying-car thing that Okurii's driving.

The thing you'd been flying goes through the Stargate with a SCHLORP- and Trizza heedless of what her guards were yelling- dove through the Gate after it without a second thought.

Her guards hesitated, but went through it too a moment later.

Then, the Gate shut off.

With that bit of danger out of the way, the Flight cars are set down on the ground, and the Princess laughs. "Oh, that was entirely too much fun... but after how much trouble we just caused? The Empire's sure to notice and send troops to quell down this 'rebellion.'"

"Actually, I've been working on an idea to counter that," Callie says, smiling. "It's something of a retrovirus to rewrite the Gate-network permissions and..."

And the more Callie said about her idea, the more Princess Millia's smile grew.

This was the first I'd heard of it too, so don't feel lost, Journal.

Basically..., Callie said she could create a SUB NETWORK of Stargates within the existing Stargate network. Any gate from the outside network would be prevented from dialing in, while gates insulated from it could still dial out to any Gate outside the sub-network. Our Alternia Gate on the Ship was one she'd built in a "Switch" for, based on my descriptions of what I saw in Grandma's home-made DHD, that would allow US to swap back and forth between networks at will.

Essentially, for every planet we "Conquered" and Liberated from the Empire, we could put it on a private network that would keep anyone from the Empire from gating in. They would be FORCED to dispatch a ship instead to 'deliver punishment' and given that one of the first worlds we would be doing this to was one of their MAJOR SHIP PROVIDERS! Well... The Alternian Empire was going to suddenly find their ships were at a PREMIUM and dispatching any to QUELL A REBELLION...
could be a COSTLY MOVE!

And so, with this REBEL NETWORK established, Princess Millia quickly contacted the SHIP BUILDER UNIONS, and told them that they would be stopping ALL WORK on the Alternian Empire ships. Everyone working would be given AS MANY VACATION DAYS AS NEEDED to rest and recover... but that anyone who DID want to keep working on the ships was to begin work IMMEDIATELY overhauling them to make them to the CLA’DIAN STANDARD of Battle Ships, rather than the ALTERNIAN STANDARD!

Apparently there's a difference.

So yeah. The workers revolted, and apparently NOBODY in the Empire thought to leave any Alternian guards to supervise the ship building because there wasn't any trouble in that happening at all. This worked out in our favor, because, Journal, do you want to know something incredibly silly??

"That's right!" Okurii yelled over the SOMEWHAT STATIC-FILLED subspace communication's channel, deepening her voice and aging it upwards somewhat. She'd also borrowed Dammek's SUNGLASSES for this stunt too. "HUGE REACTOR LEAK! Claudia fuel everywhere! We're going to be cleaning all of this up for months- maybe even for a full sweep! We can't get these ships out to you until then at the absolute earliest, it could be even LONGER!"

"Aw man, seriously?" AN INDIGO BLOODED hulking brute of a troll sighed over the line. "We really needed those ships. Damned Mimics are kicking our asses in the Eastern Quadrant."

"There's nothing I can do about it!" Okurii shrugged. "We've already done just about everything we can to make the process faster, while still being safe!"

"Shit, well. I'll inform my commander. He's not going to like it, but he'll have to just deal, I suppose." And with that, the Indigo blooded troll cut the static filled line.

"I can't believe he actually fell for that," Okurii said, deadpan. "I mean... who the hell believes that there's really a supervisor here named 'Zusmel Pulard'? I made that up on the spot."

"I suppose it helps that we got a grunt who didn't know any better," Dammek mused. "Otherwise they would've called out bluff that there was a supervisor on planet."

"Yuuup," You agree, smiling widely. "Lucky break, eh?"

The Alternian Empire is Bureaucracy at its finest, Journal!

They won't even CHECK to see if that's the case or not for a whole Alternian YEAR, if we're really lucky, and by then, the Cla'dians will have had enough time to rebuild their own armada and militia and th

KNOCK KNOCK
YOUR NAME IS JOEY CLAIRE, and you look up from writing in your NEW JOURNAL as there's a knock at your ROOM'S DOOR.

"Yeah, just a second." You cross out the "and th" that you'd just been writing, vowing to fill it in with a CUTE DOODLE OF A SPACESHIP when you get back to it, then close the book and put it on the nightstand- which is really less of a nightstand and more a table with a drawer crudely attached in between its legs.

Your room on this ship is about as "home" like as you can make it. You got a COUCH to sleep on instead of one of those weird RECUPRECOON things. There's a small CABINET for what clothes you have that you DIDN'T BRING WITH YOU and.... That's it.

As you open the door, you wonder if you could find some GLOW IN THE DARK PAINT to put on the walls or ceiling...

"Bridge," Dammek says the moment you've opened the door. "NOW. Bring Xefros and Okurii, I'll get Callie and Mierfa."

You and Dammek return to the bridge with your respective gathered teammates to find Salazl finishing setting up the WIDE SCREEN PROJECTOR that he'd bought at the market.

"Good, you're all here," He says, a frown on his face. "I was surfing the Net now that we've got atleast a partial signal to use, looking for news of Clown Ships coming to hunt us down. Then THIS hit the net by storm about five minutes ago." And with that, he presses a button on the console, and a GRUBTUBE VIDEO plays.

The logo for a NEWS NETWORK reading "GALACTIC EMPIRE NEWS" flashes on screen before being SHATTERED by the words "BREAKING NEWS."

Then, the image of a FEMALE TROLL with LIGHT-BULB SHAPED HORNS appears on screen- her name flashes on the bottom of the screen in CERULEAN TEXT as SERANA MICHEK.

"Breaking News!" Serana says. "Making the disastrous Reactor Leak in Cla'dia's shipyards earlier today all the more poignant of a disaster, the Alternian Empire's Eastwards expansion has hit a roadblock in the form of the Sorian Empire's strike back in the territory clash over KARFIN OUTPOST. In a BOLD confirmation of intent, the Sorian Empire launched three simultaneous attacks against the fleets stationed at the recent conquests of CHUDAR, MINLAK, and JAKATA. Sorian Weapons of Mass Destruction were reported being spotted being flung into the Solar System's stars mere moments before each star went SUPER NOVA. At least 90% of each fleet stationed in those systems were wiped out in the ensuing blast, and the remaining 10% were critically damaged in their escape attempt."

You gulp.

"The Sorian Emperor, Chakoh, broadcast a message to the Armada's high command, stating that if Alternia does not relinquish it's claim to Karfin Outpost, more planets within Alternia's Grasp will be obliterated by similar celestial strikes." Serana continued reporting, "Her Imperial Condescension, Emperess Meenah, had this to say regarding the attack."
The video cuts to a pre-recorded section of an apparently live speech from the ALTERNIAN EMPRESS herself.

"These Mofang Mimicks ain't gonna get the best of us," The Empress growls, slamming her hand onto a table. "This Chakoh think's he's so clever? Well I'll be havin' him singin' a different Tuna soon enough! We'll reel his armies in thinking they can blow up OUR STARS and then blow HIM UP INSTEAD! HAHA!"

The video returns to the newscaster, Serana, as she continues, "With the devastating loss of a solid 35% of Alternia's standing Armada of ships, and the Cla'dian ship yards under cleanup, the Princess of Cla'dia, Millia, had this to say."

The video cuts to MILLIA, speaking, "What few ships we have at 90% or higher completion will be dispatched to fill in the void left behind by this devastating attack. While we will certainly push our cleanup crews faster to fix the reactor containment, and clean up the spilled fuel as safely as can be quickly done, any ships falling between 90% and 85% completion will be focused on exclusively for launch next to help as well. We pray that rushing these ships will not lead to mistakes that could cause loss of life, but that is the price we might have to pay when the universe takes such an opportunistic moment to rebel against our expectations."

You want to laugh at such a bold faced statement of intent... but somehow you feel like there's just a pit forming inside your stomach.

The video returns to Serana again, concluding, "With the Sorian Empire clearly preparing to push heavily against Alternia's fleets, Empress Meenah has ordered a total reconfiguration of the standing armada to reinforce the vulnerable front. To those worlds under the Empire's protection that find themselves with fewer ships guarding their orbits in the following weeks to come, please, do not panic. Soon, the Sorian Empire will be nothing but dust, and standard operations will resume as you are accustomed. I'm Serana Michek, signing off."

The video ends, and silence fills the bridge for several moments.

"...So," You hear Mierfa quietly ask. "Is this good or bad for us?"

"It's Both," Salazl answers. "It's good in that we're gonna have less Empirical resistance on any Alternian occupied worlds we might gate to... but it's bad because if we manage to over throw the Empress without dealing with the Mofang first..."

"They can make suns go super nova on demand," Callie whispers. "How do we stand up against that?"

"We need a ship." Dammek decides, firmly.

"Just 'a ship'?!" Xefros asks, sounding incredulous. "Just ONE SHIP?! What good is one ship going to do against a solar system destroying weapon!?"

"It's going to be a very good ship," Dammek answers, turning on his heels and stomping down the stairs towards the Gate. "I'm going to go draw up plans and show it to Princess Millia tomorrow morning."
"What!? Seriously!?" Xefros asks, staring after him. "JUST LIKE THAT?! You're going to ask her to build you a ship?!"

"No." Dammek stops, and turns to look over his shoulder back at Xefros. "I'm going to ask her if what I have in mind is even possible to build in the first place. I'd like an expert opinion, that's all."

"And if it is?" Xefros asks.

"If it is?" Dammek gives a rare smile as he turns back around and continues walking towards the sleeping quarters. "If it is, Xefros, then the Cla'dians get a cool new flagship the Alternian and Sorian Empires have never seen before, and I get to help build the Prototype."

And as he storms off into the distance, you stand there, staring, thinking.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you have no idea if what you did today was THE RIGHT THING TO DO.
Chapter Summary

Sometimes all it takes is one person in the right place at the right time to make a massive change in history that otherwise might not have happened.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

JULY 3RD, 1996.

Your name is NIRRTI.

Well, not presently, that is. You've been OPERATING UNDER AN ALIAS. But yes, your real name is NIRRTI, not KA'TURNAL.

That doesn't mean you can't put your EXPERTISE TO USE, or feel ANGERED at the mis-use of your TECHNOLOGIES AND INVENTIONS.

"She has no Symbiote," you finally confirm what the primitive X-RAYS and MRI SCANS had shown. "This woman is not Amaunet and her host, but a clone of the host made with Amaunet's memories, based off of a template Lady Nirrti had been proposing for a potential body-decoy. It never worked for more than a month at a time, though. I'll have to do a more thorough check of the aging markers, but I suspect she's no more than a week old at most."

Which means she was likely decanted just before being put on that Spaceship in the first place. Was it a test of the technology? To see if a Clone could properly manage an invasion fleet?

"...So SG-1 captured a Goa'uld System lord in memory only," Doctor Fraiser frowns as you both stare into the ISOLATION CHAMBER where the SUPPOSED AMAUNET storms around, yelling up a storm.

"Indeed," you scowl just the same. "We can still get information out of her, but there's a question of whether it's accurate or up to date or not."

"The real question is why would Apophis go to the trouble of cloning his wife like this?" Fraiser asks. "Why wouldn't the real Amaunet be sent on such a critically important mission like capturing the Earth?"

"I have no idea." You shake your head. "I can certainly try to find out what she knows, but those memories may have been intentionally culled away."

That's when the SIRENS BLARE, alerting the base that an INCOMING WORMHOLE has been established. A moment later, you hear confirmation that SG-1's IDC has been received and that a defense team was needed at the Gate Room.

Interesting, hadn't they been scheduled to go to a planet called Nasya? You recall from your
memories that it had once belonged to some Goa'uld System Lord who brought humans there, but
had abandoned the planet for reasons unknown even to you. You'd been curious about potentially
experimenting with the people there, but you'd been BUSY WITH OTHER THINGS and so had
merely kept an eye on the planet every now and then, just to see how things changed.

As part of your AMNESTY DEAL with the SGC, among other things, You'd volunteered some
POTENTIALLY FRIENDLY PLANETS you knew the addresses of, simply by way of "These
were worlds Nirrti had interest in." Even if that interest was very tiny indeed.

You wonder what happened. The people there weren't THAT technologically advanced to cause
trouble.

As you and Fraiser head to the infirmary to prepare for CASUALTIES, you muse on your current
fate. You knew that you'd have to ditch the REGALIA of being a System Lord in order to ensure
that Project Heir grew to fruition, but you never thought you'd actually ENJOY putting your skills to
a, dare you say it, COMMON GOOD.

That said, if you ever get your hands on APOPHIS, you're going to MAKE SURE HIS DEATH IS
LONG AND PAINFUL for misusing your work like he has been.

After a short while, SG-1 comes through the gate with the Nasyans- refugees from a sudden
DEATH GLIDER ATTACK. As this happens, however, you feel a TINGLING IN YOUR
BLOOD. The modification that you'd designed to help IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SPIES is going
off- double fold.

There are at least TWO FOREIGN SYMBIOTES possessing people at the moment, and chances
are, they're hidden among the villagers.

"Fraiser," you say in a whisper to the Doctor, "make sure to run the Symbiote scan on all of the
survivors."

"Alright," she nods, understanding why you'd request such a thing. You LONG AGO made it clear
that you, like young JADE HARLEY or CASSANDRA, have that same modification to sense those
who have been bodyjacked by one of your kind. Although it's somewhat amplified and refined on
some level by your own nature as a Goa'uld; however, that's a fact you've kept... mostly quiet.

Even so, you feel a little bit better inside yourself for a moment as SG-1 brushes past you- Carter
gives you a somewhat wary look as she does so, and that good feeling gets squashed.

You suppose you deserved that. It was your Intel that sent them to that planet, after all. You'll have to
make it up to them somehow, if only to maintain your cover.

Your name is CASSANDRA FRAISER, and you're having a PRETTY GOOD DAY.

You're hanging out at an AIR FORCE ACADEMY HOSPITAL near the Cheyenne Mountain base
with Jude Harley and his FOSTER SISTER, JADE, because while you'd all planned to go see a
MOVIE TODAY after your Foster Mother got off work, Jake's PA included among your number
for that plan, it seems that today THINGS WOULD NOT BE GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.
Your Foster Mother maintains an OFFICE here at the academy for whatever reasons you don't really get, and there's a WAITING ROOM attached. So for the moment, while Jude's PA, and your Foster Mother deal with whatever EMERGENCY came up here, you and Jude are keeping little JADE entertained with PAINTING.

She's only EIGHT MONTHS OLD, apparently, but she's got an EYE FOR COLOR. Namely, getting the CHILD SAFE WATER PAINTS all over herself and her clothes, more than the LARGE CANVASES that your Foster Mother has kept around for reasons similar to this. Jade also wasn't going to come with you to the movies, you were going to drop her off earlier at ROXY EGBERT'S for a PLAY DATE with ROSE and their own recently taken in FOSTER KID, JOHN. That obviously didn't work out either.

You go to find some PAPER TOWELS AND WASHCLOTHS to clean up the mess with, and decide to CHECK UP on your Foster Mother at the same time. As you approach a small LAB that she told you she'd be in, you feel a FAMILIAR BURNING TINGLING SENSATION in your blood.

There's a GOA'ULD nearby.

You try to put it past you. It might just be Ka'turnal- or "Nurse Katran" as she went by back on Hanka and is going by here- and she's... well... she still puts you ON EDGE for reasons you can't quite nail down, but she's... SELF-RESTRAINED and not MEANING YOU HARM, for the moment, at least.

You peer into the LAB, and look around.

Dr. Fraiser is in there, yes, and so is Captain Carter...

But you don't see KA'TURNAL anywhere nearby. Odd. There are a few people who look like they got hit by STAFF BLASTS, though. Maybe it's one of them? You knock on the door, and your Foster Mother turns around to look.

You give a wave, and she nods, quickly making her excuses to come outside and talk to you.

"Hey, Cassie, what's up?" she asks.

"Two things, Jade made a mess and I need some washcloths to clean up the paint," you open with the easy thing first before you forget.

"Janitors closet, down the hall," she points you that way. "What's the other thing?"

"I... I felt a Snake just now," you inform her.

"Ah. Yes..." Your Foster Mother lowers her voice conspiratorially, "Nurse Katran sensed one too. We think they're hiding in one of the Nasyan survivors. We're running the tests now to be sure"

"Oh, okay," you nod, looking into the Lab. "I think it's someone in there."

"I'll keep that in mind, thanks," your Foster Mother smiles, and then gives your shoulder a comforting squeeze. "Now you don't have to worry about it. Go get Jade cleaned up."

"Right," you nod, and then go to the Janitors closet to do just that.
As you leave the proximity of that lab, the sensation in your blood fades to a simmer, barely even noticeable and easily ignore-able.

You find the Janitor's closet, and retrieve a couple of towels and washcloths. Now to just find a restroom to get them wet and- As you exit the Janitor's closet, you feel that BURNING SENSATION rising to full force again and you CLOSE YOUR EYES to try to block it out.

You run into someone doing this, though, and your body feels like it's been ignited on FIRE from the contact. You quickly open your eyes to apologize to them- expecting it to likely be Ka'turnal you've run into.

But it's not.

It's Carter.

"Are you okay, Cassandra?" she asks, frowning. There's something off in how she asks it.

"I..." PLAY IT COOL, you hear Jude's voice in your head for a moment. LIKE A SPY. "Yeah, I'm fine. Got really dizzy there for a moment."

"Are you sure?" Carter-Maybe-Not-Carter asks, and you NOD RAPIDLY in response.

"I think I just need to eat lunch," you say, putting on what you hope is A GENUINE SMILE, and then make your excuses to go elsewhere.

You run down back to your Foster Mother's office and waiting room as QUICKLY AS YOU CAN, and as you do, you make CAREFUL NOTE of how far away Carter is as you move.

The FIRE'S INTENSITY in your blood lowers as you move away from her.

It's definitely her.

You close the door to your Foster Mother's office behind you just a little bit too sharply.

Jade looks uneasy, and you bet you know why.

"What's up?" Jude asks.

"I think Sam got body napped," you say, whispering quietly. "Do you remember any Colonel O'neill's phone numbers?"

Jude nods, and you feel just a LITTLE BIT RELIEVED.

You hand Jude the towels and then go to make a call.

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Your name is JOLINAR of MALKSHUR and you've been having a VERY BAD DAY.

First your previous host gets GRIEVIOUSLY WOUNDED in a sudden attack by CRONUS, you
jumped into a new host—who turned out to be a prominent member of SG-1, whoops—and then you got identified by a little girl and subsequently asked to come quietly to the SGC for questioning by Colonel O'Neill.

Of all the rotten luck...

Carter, your host, seems to agree that it was just a lot of bad timing, although she's mad that you just didn't tell anyone when you had a chance.

If you could have just gotten off world again, and slipped to a new host...

Damn it.

Well, you suppose now's the time to come clean. You tell the Colonel that your name is Jolinar, and that you are a Tok'ra, a rebel group of Goa'uld who oppose the System Lords and wish to overthrow them all to bring peace to the galaxy, and not to rule. The Colonel doesn't seem to buy it at first... not even when you actually let Captain Carter take over and explain that it's all true.

The Betrayer of Apophis- Teal'C- seems to believe you, at least.

And then that damned Ashtrak assassin shows up and your day goes from bad to worse. As your host begins to die in the infirmary, you prepare yourself to do what you can to save her, even at the cost of your own life...

And then you get saved by a servant of a System Lord of all people.

You have no idea who Ka'turnal is, but damn if she isn't good at mending flesh. You swear that if you ever somehow manage to make it back to the other Tok'ra, you're never going to tell them about this part. Your reputation would suffer from such a humiliating embarrassment that you'd rather have died.

Just...

Yeah.

Today has not been your day at all.

Your name is Samantha Carter and today has not been your day at all.

"There," Ka'turnal says as she finishes injecting you with a unique paralytic that should suppress the symbiote within you for a few hours. "Whatever she says next is pure, one hundred percent Samantha Carter."

"You sure?" O'Neill asks, raising an eyebrow.

"I've... seen Nirrti use this when she's tortured some..." Ka'turnal chuckles in a distinctly Goa'uld way. "Well, let's just say that they were unpleasant individuals who weren't the best of house keepers and their hosts had a lot to say about what their jailers were doing. This works."
"And it is me, Sir," you say. "Is Cassie okay?"

That seems to convince the Colonel. "Yeah," he nods. "She's had a little freak out from running face first into you like that, but she's fine. Jade might have sensed you or that Assassin at some point, but she seems like she's forgotten all about it by now."

"So," General Hammond says. "Is it true? Are there really Rebel Goa'uld out there?"

You nod. "I've had a while to dig around in Jolinar's memories. They're... they'd be really hard to fake. Some of the things she's seen, the people she works with."

"She?" O'neill raises an eyebrow.

"She thinks of herself as a she, at any rate," you say.

"This is true," Ka'turnal remarks. "Goa'uld as a whole, while most are mentally gender neutral, do still occasionally prefer one mental gender over another. I consider myself a female, and prefer female hosts when available over male."

O'neill and Hammond give her odd looks, and the woman bows her head, muttering a "Sorry, I'll just... go check the test results for any other hidden surprises from the other survivors," before going off to idly tap at a keyboard.

"So... uh..." O'neill begins. "Awkardness of That Conversation aside. The Tok'ra are legit?"

"They are," you nod. "And from what Jolinar's been seeing from them lately, they've been rather impressed with how we've handled our entry into the galactic stage. She certainly likes us. Enough that she's willing to jump to another host if they volunteer for it."

"Volunteer? Really? Didn't this one force 'herself' on you?" O'neill asks.

"Desperate circumstances, sir," you explain. "Her host was already dead when I'd found them. They really don't like taking over people without permission first, and even when they have to... Jolinar's last host didn't even know she was there. She never took him over directly at any point."

"That's..." O'neill frowns. "Okay, I'll admit that does sound a little bit better than the standard Goa'uld mind rape stuff. But still..."

"The Tok'ra could be a very powerful ally," Hammond says. "If this is all true and Jolinar hasn't been lying to you the entire time."

"It's hard for her to lie when I can see inside her head, Sirs," you say, frowning a little. "That's something I never really expected from something like this, actually. Ka'turnal's descriptions of it from her perspective don't really do it justice, and I think part of that's the mental philosophy between the Goa'uld and the Tok'ra."

"They have philosophies, now?" O'neill asks. "Really?"

"Think of it like this. The Goa'uld are like Senator Kinsey and the NID, trying to kidnap people like the Tollan to use for their own benefit; while the Tok'ra are like the SGC, borrowing or trading for technology, and building friendships to ensure that nobody gets a bad deal."
"..." O'neill and Hammond consider that for a few moments, and then the Colonel remarks, "I KNEW that Kinsey was a Snake."

"I suppose the question then is, what happens if we give Jolinar a volunteer host?" Hammond asks.

"That all depends, I suppose. Ideally she goes back to the Tok'ra, tells them she made contact with the SGC, and we all become friends, but there's the fact that Cronus wants her dead." You frown. "This whole stunt on Nasya was an attempt to kill Jolinar for doing what we've been doing ourselves. If she leaves in another host, it's entirely possible that Jolinar will just have to keep running and hiding."

"I don't want to say it, but what if she stays?" O'neill asks. "Like, here on Earth, refugee status like Ka'turnal over there."

"I'll have to talk with her and see what she thinks of it," you say, "but if she does want to stay here, I don't think we necessarily need to find Jolinar a new host."

"You want to keep the damned thing in your head?" O'neill gives you a look like you've gone crazy. "Hey! How long does that paralysis stuff last for? Can you top her up with another shot to make sure she's not taken over again?"

"Sir, I'm still me," you protest. "Just think about this from an alliance standpoint, as well as a research point of view."

"What kind of research are you thinking about, Captain?" Hammond asks.

"We don't know very much about how this blending process even works," you say. "Most of what we do know is from what we've learned by observing Ka'turnal, and that's a very one-sided arrangement to say the least."

"Right," O'neill frowns. "So... you're saying we research this whole 'blending' thing so we can get a better idea of how to... what? Tell when a host's in control and the Goa'uld isn't?"

"Among other things, yes," you say, nodding. "And that's not counting the Alliance potential. Jolinar could very well act as the Tok'ra's diplomatic envoy to Earth, and if we ever have a volunteer, and the Tok'ra ARE open to an alliance, we can send a human over to their side to maintain diplomatic ties."

"That could work," Hammond says, nodding. "That could very well work. When Jolinar wakes up, see if she's open to the idea. I'll talk with my superiors upstairs and see if they're okay with the idea of having an ambassador on Earth on a more regular basis."

"Okay, I'll admit it's a good idea," O'neill sighs. "But there's no talking either of you out of this at this point, is there?"

"No, Sir," you shake your head.

"...Well, okay then," O'neill says. "I'll give my approval for the idea, on one condition."

"What's that?" you ask.
"I give Jolinar a job interview," O'niell says.

"I'm sure she'll love the idea of that, Sir," you say in return.

Your name is COLONEL JACK O'NEILL and you're ADMITTEDLY A LITTLE FREAKED OUT.

You haven't really... TRUSTED Ka'turnal all that much since she became the "Off and On" CONSULTANT regarding the MECHANICS OF GENETIC MANIPULATIONS. To be honest, you've kind of SUSPECTED her to even be this NIRRTI CHICK she claims to be serving...

But you've got no proof. Goa'uld like her can play the LONG GAME like a pro- you'd guess, at any rate.

This whole JOLINAR THING is something you'd prayed and wished and hoped would never happen- one of your team BODY JACKED by a damned SNAKE- but here it is, and now you're basically deciding whether or not to keep Carter on the active SG-1 team based on whether or not this "TOK'RA" can successfully bluff you into accepting her as a member of the team.

Okay... maybe BLUFF is a strong word, and not the one you necessarily want, but... still.

"Alright, I'm going to make one thing abundantly clear getting into this," You say to the Alien wearing Carter's face. "I'm a little bit skeptical about all of this. But, I'm willing to chalk that up to us just not getting off on the right foot. So. This. Let's fix that. Also, no cheating, Carter, by telling her the answers."

"Really, Sir?" Carter gives you a questioning look, then closes her eyes...

"Of course, Colonel O'neill," she says, reopening her eyes, as her voice starts doing the echoing thing. "Let us do this as properly as we can."

"State your name for the record?" You ask, trying to ignore how it sets you on edge.

"Jolinar of Malkshur," Jolinar says.

"Why the 'of Malkshur'?" You ask.

"It's where I, and one of my first hosts came from. It holds a special place in my heart... And it's where all of our recent troubles originated from." She answers, and you frown at that.

"Care to elaborate?"

"I attempted a rebellion, similar to what happened on Earth and Abydos..." there's a SAD LOOK on her face. "Unfortunately, I was on my own for the most part and it failed. Cronus found out I was a Tok'ra instigating things, and sent the Ashrak Assassin after us."

"I see," you're tempted to ask an "And then?" but instead, you ask, "Do you think you could have benefited from a team?"
"I... Yes, I suppose I could have." She nods.

"Say we're on a mission," you begin a hypothetical, "we're fighting for our lives, what do you do?"

There's some consideration, then she says, "I'd defer to Carter's judgement."

"And if Carter's unconscious somehow, and you can't rely on her?" You doubt that'd ever be a thing that'd happen, but, you gotta ask.

"I'd defer to the team leader, you, if you're there, and anyone else from SG-1 if you're not there," Jolinar answers.

Hmm, good answer. You weren't expecting that kind of response.

"You wouldn't try to take control of the team or anything?" You ask.

"Only if absolutely necessary as a last resort," Jolinar says. "I... if previous experience regarding my attempt to start a rebellion are anything to go by, I don't think I have what it takes to lead a team for any longer than a single combat encounter."

You... really weren't expecting that from a Goa'uld.

Maybe there's something to this Tok'ra thing after all?

JULY 4th, 1996.

"So... she's really keeping it?" Your name is JUDE HARLEY and as you and CASSANDRA sit in a movie theater, waiting for your PA to return with POPCORN, you can't help but ask a pressing question.

"Yeah, she is," Cassie frowns. "It's Sam's choice, I guess."

"Well, yeah, but, what about you?" You ask. "Are you okay with this? Sam has kind've been our off-and-on sitter every now and then."

"No, I'm not really sure I'm..." Cassie pauses, "okay with this? But... I guess, I can deal. Atleast this Jolinar doesn't make me creeped out like Nurse Katran does, even without the weird... thing." She wiggles her fingers on her hands to indicate the whole 'blood on fire' thing.

"I'll have to see when I meet her, but... yeah, I agree," you nod. "That Nurse still creeps me out too, even when she's acting all nice and cheery."

And it's not just because she's got a Goa'uld in her. There's just something about her that puts you on edge. But...

"Still, even though she creeps us out, at least she's trying to be helpful," you say. "So even if she does turn and betray us later down the line, at least she did do some net good while trying to stay on our good side."
"--and I'm telling you," you hear DR. FRASIER say as she and your PA return from fetching SNACKS from the snack bar. "Replacing an entire limb with a synthetic robotic construct just isn't- There's no way that's even scientifically possible right now! The Technology just isn't there!"

"And I'll respectfully agree when it comes to Earth-born tech!" Your PA says, GRINNING UP A STORM. "But imagine if it's possible out there in the universe, somewhere! A whole arm that transforms into some kind of computer hacking super tool! A straight bio-tech interface from brain to computer!! Just imagine how incredible that would be!"

"Sure, but THAT is verging more on the edges of Science Fiction rather than Science Fact, Harley," Frasier shakes her head. "Now then! Snacks. I made sure to get the healthy type of popcorn for you kids..."

"Aw, man," you lament. Lately this particular theater had been experimenting with the taste of their "HEALTHY" POPCORN BUTTERS, which means that you might as well have not gotten popcorn at all.

"And *I* got you all the sugariest candies I could find!" Your PA grins, to which Frasier sighs, remarking about that being why she got the healthy popcorn.

Still... even though it's a whole DAY LATER, at least now you're going to be able to see the MOVIE you'd planned on seeing.

Jade, of course, is still too young for this sort of thing. But one day when she's OLD ENOUGH, and once this movie is out on VHS, you'll be sure to show her what's SURE TO BE AN AMAZING FLICK.

After all, with a title like INDEPENDENCE DAY, where could it go wrong?

145 minutes later, you and Cassie are covering your ears as your respective PARENTAL FIGURES have a NEW ARGUMENT to dish out.

Namely, how feasible it would even BE to give an ALIEN COMPUTER SYSTEM A COLD.

They would end up keeping this argument going for another WEEK before something else ended up catching their respective scientific interests to argue over.

Chapter End Notes

Whoo! Major Butterfly Alert! Jolinar LIVES!
MARCH 5TH, 1996?

Your name is JUDE HARLEY, and you're quite sure that you're DREAMING. After all, it's your SISTER'S BIRTHDAY and she's here at home, but it's HAUNTSWITCH and not COLORADO SPRINGS.

Plus, she's got a SWARM OF GLOWING BUGS floating around her. That's something right out of a dream.

"Hey, Jude," Joey smiles at you. "It's been a while, huh?"

"This can't be real," you say, staring at her. She's older, tougher looking. It's been over a year since she vanished. "This is a dream."

"Best kind of dream, though, right?" Joey asks, motioning at the table. "Cake and Ice cream! You wouldn't believe how dry it is where I've been."

"This has got to be my subconscious mind just... wildly trying to make sense of everything." You shake your head.

"If that's what this is, then I hope you'll believe me when I say that I'm okay," Joey says, and you take a steadying breath.

"I really, really hope that's the case." You frown as a RINGING SOUND fills your ears.

"Tell Pa I said Hi when you wake up, Jude," Joey smiles, and then-

JULY 24th, 1996.

Your name is JUDE HARLEY, and you're SUDDENLY AWOken from a somewhat unpleasant dream to the sound of an UNFAMILIAR PHONE ringing.

It takes you a moment to place that- Oh. Right. Yeah, you were BABY SITTING Jade, John, and
Rose tonight. That means you're at the EGBERT HOUSE.

You hear ROXY tiredly storming down the hallway outside the GUEST BEDROOM you must have crashed in last night, and hear her answer the phone. "Mrrlow?" There's a pause, and then Roxy's groggy tone of voice shaves away dramatically. ". . . What? Yes he's here, but why does-? Oh. Oh my god."

You, too, are suddenly wide awake. That does NOT sound good. You search around for your GLASSES and then find them clutched in ROSE'S HANDS. Of course she'd get her hands on them while you were asleep. Gently, you pry them out of her hands, and put them on.

"No, that's... Yes, I think we can... No I'll tell them." You hear Roxy talking into the phone as you exit the guest room. "Thank you for letting me know." And with a curt exchange of goodbyes, Roxy hangs up, and then puts her face in her hands for a moment. "Oh, why, Jake??"

"Roxy?" You ask, making your former Babysitter jump a little as she turns to look.. "What is it?"

"Oh, Jude," Roxy gives you a sad smile, and then pulls you into a hug. "C'mmere, Sweetie."

Your name is JUDE HARLEY, and that was the moment that you learned you're now a FULL ORPHAN, instead of just a HALF-ORPHAN.

"It looks like our 'friends' in the NID decided they'd rather kill over what they couldn't steal," 2ND LIEUTENANT Davis Strider says, planting the folder of the CRIME SCENE down on your DESK.

Your name is GENERAL GEORGE HAMMOND, and you're SWEARING INTERNALLY over this disastrous turn of events.

While SG-1 was off world trying to BROKER A NAQUADAH MINING AGREEMENT, Jake Harley had been murdered in his own house while trying to FORGE A NAQUADAH POWER COIL for one of those damaged generators.

Then, they stole the SNAKE THEMED STARGATE and it's matching, BROKEN DHD, along with all of the "SPARE PARTS" Harley had taken out of that Gate.

The NID were the most likely culprits behind this. After the Tollan incident, and then Senator Kinsey's attempts at shutting down the SGC, it was fairly clear that the NID wanted to start their own STARGATE PROGRAM.

"At least they didn't succeed in getting the Antarctic DHD crystals," You sigh in relief. After the attempt to Gate to Hanka, Harley had wisely decided to keep those ON BASE, hidden away in THREE SEPARATE SAFES across the base, in offices not tied to his name at all.

"There is that, yeah," Strider nods. "But what if they come looking for them when they realize it's busted?"

"They'll likely try to leverage Jude and Jade to get the crystals," You reason. "Or the rest of Jake's family." After a moment's consideration, you nod as you come to a decision. "Bring them in to the
SGC. Have Janet bring Cassandra in too. I don't want them caught in the crossfire either."


You get back to paperwork, letting your thoughts WANDER.

Due to those bastards using Harley's OWN GUN COLLECTION for the murder, and leaving said weapons behind, you couldn't pull for a WEAPON'S TRACE as evidence. Even if they were stupid enough to use their own guns instead, you doubt you could PIN IT ON THEM.

The simple fact of the matter is that JAKE HARLEY is dead, and the world is going to be worse off for it. You wonder... could you slip some kind of message into that note that's going to wind up in YOUNG JOEY'S HANDS back in 1994? Something to warn her to tell her Pa not to be home on that night?

Could you do ANYTHING to prevent this using the tools you have at your disposal?

Could you add a line to the LIST OF ITEMS and send that note INSTEAD? Would it change anything from your perspective, or would it just create a DIFFERENT BRANCH OF HISTORY?

But that is a slippery slope you won't descend from.

As you finish off A STACK OF PAPERWORK, there's a knock at your office door. "Enter," you say, looking up as the door opens...

Then down, when you don't see someone at the expected head height.

It's JUDE HARLEY, and he's clutching a NOTE BOOK in his hands. You look to the time. It's been a FEW HOURS and you think you've ended up wasting some time in your idle thoughts.

"Excuse me, Sir?" Jude asks, entering the office and closing the door behind him. "Can we talk for a minute?"

"Of course," you nod. "What can I do for you, Jude?"

"...The note with the Gate Address that sent Joey to another world," Jude begins, opening his note book to show you A FAMILIAR PAGE. "I wrote it. Originally. This page becomes That Note you gave Joey."

"You're not asking me 'how,' I notice," you observe.

"Time Travel, obviously; just that the time travel hasn't happened yet," Jude says, rolling his eyes behind his glasses. "But what gets me is why I didn't warn myself. Why didn't I warn Pa about any of this? I've kept quiet about this note. Why? Why did I not tell myself to warn Pa? Why "Don't Tell Pa"?"

"I can't say for sure for what your reasons were, Jude," you say, "but I've been asking myself that ever since I found out what that note did. Since I heard that it sent your sister off to only God knows where. Why didn't I give myself more heads up about everything that I went through? Why write such a cryptic note? Why not warn myself that any of this would happen?" You pause, waiting to see Jude's reaction.
He seems to be considering the questions you've raised.

"...Because then we'd be constantly refining events," he says, coming to a conclusion. "We'd be abusing the loop to the point that whenever something went wrong up to this point, we'd prepare for it by warning ourselves."

"But if something goes wrong after the point we can feasibly warn ourselves," you say, "we'd be unprepared for solving the problem as it happens."

"I get it," Jude frowns. "I guess it makes sense... But still... We have a chance to give ourselves a heads up on this. Why didn't we take it?"

"I agree that it seems sketchy," You offer. "It seems... immoral? Cowardly? If we have an opportunity to change this, why don't we?" You close your eyes and think back to your countless internal debates about this whole time travel business. "Because we can't know how our actions will affect the future. In a few months, or maybe even a year's time, SG-1 will travel through time, and find themselves in a position where it's only my note to myself that saves them. I couldn't know at the time how my actions would change the future, if at all, and I only had my own future self's judgement to go by. It's possible if we change the note that all of the events that lead us to this point change. Skaara could have been taken instead of Daniel. Jade might never have been born. As upsetting as losing Jake Harley is to both of us... there are times we just have to let go."

"And what about Joey?" Jude asks. "Pa DIED while making something to bring her back, didn't he? If I never send this note, she never goes, and Pa never is in that basement."

"Fair points," You concede. "However, let me raise a counter point. I have faith that whatever your sister is doing on the other side of that gate will prove itself as necessary and beneficial in the long run before we send that address back in time. Otherwise," You look the boy in the eyes. "Why else would I have sent it forwards in the first place if it didn't help?"

After a moment's consideration, Jude nods. "I guess we'll wait then."

---

**JULY 27th, 1996.**

Your name is SKAARA, and you're NEVER setting foot inside of a SARCOPHAGUS EVER AGAIN.

As you NURSE what O'neill calls THE MOTHER OF ALL HANGOVERS in the infirmary, you hear a COMMOTION as the STARGATE alarms activate for but a moment before going silent.

Then, what seems like an eternity later, but really is only a few minutes at most, you hear GENERAL HAMMOND's voice over the Base's intercom, "Would SG-1 and Jude Harley come to conference room, ASAP."

You ask FRAISER, who reluctantly gives you the OKAY to go to the conference room.

You make your way up (Down, technically) to the Conference room, and take a seat at the far end of the table. You're curious why JUDE HARLEY was called in just now, but you suppose you'll find out why in a minute, as HAMMOND enters the room, talking to CARTER at his side, or rather,
JOLINAR, going by the voice.

You're still not quite sure where you STAND on this whole TOK'RA thing yet, but if the rest of the Goa'uld are BAD mostly for their OVER USE of the Sarcophagus? Well... You're leaning more towards a BELIEVER than you were before.

"Five minutes ago, we received a Data Burst transmission through a Stargate Wormhole," Carter says, taking over from Jolinar. "It was in a code language I hadn't seen before, but Jolinar had. Apparently it's a coded language Khepri used frequently to secure certain data transmissions. The Tok'ra cracked it ages ago, of course, but that's not the important part."

"What is?" O'neill asks.

"Using that knowledge, we were able to decrypt the first of several video files that was broadcast to us through the wormhole," Jolinar explains, as Hammond sets the stage by DIMMING THE LIGHTS and dropping the PROJECTOR SCREEN.

"It's not long," Carter continues, "but it sheds some rather interesting light on the Aliens we saw on Apophis' ships."

And thus, Hammond clicks the PLAY BUTTON on a remote.

The image of a TEENAGED GIRL appears on screen. She looks... rather much like JUDE, as a matter of fact. She's wearing what looks like a BLACK T-SHIRT with a RED PAINTED version of the EARTH POINT OF ORIGIN on it.

"To anyone on Earth who might be receiving this," the girl says, "My name is Joey Claire, and we're sending this message partly as a warning, and partly to finally re-establish contact with Earth."

"Joey..." Jude whispers.

"About a month ago, during a skirmish at Karfin Outpost, several Mofang Assassins wound up being caught up in a Ring Transmat Beam that somehow was super charged." Joey continues, "We believe that one of the Transmat beams ended up being broadcast towards the Milky Way Galaxy. We have no idea where, or even if it will land, but if it does, you need to be aware that there are potentially Mofang Assassins in your galaxy."

There's a pause, an ALIEN VOICE speaking from off screen, even as a strange kind of GLOWING BUG lands on Joey's shoulder. Jude gasps upon seeing it.

"Oh, right. Yeah." Joey nods. "We're sorry it took so long to get this message to you, but first we had to calculate how much energy we'd need to send this transmission in the first place, and what the proper Gate Address even was. Thankfully, that second part fell into our laps pretty recently, so all that was left was gathering the energy needed to send this transmission. Callie's fancy math for it is included in one of the text files we sent, so you could maybe replicate this stunt if you've got the power saved up for it." She pauses, listening to another off screen voice, then she laughs. "Oh hush, you! It's a compliment!"

You look around the table, gauging reactions. Jude looks near to CRYING, Teal'c seems STOIC AS USUAL, O'neill looks concerned, and Carter looks CURIOUS.

"Anyways," Joey concludes, "there's a few personal messages, and a record of everything I've been
up to elsewhere in this transmission, I think. Maybe not that 'record of everything' if we ran into the data cap. We're not sure on the exact compression ratio yet. We'll fine tune it and try again another time but- Wait. Crap." And with that, Joey stands up to go off screen, her voice continuing, "Salaz! They're not going to have a problem decrypting this, right?"

And then the video ends, and Hammond brings back up the lights.

"So," O'neill begins, "was it just me, or was she conversing with aliens in real time and we didn't understand jack shit?"

"It's the same phenomenon we've been observing with the Stargate translation effect, Sir," Carter explains. "Remember our conversation back on Chulak?"

"Oh, yeah, that." O'neill nods, then, after a moment, admits, "...I'd forgotten, actually."

"What else is included in this transmission, Captain Carter?" Teal'c asks.

"We're not sure yet," Carter shakes her head. "The encryption on the other files seems to have been compressed a bit too heavily for us to easily get at within a few minutes. They might have over compressed everything else non-important in an attempt to leave the main message easier to access."

"At any rate, we now know how these Mofang creatures wound up on Apophis' Ships," Hammond continues. "It seems fairly obvious that the ships in Hyperspace miraculously intercepted these rogue matter transmission beams by sheer coincidence."

"Something tells me it wasn't just sheer coincidence," O'neill remarks, dryly. "But hey, who knows. Kinda annoyed it took Joey almost two years to actually send us a message, though. She doesn't call, she doesn't write... unless, of course, it happens to be because they screwed up and sent one of their bad guys over to our neck of the woods."

And that's saying nothing about the bad timing. Another few days sooner and maybe Jake Harley could have gotten to see this message.

Jude stands from his chair, asking to be informed of any other videos featuring Joey, and then leaves the room, probably to cry tears of relief.

You know you'd certainly be crying if Sha're suddenly sent you a message from beyond the grave.

Your name is CASSANDRA FRAISER, and you've found your friend JUDE crying to himself in a BROOM CLOSET.

"You okay?" You ask, sitting down next to him.

"She's been gone for over a year and the first I hear from her is days after Pa died," Jude mumbles. "She doesn't even know. We don't know how to send a message back. And the worst part is I had a dream about her the night Pa died that might not have been a dream."

You remember him telling you about that dream. About Joey and the WEIRD GLOW BUGS.
"Why do you say that?" You ask.

"...She had the same bugs hanging around her in the video," Jude answers. "A part of me feels like she had to know, the timing of it... but... why? I... I just feel like I'm getting jerked around by everyone else's selfish needs and desires and I JUST WANT MY FAMILY BACK TOGETHER, DAMN IT!!"

You aren't sure how to respond to that beyond giving your friend a HUG as he continues to cry.

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**JULY 30TH, 1996.**

You are now COLONEL HAROLD MAYBOURNE and your wondering this last week at how the HELL your MEN could have BUNGLED THE SITUATION so badly has been replaced by a PURE, BURNING RAGE of WHAT THE HELL WERE THEY THINKING!?

"As I've had to tell MANY people over this last week, you Idiot, I explicitly ordered you to be using STUNNERS ONLY, and taking him captive was the TOP priority!" You growl into the phone at your WAYWARD SUBORDINATES, "NOT to kill the man in his own basement with his own fucking GUNS!! We needed Harley ALIVE to make that Gate work!" ... Oh, Really now? "I don't CARE if the man screwed over your UNCLE IN MANCHESTER! That's still no fucking excuse to BREAK ORDERS! I swear if this didn't reflect badly back on ME and MY ORDERS, I'd have you court mart-!"

CLICK.

...dooooooot

"...Did you seriously just hang up on me?" There is no response. And yes they did indeed seriously just hang up on you.

Damn it all. Why are your ROGUE OPERATIONS always falling foul of ROUGE OPERATORS??

Now you're OUT A STARGATE, OUT A BRILLIANT MIND, and POSSIBLY OUT OF A JOB if you can't clean this mess up in a reasonable amount of time.

---

Your name is JUDE HARLEY, and you KNOCK ONCE MORE at Hammond's OFFICE DOOR.

"Enter."

You do such.

"I'll keep this quick," You say, withdrawing a CAREFULLY FOLDED piece of paper from your pants pocket, and handing it to Hammond. "Joey's alive, so here's the Gate address."

Hammond takes it with a nod, promising, "I'll make sure this gets to her."
And with that bit of CAUSALITY taken care of, you exit his office again.

You really hope whatever is on those videos is worth the price of that one piece of paper.

Chapter End Notes

Had a death in the family this morning. What was originally going to be one ALT plot about Ghosts has now turned into an SG1 plot about Jake Harley's untimely demise at the bullets of his own guns.
"Are you SURE you're going to be okay?" Your name is XEFROS TRITOH and you're KINDA FREAKING OUT over the HEALTH of one of your FRIENDS.

"I'm FINE, Xef," Joey Claire says, smiling through the half-open gap between her door and the wall. "It's just a regular human thing. Happens every month. You don't have to worry about it. I'll be better in a couple of days. Just go have fun on the strange new alien planet!"

"If that's something I can even do with Dammek there," you sigh.

"Okuri's coming with you two too, isn't she?" Joey asks, frowning.

"Well, yeah..."

"Then she'll make sure you two are fine," Joey smiles. "Don't worry so much, Xef. It'll be okay."

"Alright," You nod. "See you in a couple hours!"

"See ya!" She nods as well. "Have fun! Good luck!"

And with that cheerful line, she closes her bedroom door again. A moment later you hear her complaining to herself again about STUPID BODILY FUNCTIONS and how LUCKY trolls were not to run into that kind of thing.

You sigh, and make your way to the BRIDGE/GATE ROOM.

You've got the feeling today isn't going to be that fun of a day.

As MIERFA dials up the coordinates, you can't help but feel nervous.

You'd lucked out that Callie was able to rig together a SIGNAL DAMPENER to hide the Stargate's signals, but every time this gaudy, golden thing activated you WORRY over whether or not this will be the time the dampener breaks down and you'll get blown up at a moment's notice. But this is not that time.
KAwooosh goes the Stargate, and you sigh in partial relief.

The tension won't go away, though, mostly because this expedition is ONLY HALF for RECONNAISSANCE reasons. It's only you, Dammek, and Okurii today for reasons you DON'T QUITE GET.

You guess this is Okurii testing to whether or not you and Dammek really need an EMERGENCY AUSPITICISE anymore. It's been A WHILE without any major blow ups... but then again you've had OTHERS AROUND keeping you from over-reacting. So...

Yeah. First time out 'alone' with Dammek in a while. Just you, your maybe-Moirail, and Okurii.

What could go wrong.

You step through the Gate with Okurii firmly in the middle between you and Dammek.

The moment you emerge from the other side, you're OVERWHELMED by a sudden, over baring SOUND in your skull.

You cover your ears with your hands but it DOESN'T DO ANYTHING. The Sound is PSYCHIC IN ORIGIN. 

"Hey, are you okay?" Someone asks. You look, and see that- No, it's not Dammek asking that, but Okurii. Dammek seems more interested in staring off into the distance.

"It's Loud," you manage to answer her. "The cries of the dead it's... overwhelming."

"Probably has something to do with that," Dammek says, pointing off into the distance.

You and Okurii look upwards that way, and see that there's a CRASHED ALTERNIAN CRUISER buried in a nearby mountain side. It looks like it's been through ONE HELL OF A FIRE FIGHT. There is still SMOKE rising from one of the holes in the side. Either this happened RECENTLY, or there's SURVIVORS.

"Yeah..." you nod. "That'd do it alright."

"Shall we go see what we've got here?" Dammek asks, hefting up a rifle.

You consider it, then say... "Might as well try and put these spirits to rest."

"...Fine," Okurii says. "We'll go investigate. But the minute you feel like you can't handle the strain, Xefros, we're turning back."

"Sure," you nod.

...Yeah, what could go wrong, you ask yourself again, rhetorically and sarcastically.

As you hike along the ANIMAL TRAILS leading towards the crashed cruiser, you feel as if the CRIES OF THE DEAD are getting louder and louder.
The Ship is definitely the source of all of this death. Their ECHOES are EVERYWHERE.

It's when you come across the HALF DECAYED CORPSE of an ADULT TROLL MALE along the road that you realize that while the ship carried these people here, not all of them died in the crash.

"This uniform is at least ten sweeps old," Dammek remarks. "This body should be more decayed than this."

Warily, you raise your CUE BAT and then SMASH THE SKULL IN.

"...If it's undead, it's not going to attack us now," You say, frowning.

"Something about this just doesn't add up," Dammek muses, but other than that....

How Infuriating. You wish you really knew what went through his head beyond stupid ass vague comments like that.

When you get closer to the ship, you spot a SENTRY pacing up and down the path up ahead.

An UNDEAD SENTRY. An Undead Sentry that looks like a SPECTRAL TROLL WOMAN wearing a WORRYINGLY SKIN EXPOSED, TORN UP SHIP UNIFORM. An Undead Sentry from whom you can sense LARGE, CONCERNING AMOUNTS OF FEAR, WORRY, HOPELESSNESS, and DISMAY, which are being OVER-RIDDEN by some other FEELINGS, namely, LOVE, ADMIRITION, LUST, and PROTECTIVENESS. All of which are then SPAWNING the first set of emotions all over again.

"This isn't right," you say, frowning. "We need to find out what's going on here before we go any further."

"And how do you propose we do that?" Dammek asks, hefting his gun in preparation.

"Like this," You say, reaching out a hand AND your PSYCHIC ENERGIES towards the ghost. [Hey there! You don't have to be afraid any longer. We're here to help.] You intercede YOUR WILL in between the Ghost and the OTHER CONTROLLING INFLUENCE.

The patrolling UNDEAD SENTRY stops in her path, looking around in confusion as you technically SUMMON HER from her post towards your position.

Visually, it looks as if she poofs from one spot, and reappears in front of you.

"What the-!" Dammek steps back in surprise, and Okurii keeps him from shooting anything by putting her hand on his gun and pointing it at the ground.

"Who... are you?" The ghost asks, sounding frightened. "How did you get here?"

"We came through the gate," Okurii says. "We're explorers."

"Can you tell us what happened here?" You ask, and the Ghost nods.
"Anything just to have the feeling of my own mind back for a change," The ghost shudders, rubbing at her arms as if she's cold. "Our ship crash landed about ten... maybe twenty sweeps ago. I can't remember any longer. A lot of us died in the crash, but came back as zombies, ghosts, that kind of thing. We weren't sure why it was happening, so we survivors went out to search for whatever was causing it."

"Lemme guess," Dammek begins, "you found something small, kind of crystalline?"

"Yes," The ghost nods. "One of our Animal Communers found it- this tiny little thing with the color of Rust Red blood. He found out that it worked rather well in conjunction with his communion powers, so we began utilizing it to speed up reconstruction on the ship..."

"Until?" You press.

"Until one day he went mad with power and started attacking us- killing us- turning the guys into zombies and the girls into ghosts. He..." She sobs. "Oh by the Empress, we haven't had a free thought to ourselves without him forcing his will on us. None of us have been working on rebuilding the ship, just guarding it from any 'Empire Goons' coming to kill us. Please you have to stop him. What he's doing to us, to our bodies, our spirits... it's not right."

"We'll stop him," You promise.

"We might need your help getting through the ship, though," Okurii says. "Xef, can you keep her out of this douchebag's control for a while longer?"

"Yeah," you nod. "It's... not that big of a strain. It's actually helping to focus on one voice instead of being pounded by everyone else at once."

And so your ghost summons helps lead you through the ship, around other patrolling ghosts or zombies, and then finally to the BRIDGE. It's... remarkably similar in style to the Bridge of All Your Base, but... older. Definitely an older style of ship, and a lot more decayed looking. And speaking of decayed...

There's a POSITIVELY ANCIENT LOOKING TROLL sort of hovering above a THRONE made out of ROCK and ANIMAL BONES. HE'S MISSING BOTH HIS LEGS CLEAR FROM THE KNEE DOWN WHAT THE HELL!? And that's not counting the fact that you can see a few LARGE HOLES going clean through his torso.

"That's him," your ghost whispers to you and the team, "He's taken to calling himself THE LICHKING. The artifact you seek is on his forehead. It's keeping him alive."

You look closer and SURE ENOUGH, there's a small, vaguely diamond shaped RUST BLOOD RED CRYSTAL embedded into that DECAYING SKIN.

You use hand signs to signal for Dammek to take aim at the forehead, then to Okurii to follow your lead.

You and her split off to the side, and sneak around the edge of the room while Dammek lines up his
And then you give him the signal to fire.

**BANG!**

The shot ECHOES LOUDLY across the metal room, and then SMASHES into the guy's SKULL. He never even had a chance.

The decayed troll's body falls to the ground as his skull SHATTERS from the shot, and a single piece of it connected to the BLOOD CRYSTAL goes flying across the room...

You feel the FLICKER of Psychic energy across the world as the GHOSTS all SCREAM IN RELIEF at being freed.

You smile to the ghost you've been summoning, and let go of your summoning of her. "You're all free now."

"Thank you...!" And thus, the girl's ghost fades away.

After a few moments of silence, you hear NOTHING inside your skull but your own thoughts.

"So..." Dammek says, kneeling down to inspect the piece of GEMSTONE ENCRUSTED FLESH he'd shot loose. "Was it just me or did that seem Too Easy?"

"Don't jinx us, Dammek," you grit your teeth. "Do you seriously want to have to deal with a prolonged fight with ghosts and or zombies?"

"...Maybe," Dammek shrugs, picking up the piece of flesh to try to pry the gemstone loose from it.

And that's when you suddenly feel like your BLOOD IS SET ON FIRE.

Your name is OKURII LEIJON and you WAKE UP to the feeling that SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED.

You pick yourself up off the floor and realize... "Well, SHIT." Your TWO TEAMMATES are missi-

**BOOM!** The ship shakes suddenly.

"SHUT UP AND DIE YOU STUPID LICH!!!"

"I'M NOT THE LICH! YOU'RE THE LICH!!!"

...ah. Nevermind.

You follow the sounds of BATTLE and INSULTING COMMENTS until you find the CAMP FIRE ROOM. Well, maybe more of a BONFIRE ROOM, but what ever. It's the room with the giant hole in the ceiling that SMOKE was coming out of earlier.
There's a GIANT PILE OF TREES being burnt, and it seems DAMMEK is throwing OBJECTS AT XEFROS- objects that are completely missing their intended target by way of Xefros batting them away, thus winding up in the fire and then-

**KABOOOM!**

-Exploding.

"Grenades?" You frown. Those sure don't look like grenades, but hell, who knows what this ship had on it armament wise.

"SHUT UP AND DIE!!" Dammek roars- throwing another one of those strange exploding objects at Xefros, who bats it right back at him with a cry of "NO! YOU!"

...Fucking. Hell.

Boys.

Boys who likely got MIND WHAMMIED by that glowing crystal floating in the corner of the room, held by a FAINT, BARELY THERE PROJECTION of the Lich Dammek had shot. A Ghostly Lich who's LAUGHING as he apparently puppets the two boys into killing each other.

You look down at the floor as your feet kick into something...

"Really?" You pick up DAMMEK'S GUN and check its AMMO LOADOUT... a nearly full clip save for one missing bullet. "Of all the stupid, dumb, fucking things for you to drop..."

You aim the gun at the wall behind the Lich-ghost, too focused on watching Xef and Dammek fight, and then shoot a few rounds.

The bullets go right through the ghost into the wall, of course- but the action and sound is enough to get everyone to go silent.

"SOMEONE." You yell. "ANYONE. Please. Just... fucking tell me what the hell happened while I was out cold on the floor? The last thing I remember was Dammek picking up the crystal."

"HE DID!" Xefros yells, "That's why he's possessed by the LICH!"

"No! The Lich's Ghost flew out of it into Xefros!" Dammek counters. "He's the badguy!"

You side-eye the GHOST LICH, who just laughs again, completely unnoticed by the two boys.

...Seriously? Just... Seriously??

"Well, if you're not possessed and you're not possessed," you rationalize. "Then maybe neither of you are, and maybe both of you are getting tricked into killing each other??"

"...Well..." Xefros considers it.

"Not likely," Dammek grunts, dismissing the idea.
"Then tell me, who has the Crystal?" You ask.

"He has it!" both point at each other, "WHAT!?!?" They shout, angered. "NO I DON'T! YOU HAVE IT!!" they yell- "STOP THAT! STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT! GET OUT OF MY HEAD YOU LICH! STOP TRYING TO TRICK ME!" there's a long pause, then they both yell out, "ANTIDISESTABLISHMENTARIANISIM!! ... DAMN IT!!!"

You side eye the GHOSTLY LICH again, and he wriggles his spectral, half-decayed eyebrows at you in a lecherous way. Ew.

There's likely only one real way to end this, is what he's thinking. Someone has to die... Well, yeah, you'll agree on one fact. This LICH has GOT to go.

You march over, grab XEF'S Bat from him, and then storm over and grab the BOX OF GRENADES from Dammek before he can grab another one.

"Wait- what are you doing!?" One or both of them asks as you light up a grenade, drop it back in the box, AND THEN BAT IT straight towards the damned Ghost-Lich.

You don't care if this burns up the crystal or not, although you have the SNEAKING SUSPICION it will survive this stunt.

The box lands at the LICH'S FEET for but a moment, a moment that lets you see that HAPPY GO LUCKY smile fade into a look of, "Oh. Crap."

And then there is FIRE, FIRE, SHOCKWAVES, AND MOLTEN METAL flying EVERYWHERE.

You three wisely take cover, and by the time it subsides, both boys are complaining about a massive HEADACHE and a WEIRD DREAM. You tell them it wasn't a dream, and then they start arguing over who's fault it was that they got turned against each other and tried to kill each other.

To which, you tell them that it was insanely obvious that this Lichking guy was using and exploiting some existing grievances. That's enough to get them to go sulk in different corners of the room for a while. Long enough for you to check on the recently made CRATER, within which you find, unsurprisingly, that the red crystal has survived its untimely demise. The Lich that bound itself to the crystal, however...

Well, let's just say that even your UNTRAINED NON-PSYCHIC ASS can hear that damned Lich's DEATH CRIES as his spirit is finally PURGED FROM THE CRYSTAL by way of FIRE.

By the time the ground has COOLED ENOUGH to pry the crystal loose, though, the boys have started ARGUING AGAIN, and you're coming to realize that just because they'd seemed COOL with each other the last few weeks doesn't mean they still haven't worked out whatever stupid shit is keeping them like this, if they ever can.

By the time you all make it back to the Gate, you've had to stop them from killing each other at least three times- luckily, by being able to say "Do that and the Lich might come back." And by the time you've dialed Alternia again and made it back through safe and sound, the only thing you're looking forwards to is a NICE BATH and maybe some LUNCH. Not necessarily in that order.

Still, you gotta do your job, and you tell the two of them to spend the rest of the day on opposite ends
of the ship so they can cool their heads off. It's with that begrudging finality as they head off to do just that that you get a feeling deep within yourself...

It's the feeling that you kinda wish you were getting paid to put up with their bullshit at this point.

You SECURE the Gemstone fragment inside the HEIRESS' VAULT- that is to say, the ABSURDLY SECURITY CONSCIOUS JEWLERY BOX within her FORMER BEDROOM that has become the defacto DUMPING GROUND for any and all INTERESTING ARTIFACTS your crew finds off world.

The jewlery box/safe thing never even held any real jewlery in it. Just COSTUME JEWLERY. So... Yeah. Best hiding place the Heriess will never look in if she ever finds her way back onto this ship.

You're feeling pretty hungry right now, so you go see what there is to EAT.

You find JOEY and CALLIE in the kitchen, chowing down on a couple of FLUFFY LOOKING BISCUITS, and commenting on how the taste came out.

"Well, it's certainly a lot better than the last batch we tried, even if the cheese does taste weird," Joey appraises.

"We'll recreate this biscuit mix one day!" Callie says, grinning, and then she notices your presence. "Oh! Welcome back, Okurii!"

"Biscuit?" Joey offers you by way of sliding the plate closer towards an empty seat.

"Sure," You say, sitting down and taking one of these FLUFFY LOOKING THINGS. You take a bite of it, and consider the flavor. "...Esch, what kind of Cheese did you use on this?"

"Sharp Centaur Milk Cheese," Callie says.

You consider that, shrug, then stuff another bite of biscuit into your mouth.

"It ain't no sharp cheddar, that's for sure," Joey bemoans. "Still, it's an improvement over the last batch we made."

"Oh?" You ask, not remembering them trying a previous attempt at all. "Did you make that while we were off world too?"

"Yup," Callie smiles, her face covered in a green hued blush. "We ended up throwing it out because we goofed on the temperature math."

"Apparently, no, you don't up the temperature by a hundred whenever you double a recipe," Joey explains. "That way just leads to hockey pucks."

"Still, these are pretty fluffy, at any rate," you say, stuffing another bite in between sentences. "Find the right cheese and they'd be good to have at dinner."

"Mnh." Joey nods. "Back on earth we have restaurants that give out biscuits like this as an appetizer while you're waiting on your meal. That's what we were trying to re-create."

"I figured if Joey has to put up with some weird, monthly biological thing, Mierfa thought might as
well try to give her something comfortingly familiar to soothe it over," Callie said, smiling.

"Where is Mierfa, anyways?" you ask. "I only saw Salazl in the Gate Room."

"She got a bit over excited on mixing the butter sauce that's supposed to go on these, and spilled it," Joey answers. "She went to go change clothes."

"Ah," you nod, understanding. Butter could be a right tricky thing to get out of your clothes if you weren't paying attention. You finish off your current biscuit and consider going for another.

"So, how did the mission go?" Joey asks, trying to change the subject.

...Okay, you'll take another one.

You take a long, drawn out bite, chew thoughtfully for a few moments more, and then say, "Good news, I'm pretty sure we got a piece of the Bracelet Artifact."

"Really?" Callie beams, surprised. "Which one?"

"Bad News, it's ghost summoning and zombie raising," you continue, then pause to eat another long, drawn out bite of biscuit. Once you swallow, you pick up with: "Good news, though, Xefros figured out how to free all these ghosts from their captor and we killed the bastard. Dammek took a headshot. And he's down."

"That's... good, I guess?" Joey frowns as you take another large bite of biscuit.

Thoughtful, long Chewing. Swallow. Continue. "Bad news, guy turned out to have turned himself into a ghost by forcing his spirit into the gemstone thing," you say. "Made Xefros and Dammek fight each other. Good news, though, I blew him up with a grenade and now he's double dead and we've got the crystal safe and ghost free."

"...So... net positive?" Callie asks.

"Net positive," You say, then eagerly eating the last bite of your biscuit. Chew. Chew. Chew. Swallow. "Even the fact that I'm pretty sure I'm gonna be a full time Auspitice is kind of a positive if you squint right. Maybe if I can find some Moirails for 'em full time... Xef seemed happy with the idea when I mentioned it last time, Dammek... not so much." He honestly seems too hung up on the whole "FATED MOIRAILS" thing. Oh well. You get up from your seat. "Anyways, yeah. Talk to ya later. Good luck with the cooking-slash-baking stuff!"

Time to get the smell of molten metal out of your hair, you think.

Chapter End Notes

basic structure for today's episode plot was half-ripped off from the YNGVILD DUNGEON in TES5, SKYRIM. You know the one, if you've played the game.
AUGUST 21st, 1996.

Your name is SKAARA, and you’re feeling a little NERVOUS over the fact that ABYDOS had dialed in ahead of schedule.

The CAMERA set up at the other side for people there to talk to you activates, and then your FATHER appears on screen.

Except he’s not the only one on the screen.

"Hello, SGC," says the Goa'uld modulated voice of one DANIEL JACKSON. "I'd like to Parlay."

Emerging through the Gate into the Abydosian pyramid, SG-1 stands in front of YOUR FATHER, KASUF and DANIEL JACKSON’S POSSESSED BODY. Kasuf looks nervous, as you would be. Jackson... is wearing robes NOT LOOKING like the usual Goa'uld FANCY WEAR. Besides the STAFF WEAPON being used as an actual Staff and the REALLY SHORT HAIR... He looks much the same as he did when living on Abydos.

"Well," COLONEL O'NEILL begins, "this was not how I was expecting today to go."

"Indeed, however I have information you need to know that has become extremely urgent," The Goa'uld in Daniel spoke.

You cough. "Before we get to that, I feel like we need to tell Daniel something important first."'!

"Really?" The Goa'uld asks, frowning. "Fine. But don't take too long. I'm on a SCHEDULE."

Then, with a sudden shudder and a collapse forwards that has Daniel clutching to the staff weapon for support, it's clear the Goa'uld has gone silent.

"Ow..." Daneil grunts.

"Daniel?" O'neill asks.

"Yeah, I'm here," Daniel says, staggering over to sit down on the Stargate's stairs. Carter and O’Neill
move over to check on him.

"Kasuf!" you call out. "Are you okay?"

Your father nods, and tells you that this Goa'uld never directly harmed him. You tell him to go back to town and tell them to be ready for... for...

For what? You just tell them to be ready.

And so he heads off.

You sit down next to Daniel as O'neill tells him the bad news. That Sha're didn't make it, that Jake Harley is dead.

Jackson takes both sets of news about as well as he could- namely, he puts his head in his hands and mutters out a "I should have been there."

"It's not your fault," You tell him, though it doesn't look like he believes you. Instead, he looks like he's resigning himself to years more of servitude.

"Look, before you talk to the Goa'uld again, you need to understand something." He says, "Khepri did something to me back when I died and came back. It's some kind of... I don't know, brain-ghost memory clone of some high ranking commander of hers from another world. It sat idle inside my head until a Goa'uld symbiote tried to get inside my head. Then it... I guess it rewrote the damned things memories in an instant. It played the part of Klorel, until we got through the Gate and then..."

"And then?" Carter asks, frowning.

"And then we tried to kill Apophis and Amaunet," Daniel answers. "It didn't work out well. We managed to escape, but we were wanted after that. We did what we could to sabotage things, spy, steal information, turn it over to people who could turn it against Apophis..."

"Until you found something that you need to tell us about?" O'neill guesses.

"Until we found something that we need to tell you about," Daniel nods. "I'll... let him explain. He's been rehearsing it for hours."

After a moment's pause, his EYES FLASHED, and the Goa'uld took over again. Well, you suppose it's really just another personality overlaid onto the Goa'uld's personality? You're not sure what that means.

Did the Goa'uld get Goa'uld'ed?

That doesn't sound right at all, but oh well.

"Oh, by English the Melodrama," the Goa'uld speaks, annoyed, as he stands up. "Why Khepri had to place my mind within this pitiful fool I have no clue."

"Easy there," O'neill warns.

"Fine, fine," The Goa'uld says. "Look, the information I bring is critically time sensitive."
Apophis and Amaunet are having a child."

"A child?" you ask. "Why?"

"The reason why is exactly why I've come," The Goa'uld continues. "They've stolen Nirrti's technology to not only ensure that the child born will have incredible, innate genetic abilities-the Perfect Host, as it were- but as well to ensure that the child is a Harcesis."

Teal'c, who had remained silent up until this point, seems taken back, and Carter reacts as if Jolinar just screamed out in terror within her head.

"A Horse-sea?" O'neill asks, frowning.

"Harcesis," Teal'c clarifies, "an illegal type of breeding among the Goa'uld. Goa'uld carry their memories through their genetics, and that genetic memory carries through to any offspring born from the mated individuals."

"And that's bad because..." O'neill asks for clarification.

"A System Lord like Apophis would know much about restricted Goa'uld history and banned technologies," Teal'c continues. "Amaunet would also likely know other things that that Apophis does not. A human child containing the combined knowledge set of two distinct Goa'uld but without the Symbiote cannot be controlled."

"As a matter of fact, the child would technically be a Goa'uld in human form," Not-Daniel adds. "I believe a similar concept you may be more familiar with is the Nephilim."

"So..." O'neill begins, "just to summarize here. Horse-kid, bad? Super Host, worse? Super Host Horse Kid, worst of all?"

"That would be most accurate," Teal'c agrees.

"Pretty much," Not-Daniel nods. "The simple fact of the matter is, Amaunet has been in hiding so this Pregnancy can take place. The minute the other System Lords find out- and they will, even if I suddenly decide I'm NOT going to tell anyone else and keep this a super secret SECRET- they will take action and hunt both Apophis and Amaunet down, and kill the child."

"So you're basically forcing the issue before the kid can get squirelled away somewhere," Carter surmises.

"Essentially, yes," The Not-Daniel, Not-Klorel says. "The way I foresee events transpiring, either I get my hands on the child, or you get your hands on the child. And if I get my hands on the child, once they're of age, I will be taking them as my New Host if the genetic modifications aren't blocking that."

You see a FLICKER of something in O'neill's eyes.

"And if you can't take this kid?" He asks, "What then?"
"It's the same as if I can, but find that the host does not fall under Khepri or Nirrti's parameters for Project Heir," The Goa'uld says with a noncommittal shrug. "I go to Earth, find the Heir, and if of age, take them as my new Host instead."

One face immediately JUMPS TO MIND- that of the YOUNG, ADORABLE, NEPETA STRIDER. But Fraiser once confided in you that she suspected the girl was just a decoy for ANOTHER CHILD. You'd thought it may have been that little mystery JOHN EGBERT, but that kid's genetics were perfectly NORMAL as far as every test taken had shown.

Jade, perhaps? Was JADE the Heir? Had Khepri known Daniel and and your sister would have a kid? Predicted? Theorized??

...Either way, those three possibilities must have been circling through O'neill's mind as well, because he says, "Listen, Brain Ghost."

"My name is not Brain Ghost, it is-"

"Don't care," O'neill interrupts. "Just listen for a moment here. I want you to understand that if you weren't in Daniel's body right now I'd shoot you in the head and have you DEAD in a heartbeat. But if you're talking about who I think you're talking about... Just know that if you go near ANY of those kids. Any of them. I'll shoot you dead. It doesn't matter if I'm killing Daniel or not. Are we CLEAR?"

"...Crystal," the Goa'uld says. "...I think I'd like to leave now."

"Good." O'neill says. "And the next time I see Daniel's face, it had better be because you're turning yourself in to get removed."

"I make no promises, Jack O'neill," and with that, the Goa'uld you never learned the name of goes to the DHD and begins dialing.

SG-1 stands aside for the Gate opening, and then you watch as Daniel's body walks up the Gate's stairs...

And then O'neill snaps out his ZAT GUN and fires off a shot.

PCH-ZYU!

"GAHRH!" The Goa'uld yelps in surprise as the stun blast hits him and he stumbles in his forwards stride, trips on a stair, and falls, spinning sideways...

SCHLORP!

Straight into the Stargate, which shuts off a second later.

"No!" O'neill yells, "Damn it. I thought he'd fall down the stairs."

"It was worth a shot, Colonel O'neill," Teal'c says, frowning. "Unfortunately, it seems that Gravity was properly fore-warned about your attempt to send Daniel Jackson's body cascading down the stairs."
"...Was that supposed to be a Joke?" O'neill side-eyes the Jaffa. "Because it wasn't funny."

You make your excuses to O'neill to say that you'll stay on Abydos for a few days to make sure that if the Goa'uld comes back, that you'll be ready to capture him.

It would be several days later when you realized he wouldn't ever return even if he hadn't just gotten ZAT SHOT.

"...So that's what Apophis wanted My Lab's tech for," your name is NIRRTI/KA'TURNAL, and you're MORE THAN A LITTLE BIT MAD. "A Harcesis. Of all the damned things to try... I'll bet you he wants the child to be his next Host."

"It makes sense," General Hammond says, frowning. "Thank you for the report, Teal'c. You can go now."

"It is my pleasure, General Hammond," Teal'c says, giving a brief bow before meandering off.

And thus, you and the General are left in his office.

"I'm mad," you say, after a moment of silence. "I'm mad that my Lady's technology has been stolen. That MY LAB was raided for this abomination of a child. That all of what the people of Hanka have gone through..." you clench your hands into fists, genuinely feeling ANGRY at the thought of the innocent people of that world being hurt without even first considering their potential as DECENT TEST SUBJECTS. In fact, that part just makes you MADDER, partly at yourself, but you funnel it right back around at APOPHIS. "And the worst part is that I'll bet you Apophis was going to raid the place regardless of whether or not he got his hands on that Naquadah Bomb."

"What about this Goa'uld inside Doctor Jackson?" Hammond asks of you. "What do you know about it?"

"Very little," You mostly-honestly answer. "First Prime, Jayni, did most of the work that day. Whatever Khepri specifically requested to be done, I was out of the loop on..." Lies. You know perfectly well what it was that was done that day. "However, I do know a Code Name for a similar project."

"And what's that?" Hammond asks.

"PROJECT ATUM."

Your name is JOLINAR, and you're honestly a little UNSURE why your Host/Partner's FATHER doesn't seem to want her to continue working in the SGC.

Sure, he can tell that the FABRICATED COVER STORY for your host's actions in SAVING THE WORLD is just a COVER STORY, but surely, your host is thinking, he can recognize that she's done SOMETHING worth being awarded for, even if the Public can't be told why.

You're also not sure why he's TRYING TO TRANSFER HER to another POST elsewhere in the
government. Sure, Carter thinks, NASA would be awesome if not for the STARGATE.

Multiple denials for the Job Offer press the situation to a breaking point, at which point MAJOR GENERAL JACOB CARTER storms off.

'I just don't get it,' Carter laments to you, and honestly, you agree.

IT DOES NOT MAKE SENSE.

A few minutes later, O'neill comes up to Carter, and tells you both that there's A SITUATION involving a Reporter who knows about the STARGATE PROGRAM.

This... this could be BAD.

You and Carter offer him your own pieces of advice, and after a brief CONFERENCE with General Hammond, O'neill has his course of action.

Your name is COLONEL JACK O'NEILL, and today has NOT BEEN A FUN DAY.

Your TRIP TO D.C. for an AWARD CEREMONY for Carter has been crashed by a BRAZEN REPORTER who seems to know a lot more than he lets on.

There's also something going on with Carter's DAD that you're not going to even TOUCH ON right now. You've got MORE TO WORRY ABOUT.

Like this REPORTER coming up towards you from the STREET CORNER, smiling like a shark smelling blood on the water.

"I knew you'd come around," this guy, ARMIN SELIG, says, grinning. "Now, you ready to try to lie to me again, or do I get to be a hero by delivering the truth to the people?"

"Alright," you say, "run it by me. What exactly do you think IS the truth here?"

"Most recently? Earth was attacked by two Alien Spaceships, which you blew up," ARMIN says. "Then, a few weeks later, one Jake Harley, world renown adventurer, inventor, and CEO of Crocker Corp and Skaianet, was murdered in his own home, likely by rogue agents acting with malicious intent to cause harm."

...Well, damn. That's somewhat impressive.

"Is that all you know? Who's your source on this?" You ask, raising an eyebrow.

"Oh no, I know a LOT more. I know about Hanka, and its survivors, and one very interesting one in particular. I know about the little kid that Harley was fostering before he died. Cassandra and Jade weren't those their names?" How the hell does he know those names? "As for my source, he's just an average Citizen Joe, Colonel," Armin says, grinning. What a Cheeky little Reporter you've got here. "Now, are you willing to have an Interview?"

"No need to have an Interview," you say. "You've clearly done your homework on us. Go ahead,
"Publish it all." You say. "Just, I want you to get ONE THING right for sure."

"And what's that?" Armin asks, grinning.

"It's O'neill," you say, "with TWO L's," you hold up 3 fingers. "There's a Colonel O'neil with only one L and he's... got no sense of humor at all." You say. "Like, none. Just... As cold as the thermometer in Antarctica. That's how little sense of humor he's got. So Make Sure you get that right. Okay?"

Armin LAUGHS. "Antarctica, huh? I know about that place for sure as well." And thus, he turns away, walking back to the street corner. "Thanks for confirming everything! HAAHA! I'm gonna be famous! A HERO!"

And then he steps out onto the crosswalk, and a BLACK SUV comes barreling out of nowhere, slamming into the poor hapless REPORTER, sending him sprawling to the ground as they speed off.

You're running down to him a moment later.

"Armin! Armin! Come on!" you try to keep him with you.

"They... set me up?" He asks, staring, blankly up at the sky.

"No! I didn't! We didn't!" you press.

"...No. Not... not you," the reporter gives one last breathy laugh. "The same people... who got... Har..."

And then he's dead.

Harley.

The same people who got Harley.

Pardon your French, but SHIT.

Cancer.

Your name is SAMANTHA CARTER, and your Dad has CANCER.

You can't even tell him that you've fulfilled his dreams of seeing you become a SPACE EXPLORER.

As you and the Colonel FLY BACK TO COLORADO, you can't help but try to reason if there's some way you could fix things. Goa'uld tech, maybe? One of those Tok'ra healing devices, perhaps?

Jolinar seems hesitant to suggest that, if he lasts long enough for you all to track down the MOST RECENT TOK'RA BASE and forge an alliance, that maybe a BLENDING might be the cure. Because a Symbiote could take care of something like this.
You think... that might just work.

Now to just figure out WHICH of the many POTENTIAL TOK'RA BASES they actually did MOVE TO from the address that Jolinar knew as their LAST KNOWN LOCATION.

There's at least three more addresses on that list. You'll STRIKE PAYDIRT SOON.

You are now HARRY MAYBOURNE and you've got SUCH A HEADACHE.

That Damned Man you hired to steal the Stargate and his EXTRACTION TEAM have officially gone from AWOL to OFF THE RESERVATION.

Arranging a HIT in broad daylight to kill some NO-NAME reporter?? What the hell have they gotten in their heads?? (You're PRAYING it's one of those damned Snakes at this point.) Did they think they'd get O'neill instead or something??

Seriously, you have NO IDEA what the hell they're doing at this point and you're SERIOUSLY HOPING you can pull off a WIN to earn some face back.

Unfortunately, by the time you got your NEXT MAJOR OPPORTUNITY, things just would not go your way either.

Stupid Alien Parasites and their DNA rewriting SHENANIGANS.

Chapter End Notes

apologies for the shorter chapter, and that it isn't the next Alternia segment. Just did not get a lot of time to write yesterday or today, so instead of rushing through the ALT chapter, I knocked out a short and simple part of the SG-1 timeline.
ALT:01X07: Swimming in the Stars (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

In which Eggs Hatch.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and as you step through the Stargate to KATPAR, several days later, you feel about as light hearted as you could be considering the situation going on when you stepped through.

Dammek and Xefros, arguing again over the fact that while almost everyone elses' lusus had shown up safe and sound, Xefros' hadn't, and so Okurii was keeping them from killing each other. Whatever fragile balance those two former Morials had struck had been completely upended by that encounter with the Lich troll ghost king guy, and this wasn't helping matters any.

As you start walking away from the Gate, though, you realize it's still open. Weird, usually they shut it off right after when you come to do one of these things, just to conserve power. You turn around to look just in time to watch Okurii drag Xefros bodily through the Gate, which shut off a second later.

"--enough! How many times do I have to repeat it!? THAT'S. ENOUGH!!" Okurii continued her sentence from the other side of the gate without missing a beat. "If going to opposite ends of the ship won't cool you two down then maybe being on other planets WILL!" She throws him down into a sitting position, and then takes up a position next to the DHD. "Now SIT DOWN and CALM DOWN!"

"It's HIS FAULT they haven't found Sleepyhead yet!!" Xefros continues to yell, voice sounding hoarse. "His fault we built ALL of that Stargate stuff in HIS HIVE putting US ALL at risk! I TOLD him we needed a secure bunker! I TOLD HIM we needed the Gate somewhere else but NO! He said it was FINE! NOTHING COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG!!! But it DID and all we've got to show for it is a Destroyed Neighborhood and MY LUSUS DEAD because of him!!!"

"Oh for- You don't KNOW that for sure!" Okurii groans. "He could just be off doing something else that they haven't tracked him down yet! They didn't find a body, after all! He could still be--"

"I don't even want to be here right now!" Xefros growls, moving to stand back up.

"Oh no you don't!" Okurii shakes her head. "You're still running as hot as the Sun, Xefros!"

Xefros crosses his arms, and fumes, and Okurii massages at her forehead.

You cough, politely. "So, uh... Are you two going to stay here while me and Fey work on this crystal thing?"

"Yes," Okurii nods. "We're staying for a while."
"Kay," You nod, and then start down the path towards the HIVE. "See you in a bit!"

"Later," Okurii waves. Xefros just grunts out a "see ya."

As you walk, a few ARAI BETTLES dismount from their resting spots and hover along next to you. You open your MIND a little, and feel their PRESENCES brushing against the edges of your own consciousness, and through them, the POLYARCH.

Fey's voice echoes through one of the bettles into your mind, inquiring, [Is everything alright?]

"Xef and Dammek just had another blowout, that's all," you sigh.

[I see.] Understanding.

"In other news, we got a crystal fragment," you continue.

[Oh? Which one?] Curiosity, and hesitation. ALERTNESS.

"The blood red one that deals with ghosts."

The flare of ALARM you feel through the Arai's MENTAL NETWORKS make you stumble on the path for a moment- if not for a bettle flying against your chest to keep you on balance, you might have fallen off the edge.

You really need to put some railings in if you're going to be making this trip more often.

[What have you done with it?] Fey asks. [Who interacted / touched / communed with it last?]

"We... well, it's still on the ship in a safe," you answer. "Xef, Dammek, and Okurii were the ones who found it. I dunno who touched it. Why do you ask?"

[The Red One / Death itself / the perversion there of] Fey's voice buzzes like agitated wings. [Not nearly the worst of the abilities of that Bracelet. Ghosts can be helpful to learn of the past. However...]

"In the wrong hands it can be perverted?" You finish the sentence. "I heard about the guy who had it last. Made himself into some kind of Lich."

[Worrisome.]

"Yeah. Okurii says she burned the guy's spirit up with an explosion. The crystal survived practically being melted, even," you add.

[Concerning! Please, bring Okurii and Xefros to see me.]

You frown, look back along the path, and see that those two are still waiting by the Gate.

"HEY!" You yell, to get their attention. Okurii looks up, and waves to show she heard you. "GET OVER HERE! FEY WANTS TO SEE YOU BOTH!"

Okurii nods, and then starts dragging Xefros along with her down the pathway.
You are now the ARAI POLYARCH, FEY, and you think you're either about to make things WORSE or BETTER. You're not sure how this is going to turn out.

As JOEY leads the other two into the room, you prepare yourself to do something you wish wasn't necessary.

You direct Joey to sit in between Xefros and Okurii, and to hold their hands. After they're sitting in the usual spot in front of your hive, you... DISCONNECT.

You pull your limbs free, and spread your ENERGY WINGS to achieve flight. You lower yourself down to their level and reach out with you primary limbs- before gently TOUCHING the two Trolls on the forehead.

[Testing. Can you all hear me?]

You feel the two Troll's surprise flickering off of their thoughts.

[Good. Let us begin.]

"Begin What?" Xefros is asking, but you ignore it for the moment.

Though your real eyes don't close, metaphorically, you close them, and pull the three of them DEEP into YOUR MEMORIES.

[A History Lesson, young Troll. That is what we are beginning.] You answer, sculpting your MEMORY PLANE into a RECREATION of a LARGE TEMPLE COMPLEX, different from the one outside your hive in reality.

You then form AVATARS for you and them- in the form of regular ARAI BEETLES. Your form is drawn EXPLICITLY FROM YOUR OWN MEMORY- marking each and every one of you with a SPECIFIC SYMBOLIC ICON. Yours is a GREEN DIAMOND.

"Woah!" You hear Okurii exclaim in surprise. "What the hell is this?" Her icon is the NEPETA CONSTELLATION GLYPH from the Stargate.

"Aww! We're so cute!" Joey says, memory-given wings fluttering in amusement. Her Icon is the GREEN STAR BURST.

"What are we here to see, exactly?" Xefros asks. His icon is the RED X from his shirt.

[AWAKENING,] you say, painting the rest of the scene into existence- AN ALTERNIAN BATTLE CRUISER in the air above, TROLLS and THE FISHERS fighting below on the ground. You know the children do not need to SEE THIS BLOODSHED, and so you render them as BLACK SHADOWS. [The Empire had come for reasons I did not understand. I was but a beetle at the time, but even then I had the potential to become a Polyarch. I was more... separate than the others. I saw, and I observed.]

The fighting draws to a close for the ground forces, and several POLYARCHS, whom you render as STYLIZED PICTURES begin to confront some of ALTERNIA'S ELITE WARRIORS.
[My people were the last to be slaughtered. The Empire knew that without Polyarchs, the Arai species could not propagate. And yet we would not go without a fight.]

The Polyarchs beat a few of the Elite, only for your RENDITION of EMPRESS MEENAH to teleport down from the ship.

[The Empress held a device in hand. THE BRACELET EIGHT FOLD.] She raises the device, and an AURA OF POWER emerged around her. [She used its incredible power to defeat the Polyarchs of the time.] A BRIGHT RED, almost TENTACLE LIKE burst of energy emerged from EMPRESS MEENAH'S BRACELET, skewering each one of the remaining Alternian Trolls AND the Polyarchs in a bloodless rendition of the event. [By bodily usurping the wills of her own people, of my own, and turning them all into extensions of her own body.]

You draw up a COPY OF THE BRACELET over in front of your PUPILS/STUDENTS/FRIENDS.

[The Bracelet Eight Fold has eight powers. Four sets of two pairs.] You separate the bracelet into its SEVEN CRYSTALS and the BASE BRACELET. [First are the Pair of LIFE AND DEATH.] You draw the BOTTOM LEFT most crystal and the TOP RIGHT most crystal. [CRIMSON RED- The power to rip souls from the living, and to have them do your bidding as separated spirits and bodies.] You twirl the Crimson Red Crystal in a circle as you have the CRIMSON STRINGS OF DEATH began to RIP THE SPIRITS from the Alternian Trolls. [Opposite it is JADE GREEN- The power to prevent Death- a 'healing factor' of insane proportions.] You twirl the JADE GREEN CRYSTAL as the bodies of the TROLLS, starting to decay, suddenly REFRESH, and their spirits are FORCIBLY PULLED BACK INTO THEIR BODIES.

Xefros and Okurii shudder in the shells you gave them for this vision.

[Next are the MENTAL COMPULSIONS.] You grab the two MIDDLE CRYSTALS as you put the first two back. [BRONZE ORANGE- Animal Communion.] The POLYARCHS caught in the grip of the RED STRINGS have their minds ABSTRACTLY REMOVED, but not superseded. [CERULEAN BLUE- Mind Control.] No, that part comes when the ALTERNIAN TROLLS have their minds removed as well, and all of them are BOUND in BLUE SPIDERWEBS.

Joey shuffles nervously.

[Then come the MATTERS OF SELF CHANGE.] You replace the middle two crystals for the TOP LEFT and BOTTOM RIGHT ones. [ELECTRIC YELLOW- The Ability to GRASP DISTANTLY, or to DESTROY UTTERLY.] The POLYARCHS and TROLLS all suddenly CRY OUT as CRIMSON AND BLUE beams of energy shoot out of their eyes. [And ROYAL PURPLE- The power to rewrite the very body to however you desire.] And thus, the TROLLS and POLYARCHS are suddenly transformed into a LIVING CAGE.

[But all of them are but drops in the water without the power to CONTROL THEM ALL, and the STRENGTH OF WILL to command them.]

You spin the LIME GREEN CRYSTAL- ADMINISTRATION- and then connect it to your version of the BRACELET, along with the other six crystals.
"...They balance each other," Okurii observes. "I mean, except for Yellow and Purple. I don't really... get how those two are balancing each other."

[That is a matter for another day, I'm afraid,] you say, dismissing your copy of the bracelet to continue the history lesson. [Ensuring that none could break this prison for the most important of pieces- Empress Meenah trapped the LIME GREEN CRYSTAL on Kaptar, and then LEFT to do the same with other crystals in less important prisons. After all, if she one day DID need the Bracelet again, she would want an easier time freeing them first.]

"But that didn't happen, did it?" Joey asks, eyeing the FLOATING GLYPH you chose for yourself. THE LIME GREEN DIAMOND.

[No.] And thus you BODILY fly over to the CAGE, and retrieve the CRYSTAL within. [Empress Meenah forgot about the beetles, thinking that without a Polyarch, it would be impossible for us to be a threat. But I was. And I evolved.]

The crystal within your tiny clawed grasp glows suddenly, and your AVATAR changes to that of your POLYARCH FORM.

[I am Fey. The Last Polyarch. There are no others on Kaptar, here in the clefts, or on the mesas. I've tried so many times over the last few centuries to birth more, to keep our numbers running... but the same crystal that promoted me to Polyarch seems keen on leaving me the last. We've dwindled. The largest population on Kaptar now is this colony, my hive, here by the Stargate.]

"Why would it do that?" Okurii asks.

[Because this Bracelet Eight Fold, the components that make it up, each are...] you consider the right words. [They are not truly sentient, but they have enough of their own wills to betray owners who are not worthy of them, who do not have the control necessary to master those individual pieces. I believe that when put together, it might very well become a collective consciousness similar to the Network between the Beetles and the Polyarchs, and it's that whole that makes decisions. The individual parts cannot go against that greater whole.] You feel like sighing, and so you mimic it here in the Memories, where it's not possible elsewhere. [And so, while the fragment I own wishes to help, perhaps somewhat grateful for my stealing of it from its prison , it is forced to sabotage my efforts because of the Empress' last orders given to the whole.]

"That's horrible," Joey says. "For both of you. That's so horrible."

[Indeed it is.] You agree. [However, I suspect the moment I give you the crystal, such... restrictions will not be in place.]

"So you're actually going to give it to us now?" Xefros asks.

[I am. Though I request that Joey continue to come here to continue training, not just with the Crystal I am to bestow upon you, but with the new one as well, and any future ones you recover as well. After a certain point it should be second nature, but... I would sooner trust the Bracelet Eight Fold as far as I could throw it into the sun... which is honestly not that far.] You
pause. [There is also one other request I must make in the event that I cannot raise any more Polyarchs after giving you the Crystal of Administration.]

"What's that?" Okurii asks.

[It is a request Two Fold. Firstly, I request that as of today, you take with you back to Alternia, and then to whichever planet you settle your fellow Trolls on, a large cluster of the Eggs and Bettles with you.] You look to Joey, [And secondly, Joey, I request that you find the PURPLE CRYSTAL, and use it to absorb the complete genetic structure of myself into your memories. If you can find the part of what makes me a Polyarch, and that part that is able to hatch new Arai from the eggs, you should be able to forcibly jump start the evolution of a few new Polyarchs, as well as keep a working breeding population elsewhere, off of Kaptar.]

Joey takes the weight of such a request in mind, then nods. "We'll do that."

[GRATITUDE.] And so, in metaphor, you hold out the MEMORY of the LIME GREEN ADMINISTRATION CRYSTAL to her tiny Beetle Avatar. She takes it, and then with a WHIRL OF LIGHT, you upgrade her AVATAR in this space into that of a POLYARCH.

"Woah..." Joey looks over her form. "This... this all symbolic, right?"

[Yes and no.] You pulse. [I have calibrated this Crystal to allow you to synchronize with the members of the Swarm you will be taking with you. But there has been no physical transformation. While using it, you are effectively a Polyarch in Human form. This mental state avatar, yes, is merely symbolic.]

"So... when do you give me the Crystal then?" Joey asks.

[I already have.]

A moment later, you all return to REALITY.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and as you come back to the waking world, you find that you feel... OPEN; LARGER.

Your eyes are closed, but you can SEE through the multitude of ARAI BEETLES fluttering about.

At any moment, you could snatch control of one and direct it as you wish.

Is this how DAMMEK feels when he's doing the ANIMAL COMMUNION THING? But, also... now that you think about it... Xefros has his GHOST SUMMONING POWERS, Dammek has ANIMAL COMMUNION, and those two both match COLOR WAYS to the TWO CRYSTALS on the Rainbow spec-

THE SPECTRUM.

The BRACELET'S POWERS mimic the TROLL'S BLOOD RAINBOW SPECTURM!!
You'd be MORE BLOWN AWAY by this startling revelation if not for FEY slumping where she floated, collapsing against the rocks.

Your MIND withdraws into your body as you get up to check on her. [Are you okay!?] you don’t even realize you’re BROADCASTING to her instead of speaking until her THOUGHT-LAUGHTER comes back over the line.

[I am fine. Just... exhausted. Removing the Crystal from my heart and placing it on yours took more energy than I thought.] She answers. [Just give me a moment, and I will return to my place in the hive.]

"So... is that it?" Xefros asks. "We've got two crystals?"

You reach for your heart, and feel through your SHIRT.

There, you can feel the DIAMOND SHAPE of the ADMINISTRATION CRYSTAL somehow affixed to your skin. Didn't Okurii mention that the RED ONE had been similarly attached to the Lichking’s body somehow?

That... makes sense, you suppose. Without the BRACELET to adhere to, the Crystals have to merge onto SOMETHING.

"Yeah," You say, your throat feeling a little dry. "We've got two crystals."

About a minute later, FEY returns to her spot in the Hive, and soon is instructing you, Okurii, and Xefros on how to detach LARGE SECTIONS of the GLOWING BARNACLES covering the walls of the hive- not that you would do such yet.

That done, Fey takes you under her wing to directly HATCH one of the Barnacles into an ARAI BEETLE.

You focus your mind, and reach out into the Barnacle you were directed towards.

You can FEEL the Beetle inside, and when you send a CURIOS INQUIRY to its mind, the GLOWING PARTS FLASH in the MINT GREEN of your favored shirt- much different from the STANDBY PURPLE it was glowing both before and after.

With Fey ensuring you she has your back in case something goes wrong, you begin HATCHING the EGG.

A minute later, you're now OFFICIALLY A MOTHER LUSUS, by ALTERNIAN STANDARDS.

[Interesting... I hadn't realized until now.] Fey sounds amused, curious, and a little bit frightened. [That one has the potential to become a Polyarch as well. Take good care of that little one, Joey Claire.]

You smile. "I will."

You think you'll name this little one... hm...
You look into its ELECTRIC GREEN EYES, and decide to name it BECQUEREL, "BEC" for short.

You return to Alternia with a MINOR SWARM of ARAI BEETLES encircling you, Xefros, and Okurii. You let the swarm SPREAD OUT and find places where they're comfortable.

Dammek is sitting at his usual spot in the CAPTAIN'S CHAIR, and so you land one of the beetles on his head.

"Woah what the fuck!" Dammek yelps as he comes running down from the stairs to the bridge, glasses tucked halfway around his hoodie's collar to reveal his stunned, shocked, wide open eyes. "That's... What the hell is with these Beetles?? I can't get a read on them at all." He's completely ignoring the one nuzzling comfortably in between his horns.

"They're Joey's," Xefros answers, a little bit defensively. "Fey's given her the Crystal too."

"Where are the others?" You ask, looking around through the Beetles and not seeing ANYONE ELSE. "I thought Mierfa was on Gate watch duty today."

"Down in the village," Dammek says, frowning. "The Brood is hatching."

"....Shit." Okurii swears.

You're very much inclined to agree.

Seer Altair and Matron Porrim were brought onto the Bridge by Mierfa and Hunter a few minutes later, and you're keeping an ARAI BEETLE in there to watch things while you're off doing the IMPORTANT JOB of helping carry the RECENTLY HATCHED GRUBS via BEETLE FERRY onto the ship.

So far, only the LOWEST BLOOD TIER has hatched so far- the RUST BLOODS, and the occasional CHERRY RED BLOODED MUTANT, as much as surprise as anything because their SHELLS had been the same RUST RED coloring as their brothers and sisters.

There's time to EVACUATE to the new planet before the ROYAL EGGS HATCH... if a planet can be decided on.

"Okay," Okurii says, "we've got three planets that we've narrowed down the hunt to. Each have large cave dens near the Gate for the Mother Grub, and access to fresh water sources. The first planet is designated P2X-413 in the database, and it's about 50% water, 50% land. The land around the Stargate is fertile and looks decent for hunting. The planet, according to records, is uninhabited by sentient life, but in our experience there are natives living on the planet. Natives that take the form of giant, building sized tiger-cats. Even their youngest kittens are about as large as a motorized vehicle."

"Giant animals are not ideal, but livable," Matron Porrim says. "What's the next option?"

"Next is MXR-F04," Mierfa takes over. "It's a small moon that, around the immediate area around
the gate, is basically the desert like around here. There used to be an Alternian base hidden in the
tunnels underground, but the planet that the Moon is in orbit of is... Well, it's a nuclear wasteland too.
The Alternian Empire wiped them all out centuries ago. The planet is still covered in radiation. The
moon is fine, though."

"A decent contender, and room for expansion if the Radiation falls to usable levels," Seer Altair
muses.

"Finally, there's P0A-DSP, which we've nicknamed Diaspora." Okurii concludes. "It's a large planet,
almost Alternia Like, as far as we can tell. The Alternian Empire put a Gate there with intent to settle
eventually, but that was shortly before the Summoner's revolt, and it seems to have been forgotten
about ever since."

"There is one negative to it, though," Mierfa says. "The oceans are home to a rather large species of
Crab that occasionally wander onto the mainland."

"How large are we talking about?" The Matron asks.

"About as large as a fully grown Dragon Lusus," Okurii answers.

"Wasn't there talk of raising Crab Lusus for mutant red bloods ages ago?" The Matron asks the Seer,
and they nod.

"Yes," Seer Altair nods. "And the Empress put a stop to it around the time of the Summoner's Revolt
as well. That could work well. I foresee good fortune for us if we go with this 'Diaspora.'"

"Dial it up," Matron Porrim orders.

And then you're distracted as the first BRONZE BLOOD EGG begins to HATCH. And then two
more follow it a second later.

OH BOY.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and The MOTHER GRUB is not happy about her BROOD
being MOVED.

Nor is she happy about YOU and several of the other LOCAL RUST BLOODS and YELLOW
BLOODS using you TELEKENESIS skils to LIFT AND CARRY HER out through the tunnels,
up the ramp to the surface, and then into the ship.

"EASY! EASY!!" the JADE BLOODED KEEPERS of the Mother Grub try to keep her calm, but
it's only HALF WORKING.

By the time you've reached the STARGATE, the GRUBS have hatched all the way into OLIVE.

They're hatching FASTER. Why?? You have no idea.

Still, it's amusing to watch Joey's recently acquired SWARM OF ARAI BEETLES buzzing up to a
CARETAKER in front of the gate, drop off an ADORABLE WRIGGLER (Presently in the
OLIVE and JADE hues), and then FLY BACK OUT to the nest while the Caretaker places the WRIGGLER through the Gate where another Caretaker would take the Wiggler and place them somewhere safe on the other side.

"Clear the way!" One of the Jade Blooded Minders calls out as your convoy of MOTHER GRUB LIFTERS come into view.

"Clear the Gate! Mother Grub Incoming!" You hear SALAZL yell into a radio to the other side. People clear out from around the gate, and the BEETLE TRAIN hovers to a stop for a moment, allowing your LIFT CREW to take the MOTHER GRUB through the STARGATE.

SCHLORP.

You go from the DAYLIGHT LIT INTERIOR of the Ship to the BOLD, BRIGHTLY LIT NIGHT SKY of DIASPORA.

Stars and Constellations you're unfamiliar with shine down upon you, and FOUR MARVELOUS NEBULA swirl around above, bathing the ground around you in RED, BLUE, GREEN, AND YELLOW.

Once you've cleared the Gate and are heading down the road to the NEW HATCHERY, the Beetle train resumes, and a LINE OF CARETAKERS hastily resume picking up Wrigglers as they emerge from the Stargate.

It's adorable, and you wish you could stay longer to watch... but maybe you'll go help them after you've finished with the Mother Grub.

"TEAL EGGS! Teal Eggs are Hatching!!" The cry makes you nervous.

Who are you again? MIERFA DURGAS. Wow it's been a while!

You've got a LARGE PORTION of the population of the underground tunnels moved through the Gate already, and a NOT INSIGNIFICANT PORTION of the WRIGGLER POPULATION migrated as well.

That's when the AUTOMATED SYSTEM TIMER warbles out a warning, and a CLOCK APPEARS, showing that the wormhole has been active for TWENTY MINUTES, and that you have EIGHT MINUTES REMAINING before the ship's batteries will RUN DRY and the wormhole will CUT OFF on its own.

"EIGHT MINUTES!!" you yell out the moment it happens. "EIGHT MINUTES BEFORE WE LOSE POWER!"

Damn it, if only this could have happened BEFORE you used the Gate once before already.

Theoretically, a Gate Wormhole can remain running indefinitely for thirty-eight minutes on the nose, while anything longer than that requires EXTERNAL POWER SOURCES.

Today, neither of those is not going to happen.
You'd bounced the idea of POSSIBLY forcibly moving the Royal Eggs before they hatched, but that could possibly make them HATCH EARLY and cause even more trouble.

While thankfully the amount of eggs in each BROOD OF COLOR get FEWER AND FEWER as you climb HIGHER AND HIGHER in the hemospectrum... You just hope you can manage it all before things go from bad to worse.

Seven Minutes. You start trying to REDIRECT POWER from elsewhere in the ship to give you a few extra seconds of power.

"CERULEAN EGGS HATCHING!"

Oh you’re PRAYING that you'll make it.

More and more Trolls go through the Gate. More and more Wrigglers are ferried through.

SIX MINUTES.

You continue to monitor the power supply levels across the ship, and continue to try redirecting for spare seconds. Any extra seconds would be handy.

You call out the "FIVE MINUTES" marker at about the same time as a cry of "INDIGO! WE'VE GOT INDIGO!"

As you work, you notice INDIGO quickly runs out, followed by SEA DWELLERS. Wait, weren't there supposed to be PURPLE BLOODS? You'd say it looks like this brood jumped straight to VIOLET, but their bodies are STILL INDIGO COLORED.

"Hey!" You ask, pausing your work for a second, "What happened to purple blooded land dwellers?"

"No clue! They're hatching from Indigo eggs!" Some CARETAKER answers before going through the Gate, with an arm load of Wrigglers.

...Weird.

You quickly return to your work as the FOUR MINUTE TIMER blares in your ears.

Maybe you'll make it! Maybe you can make it!

"VIOLET EGGS HATCHING! PURPLE EGGS AREN'T??"

What the shit???

You've got no idea what's going on or if it's a GOOD THING or BAD.

"THREE MINUTES!" you yell. "GATE SHUTS DOWN IN THREE!"

You shut down ALL ESSENTIAL LIGHTING across the ship in hopes of squeezing out a few more precious seconds.
There's a sudden LACK OF WRIGGLERS, and you get on the radio. "Where are the Royals?"

"NOT HATCHING YET!" you get a reply from Hunter.

SHIIIT.

"TWO MINUTES!" you warn.

"ROYAL'S HATCHING!"

FINA-FUCKING-LY!

Elsewhere across the world- a CERTAIN ROYAL LUSUS senses a CHANGE IN THE WINDS using NON ORGANIC SENSORS.

The HATCHERIES ARE TO BE SEARCHED.

And then THREE BEETLES come hurtling through the doorway, carrying STILL HATCHING EGGS within their grasp.

Joey seems to just be directing them to fly through the Gate and not bother handing off, because she's just as acutely aware of the TIME LIMIT.

"THIRTY SECONDS!!"

SCHLORP! ONE THROUGH!

"TWENTY!"

SCHLORP! TWO!!!

"TEN!"

And then the third- SCHLORP! - IS THROUGH! And not a moment too soon, because that's when the GATE SHUTS OFF, and the POWER IS OUT across the entire ship.

You can't believe it.

You really can't.

...The Ship's POWER ESTIMATION CALCULATOR was off by EIGHT SECONDS!!

About two minutes later, you get an INCOMING WORMHOLE, as Diaspora DIALS BACK IN.

There's a single SCHLORP as Xefros comes back over, and then the Gate shuts down again.
"WE DID IT!" he yells out. "ROYAL EGGS ARE SECURED ON THE OTHER SIDE!"

Collectively, everyone remaining takes a LONG, drawn out SIGH OF RELIEF, and then there's a LOT OF YELLING AND CHEERING!

You did it.

You somehow DID IT.

Sure, only about 80% of the NON GRUB POPULATION made it over, but the remaining 20% understands that it'll just be a FEW HOURS of Solar Recharging later until they can join their friends and quadrant mates on the other side.

These have been the most STRESSFUL THIRTY EIGHT MINUTES of the ENTIRE SOLAR SWEEP. But it's done. The Royal Grubs are off world, and you've WON. A new outpost of ALTERNIANS are safely on a planet all to their own. And you've WON!!!

You decide this is the best opportunity you'll have to COLLAPSE OUT OF EXHAUSTION.

Chapter End Notes

Two parter finished. Troll Eggs hatched and moved off world. Joey becomes a honorary Polyarch, and I finally explain what each piece of the danged Bracelet does.
Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you're HAPPY FOR YOUR FRIEND!! It was a few extra WEEKS of searching but HIVEKEEP came through and tracked down XEFROS' LUSUS!

And so you and he are casually chilling in Xefros' ROOM, resting against the WARM, FLUFFY BELLY of a SNOOZING GIANT SLOTH-DAD. Apparently his name is SLEEPYHEEAD, which you find ADORABLE (Adorably Accurate, to be honest).

"I just can't believe he's here," Xefros whispers, scarcely believing it. "I feel like this is a dream and it'll end when I wake up."

"But it's not," you say, smiling as you let BECQUEREL nuzzle down into the NEST you made on your LAP with your JACKET. "We've got everyone from the Village safely hidden away on Diaspora, the grubs are alive, your Lusus is alive, everyone is in a good mood. We've got two crystals!"

You feel the one above your heart seem to pulse warmly in recognition of being talked about.

"I guess... yeah, that's true," Xefros agrees after a moment. "It just... it just feels weird, ya know?"

"Yeah, I know," You say. "It doesn't feel real sometimes, being able to just... look all around the ship at once and not feel weirded out."

"Training will do that, I suppose," Xefros says.

"But, like, right now Okurii and Callie are in the engine room installing that cloaking generator the Village used to use," you say, watching them do just that from the perspective of a SPECIFIC BEETLE that likes the WARM sounding HUMMING of the Engines against their ears. "Salazl's in the kitchen trying to make some kind of honey cake for his Lusus." Said Lusus was a RATHER LARGE BEAR, whose FUR was presently being eagerly searched by that Arai Beetle for any STRAY INSECTS to eat. "And Mierfa's..." Huh. "Mierfa's knocking on my room's door right now." You direct a Beetle in the hallway to grab her attention and maneuver her over to Xefros' room. "I'll bring her over. I wonder what she wants?"

"No clue," Xefros shrugs as there's a knock at the door, and then he opens it with a subtle application of his telekensis against the door's lock. "Yeah, come in!"

"Hey!" Mierfa says, briefly leaning against the door frame, planting a hand against her hips and- are her shorts unbuttoned?? "Sorry to interrupt Pale Time, but I, ah, I was wondering if I could borrow one of these guys as a light source?" She motions towards the Beetle you'd been directing her with
via a quick nod of her head. "I need to rework a power conduit that burnt out during our long term evac and it's safer if I have the lights out in that area."

"Sure," you nod, landing the bettle on her shoulder.

"Alright then, thanks, Claire!" and with that Mierfa waves, closes the door, and heads off down the hallway.

"...Wow," Xefros breathes out in disbelief. "I can't believe it."

"What is it?" You ask.

"She was totally going to ask you something else!" Xefros says, turning and giving you a wide grin. "Did you see how she had her hand on her hip, directing your eyes to the fact that she had her shorts unbuttoned??" So you weren't imagining that. "Plus, she came looking for you in your room! I bet that excuse about borrowing the beetle was just because-" he paused, face suddenly going pale as all blood rushed from it. "Wait, did she seriously say, 'Pale Time'??"

"Yup," you nod, "she did. What's it mean?"

"...It's... Argh. I don't wanna..." Xefros face meets both of his palms. "For crying out- No. That's Dammek's thing. I. ARGH. I can't..."

"You okay?" You ask, frowning. For a moment he gives you a strange look sent out from between his fingers, then he sighs, and puts his hands down on his lap.

"...Might as well go whole hog on this. Promise not to get wierded out?"

"Of course not," you say nodding.

"Alright..." Xefros sighs, then shakes his head. "I'm... I'm kinda conflicted. Mierfa thinks you and I are Moirails. Or drifting that way at any rate."

"Ohhh..." You realize. "That's... uh..." Well, you were kind of trying to help out in a similar manner to that, but that's just being EARTH HUMAN FRIENDLY!

"And the thing is.... I'm not... Opposed to that idea??" Xefros motions around the room. "I mean, hell, we've just been a pile short this entire time and I didn't even realize! But then that's because I don't think Dammek and I ever... had a proper feelings jam, ever??" he runs his hands through his hair. "And yet despite that a part of me is angry that I'm 'betraying' Dammek as his Moirail despite the fact that we've been pretty fucking clearly in Ashen territory since the crash! Like, what the hell? Is that just the stupid pseudo brainwashing he put me through yelling in my head? Is that really me wanting him back?? I... Fuck it, I just don't KNOW, Joey." And thus he slumps backwards against his Lusus's stomach, and sighs, closing his eyes. "I don't know."

Where your body isn't quite sure how to move, your mind sends BECQUEREL up from your lap onto Xefros' lap, curling up onto his stomach in what you hope is a comforting way.

He pries open an eye, spies BEC on his stomach, and then chuckles lightly. "This is all so freaking weird."

"Tell me about it," You agree, also chuckling lightly. "I... I know Okurii thinks you and Dammek
need proper Moirails to talk to. I'm not sure if I'm qualified or anything to be a Moirial for you, but... I'm willing to just keep doing what we've been doing, if it helps? Just... being human friends for the moment and if that somehow turns into being Moirails then... rolling with it?"

"I..." Xefros considers it, locking eyes with you. Then he smiles. "I think I'm okay with that."

You smile at him, then, lean back against Sleepyhead's body as you let your mind drift for a moment...

You wind up back with the Arai you put with Mierfa and you remember.

"Oh!" You sit up again. "What were you going to say before we got on that whole Pale-Time thing?"

"Oh, yeah!" Xefros sits up, grinning. "Mierfa was totally gonna try flirting with you!"

"...She what?" You blink.

"Her hand on her swayed hip! The open button on the shorts! The whole 'making an excuse to borrow something just to talk to you' thing!" Xefros explains. "That was almost exactly like the opening scene to... er..." his face goes red with embarrassment. "Well, it was a pretty raunchy Grubdisk movie that I'm pretty sure I was never supposed to find in my Stickball teammate's locker a sweep ago... and then promptly stole to watch and never... ah... gave back? Mostly 'cause he got Culled... but..." he scratches the top-middle of his head, in between his horns. "Anyyyways, yeah. Basically, Mierfa was probably gonna be asking you to help fill her Red Pail."

"To..." You try to figure out the right terminology and fit it to your meager understanding of Troll Romance and then... "Oh."

You look to the Arai with Mierfa and see the somewhat annoyed expression on her face, less so directed at the stubbornly refusing to move SECURITY BOLTS and more so at herself for some reason...

A reason that Xefros has just oh so kindly pointed out to you.

"OH," You repeat. "She..." You point at yourself, looking Xef in the eyes. "Me? Really??"

"Yup," he nods.

"...I..." You blink. "I'm not really sure how to feel about that."

"Why's that?" Xef asks. "I mean, surely your planet has enough people on it that a breeding population can get by without forcing everyone on the entire planet to stick with a single type of sexual relationship."

"Well.. yeah," you nod. "You're right on that." But... "But I... I never really... thought that a girl might like me?? I never really gave it any kind of thought, to be honest. I had so much other stuff to deal with..." But no, that's a lie. Mostly.

Xefros gives you a flat look that tells you he's not buying that lame excuse for a minute.

"What?" You ask, frowning at him.
"Joey... I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but..." He coughs politely. "You've totally been giving off the right kind of signals to GET that kind of attention this entire time."

"What? Seriously!?! You can't believe it. You don't believe it. "How?! When?!"

"Well... for starters, every now and then you sort of give Mierfa these looks when you think she's not looking?" Xef shrugs. "And then you sort of jump and look away before she does?"

OH.

THAT.

Suddenly that makes a whole lot of sense. You looking at her, feeling embarrassed, and then looking away.

That.

Oh.

"OH."

"Oh indeed," Xefros nods sagely.

"Did I ever say anything that'd give her the impression that I wanted-?" You cut yourself off before you can even dare finish that thought aloud.

"Umm... Not exactly," Xefros says, "out loud? Not really. But... uh... Maybe with Body Language? I think??" He laughs nervously. "You do kind of hover next to her alot. Hah! Hover! Get it?! Cause of the Arai?" He points down at BEC, and smiles nervously, as if he's not sure the pun landed squarely.

You giggle. Admittedly that is a bit funny.

"Anyways, uh..." he continues. "I think the other night... you kinda... carried her back to her room?"

You think back and... and...

Oh. Yeah. You totally did.

You'd picked her up off the table where she'd collapsed after having a bit too much to drink, slung her across your back, and- and-

Oh.

Yeah, you totally did take her to her room and pretty much strip her down in the most not-looking way you could have done so she could sleep safely and soundly in that slime without ruining any clothes and SHE WAS EITHER ASLEEP AND/OR DRUNK so she wouldn't have known that you weren't looking and and and and---

"Woah!!" Xef yelps as Bec in his lap spreads their wings and flutters anxiously. All across the ship, you're suddenly acutely aware of every Arai doing just that.
You quickly put a stomp down on that by bottling all of it down inside YOU and YOU ALONE and pray nobody else noticed.

...Mierfa noticed, of course, and is staring at the Beetle you had with her. "Uh... Joey? Light please?"

You promptly UN CLAMP that Arai's wings and let them glow again. You'll have to get that one some extra food tonight after this.

You try to unwind from that sudden shock but find yourself kind of unable to. Until Xefros- somewhat hesitantly- puts his hand on your head and strokes his fingers through your hair.

That... that feels pretty good and helps you relax a bit as you process the fact that yeah.

YOU PRETTY MUCH STARTED THIS WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING WHAT YOU WERE DOING.

Damn it, Joey Claire, you and your probably closeted ass have just landed you in a nervous situation that you aren't sure how to defuse at all.

"What do I do, Xef?" You ask, whining, on the edge of crying. "I think I really screwed things up."

"Way I see it, you've got two options," Xefros answers in a whisper. "First is you explain what happened and that you didn't mean to... uh... flirt first."

"Nnn'gaaaaahhh..." You burry your head in your hands, trying to muffle a moan of embarrassment.

"Or you could, uh..." He coughs again, this time nervously. "Roll with it?"

You think you'd rather just about faint from embarrassment.

Dear Journal, this morning before I woke up, I had a VERY FUNKY DREAM that I'd RATHER NOT REVISIT HERE, but it still swirled around inside my head all morning and made the MISSION BRIEFING for today a lot more harder to sit through than it needed to be because I was trying my hardest not to stare and blush. I can't really deny it anymore.

My name is JOEY CLAIRE, and I have an EXTRAORDINARILY LARGE CRUSH on a certain Blue Blooded Troll.

Xefros at least realized why I was distracted and barely paying attention to the briefing, and so wrote down notes for you during the briefing. I read the notes under the pretense of him asking for advice on SONG LYRICS. But then Dammek got kinda snippy thinking it was a "diss track" against him or something weird like that, and then Xef got snippy at him for trying to pry and Okurii had to get involved and... yeah.

Not fun that.
Though, apparently, Xef wants us to write an actual song together, now. Sooo... Anyways.

We were going after YET ANOTHER Crystal fragment on YET ANOTHER ABANDONED WORLD: P2S-N1C. According to Callie, the database cites it as a mountainous, cavernous world home to some old MINING COLONIES that some HELMSMEN who ran away from the Empire hid out on for a few years. Apparently the mineral they were mining there (similar to the stuff the Ancient Stargates were made out of and was what let Alternia make Stargates of their own) is a really good super conductor and lets psychic energy flow really well into the engines.

It ALSO turns out to make a really good psychic power signal blocker type thing. So it was a good place to hide... both people AND SOMEWHAT SENTIENT ARTIFACTS!

The System just says that The Empress went there because of the Helmsmen runaways, but the timing of it fits too well with the end of the Summoner's Revolt to NOT be a hiding place.

SO, we gated through and started exploring the place. It kinda reminded me of the Mountains in Colorado that we passed through when heading down there back in... October. Yeah. How long ago was October anyways? It's kind of hard to keep track.

Let's see... left November 11th, one month would be December 10thish, then... one, two... Oh. Wow. It's already New Years back on Earth. 1994, gone away and turned to 95 while I'm on ANOTHER PLANET!

I wonder how many people get to experience this sort of thing?

At any rate, we Gated onto P2S-N1C (No, I did not just look back and check to make sure I wrote it down right! ...Okay, maybe I did.) and hiked around for a bit looking for a place near the Gate like Kaptar, or the Crashed Spaceship that had to have landed near the hiding place of the Red Crystal. What we found was a RECENT Campsite looking like someone else was living here trying to do the exact same thing. Mierfa found bandages stained with royal blood and deduced that Trizza had to be on this planet somewhere.

Callie wanted to Gate Back to Alternia ASAP to call for reinforcements, but Xef and Mierfa and I knew we couldn't let Trizza get her hands on it, so we sent her back to the Gate to do that while the rest of us went on ahead.

We followed a trail of BLOODY BANDAGES and only A SINGLE SET OF FOOTPRINTS! Something must have gotten Trizza something fierce on another planet, because it looked like she was on her own out here. No sign of her Entourage (Entourage? Antourage? How do you spell that???) anywhere. Mierfa was a little upset at the thought they died, but she pushed past it. I wonder if she has a Moirail she can talk to? (IT'S SPELLED "ENTOURAGE"!)

Soon, we heard the sound of DIGGING, and GRUNTING. And then we saw her. Trizza.

It was almost impossible to reconcile (Thank you Word A Day Calendar!) how she looked then with the first time I saw her. The HEIRESS was well composed, all MAKEUP and GLAMOR and BLING.

This Trizza was... Was almost... almost... What's the word I want here? Threadbare? That works, for the most part. 'Cause she wasn't wearing much in the way of clothing that didn't have large holes in it. And she was digging through some kind of gross, organic looking CAGE by hand. No tools or anything.
That's when we realized her bracelet had a DIFFERENT crystal from the one we were looking for. Red's mate- Dark Green. Eternal Life or some such. Visually? We watched it at work right infront of us. Trizza's hands were bloody from digging through the cage, its surfaces were all edge which were all sharp and cutting and covered in her blood. Every time she'd reach in and begin prying at it, it'd cut at her hands and then... the cuts would just heal over.

The blood remained, but the damage itself healed. Just like THAT.

And then Trizza punched the wall around the cage in frustration and everything SHOOK and a ROCK FELL AND HIT HER ON THE HEAD. We thought she was dead for a moment but then she just got right back up and we watched her skull UNCAVE ITSELF as if by magic.

The look in her eyes... she was so focused on digging out the crystal from its prison that she didn't even notice us. She was like a wild animal!!

We wisely decided not to engage, and backed away. We radio'd Callie, and said 'Backup would sure be appreciated!' Callie said that Dammek and Okurii would be coming to join us as soon as they finished gearing up...

But it was too late.

Trizza got the crystal and then she ROARED and everything shook like mad and then these... this FOUNTAIN of Red and Blue Light just EVAPORATED part of the mountain above us and Xefros just said, "RUN" AND WE RAN FOR THE GATE AND HIGHTAILED IT BACK TO ALTERNIA.

Cowardly, yeah. But... there's a pattern. I found the Light Green crystal on Kaptar, Trizza gets the Bracelet. Xefros and Dammek fight over the Red Crystal, Okurii gets it, and next thing we know Trizza already has her hands on Dark Green. Trizza gets Gold Yellow...?

We need to find that Purple Crystal and FAST.

-Joey Claire

Chapter End Notes

As always, Joey's Journal Typos were left intact intentionally. She's writing in a book, not on a computer.
Chapter Summary

It's Joey's Birthday! This was not the present she wanted.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dear Journal.

Today, as best I and Callie can math given planetary rotation differences, is my BIRTHDAY: March 5th, 1995! I am now officially FIFTEEN! WHOO!

That'd be more cause to celebrate if I were on Earth, I suppose. I wonder what Jude and Pa are doing? Are they celebrating it for me? Are they working on finding a way to dial us again? It's been... five months. Five months and we haven't yet gotten another "call" back from Earth. Callie thinks given the energy requirements Dammek recorded when *I* Dialed in the first time, whatever was generating all that power got busted on transmission, which would explain why we haven't heard anything.

Pa just simply doesn't have the power to dial out, and WE have two problems preventing us from dialing Earth.

The first is one of POWER. We just don't have access to the Alternian Power Grid anymore, and it was a HUGE DRAIN just to supply the power to pull me through safely in the first place.

The second is one of ADDRESS. I was given Alternia's Address on a piece of paper. We don't have ANY CLUE what the Address for Earth from Alternia even is!! And without a power source, we're not about to start digging around randomly generating addresses to try and get a lock. Who KNOWS where we'd wind up doing that!

SO! Gifts! I wasn't expecting anything but here's a few things the team put together. I'll have to find some awesome stuff for when their birthdays come around.

Dammek made me some Tap Dancing Shoes! (They're just some old boots with metal welded to the bottoms but Hey! I'll Take it!)

Okurii made a "Grubloaf cake." It... wasn't that bad, all things considered? No bugs in it, so, hey, cool!

Callie's working on trying to backtrace Earth's Address with some kind of fancy computer program. And related to that, Salazl's worked up some kind of fancy little, ball shaped video camera that's about the size of my hand!

He said he felt bad that they all had their Lusii and I didn't have anyone here so... it's a means to send a message home. Once we get the power and the address, we can send data from it to Earth, if we can't maintain a wormhole for very long.
I'm shocked! I never really got the impression he liked me all that much?? He always seems to want to say as little as possible whenever I'm around. We've never even really gone on any team missions either. So... Yeah!

It's a really thoughtful gift, but I'm not sure what to even say to it?? I'll think of something when I talk with Xefros later for what's quickly become our regular "Feelings or Music Jam" Sessions, which really should be FEELINGS AND MUSIC JAM because a lot of the time we're working on both of those at the same time. We've been writing a song! How cool is that?

Anyways! Most two important things for last! Mierfa got me this flashlight/laser cutter thing. Xef says it's an attempt at flirt humor. I mean, I don't really *NEED* flashlights with the Arai around me at all times, but... this Laser Cutter thing could be handy when we find another CRYSTAL CAGE.

...There's been no real update on the whole crush sitch though. None of us have really had time to do anything yet regarding it. We've been too busy hunting for the Royal Purple Crystal. Day after day, planet after planet. Oh, sure, we've had LOTS of grand adventures in the mean time, but we've hit a slump for the most part. Trizza has too, it seems like. A lot of the dead planets and potential hiding spots we've visited have been... pretty much SLAGGED and turned to glass.

Xefros hasn't given me his gift yet, but he says I'll like it the most. I think I've seen him working on it every now and then. Looks like he's trying to make some kind of chain holder thing for the Crystal fragments of the Bracelet. I think that's going to be the best. I don't like how the danged Red one tries to attach itself to my skin when I carry it to Kaptar. It's creepy and gross and anything that can hold it without triggering that will be VERY appreciated.

...Welp, speaking of Salazl, he just called an emergency group meeting on the bridge. I get the feeling this is going to become a repeating trend!

"The other shoe is finally dropping." Your name is SALAZL CAPTOR and things are NOT GOING WELL.

They are positively PEAR SHAPED.

"Remember how we were waiting to see if a Ship got sent after us for blowing up three clown ships?" You say. "Well, that got delayed because of the Mofang doing shit and we'd closed Cla'dia's ship yards. Until the grubs hatched. The Empire maintained Hatcheries have been searched and searched over and they kept quiet about it until they finished. Well, they finished, and that's when word of our little stunt actually got priority attention. The Empire is officially sending a ship to search the entire planet for hidden Mother Grubs first, and take out any rebel cells second."


"No shit." You cough politely, changing the subject. "Now, we could maybe get away with using the cloaking field to hide the ship if we got any other Ship Commander. Instead?" You click on the projector. "We got the worst possible Commander to ever get." The image of this SEA DWELLER WOMAN appears on screen. "Meet Lilith Arkadi, Commander of the Abyss Bringer. She's served under the Empress for only the last twenty sweeps, a new comer by all indications, and yet she's climbed the ranks higher and faster than any other of her peers. If she were Royal, she'd have been a
decent contender for the throne. As it stands, she's likely to end up being one of the Empress' top three commanders in another five sweeps time."

"Isn't she the one who...?" Okurii trails off.

"Who broke the back of the Komsat Delegate five sweeps ago?" You ask, then nod. "Yeah. This is her."

"For those of us who weren't there, what was that?" Joey asks, raising her hand.

"The Komsat Delegate was a minor alliance of a few minor worlds," you explain, "they didn't want to work for the Empire any more than Soria, and when they saw how much trouble the Sorian Empire was putting up in a prolonged fight, they thought they could do the same. They almost succeeded, if not for Commander Arkadi." You pause, then add, "When Okurii says 'broke the back' of them, she's not talking in metaphor. Commander Arkadi literally broke the backs of every single leader of the Komsat Delegate, and sent them back to their homeworlds crippled for life."

"Brutal," Dammek grimaces. "But not unlivable. So we pull the other Rebel Cells to here, we all abandon Alternia and make a new base on Diaspora. What's the big deal?"

"The Big Deal?" You laugh. "The Big Deal is that she's going to track down where our ship is. Best case if she finds us on it? She BLOWS US UP from orbit. If she finds it empty? She's not going to rest until she finds us. She's going to hunt down every planet we've ever dialed, realize what the fuck we and Trizza are BOTH after, and then she's going to pretty much kill anyone who seems even tangentially related to us. She doesn't STOP. The Komsat Delegate were hiding REALLY well, and NOBODY could find them until she stepped in. She found them after two DAYS."

"So, there's no hiding from her," Joey says. "What about fighting her?"

"That's hilarious," You laugh. "You think we can FIGHT her??"

"Let's take the option seriously," Xefros says. "Could it be done?"

"..." You frown. "I... Guess? I mean, we got LUCKY shooting down those clown ships. The shields on the Abyss Bringer are at least five times as powerful, and are redundant as fuck. Taking them down if the ship stays in orbit and we're down here on the ground is going to be impossible. Our shots would take too long to reach them."

"...What if we get the shields down some way?" Callie asks. "What about if we got them to come closer to us?"

"I... I guess??" You run the calculations through your head. "IF. If we could take out the shields somehow, and get them close enough to us, the rest of the hull plating should only be about as strong as any other ship's armor rating and a few well placed shots could take it out. But how the hell would we do something like that?"

"The real question is," Dammek inquires, "how long do we have to prepare to do something like this in the first place?"

"...Shortest estimate? Three days," you say, "If Commander Arkadi is taking her time... maybe eight."
"It's doable," Dammek says, nodding. "Definitely doable."

You don't want to know what he has in mind, and Xefros and Okurii don't seem enthusiastic about it either.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you're CONCERNED over the events to transpire, and the face of the TROLL BEHIND IT.

Lilith Arkadi looks like she'd be about ROXY'S AGE if she were human. The smirk on her face on this FILE PHOTO is DOLPHIN LIKE, which is an odd comparison to think of at least until you read her RAP SHEET. She's all KIND AND SMILES and PLAYFUL INNOCENCE, according to people when she first meets them, and then the moment she sees an opportunity, she TAKES IT.

She's INTENTIONALLY DISARMING until the moment it benefits her the most. Her HORNS are very KNIFE LIKE in appearance, and reflect her apparent RUTHLESS NATURE, being round and pole like at the base, and then becoming all WIDE, FANNING, AND SHARPENED EDGES further back.

And that's all just in the PERSONALITY SECTION, let alone her LIST OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS. Apparently out of CADET SCHOOL, Commander Arkadi took to the top of the class rankings by RANDOMLY POISONING her fellow classmates with BAD FOOD, making them miss CRUCIAL EXAMS and putting BLACK MARKS against their records. She never FATALLY POISONED anyone, however. She let them STEW in their failures. That continued through her OPERATIONAL HISTORY, where she BACK STABBED, BETRAYED, or otherwise TRICKED people into letting her advance.

And that was just when she was SUBTLY SCREWING PEOPLE OVER. The list of ACTIVE AND BLATANT acts of sabotage or RUTHLESS HUNTING are... appalling to say the least.

You're reluctant to admit it, but you don't think there's any way you can get out of this fight with her without KILLING HER.

It's a scary thought, that this plan Dammek's put together is going to involve you killing someone just to survive... but that's what Pa and his team had to do on Abydos, isn't it? They killed "KHEPRI" in order to save lives.

This is that, just... on a much different scale.

Abydos was one town against one SO-CALLED GOD... this would be breaking an entire planet free from a GALAXY SPANNING EMPIRE. Because there's no way that destroying Commander Arkadi's ship wouldn't garner the wrong kind of attention.

As far as the rest of the REBELLION is concerned, Dammek says not to count on them. In fact, he's told HIVEKEEP to get the word out that if this FAILS? His group were the only serious Rebels around. That's the STORY you're to tell if you get captured. Nobody else but YOU ALL were the ones behind this. Maybe then whoever "TEAL COMMANDER" is will be able to pick up where you all left off.

Maybe.
Probably not, though, if Arkadi gets her hands on the STARGATE.

Speaking of, someone DIALS IN right then and there, and through it comes DAMMEK, and two CLA’DIANS dragging/pushing a LARGE VEHICLE covered in a TARP through the Gate. A moment later, ANOTHER ONE comes through, pushed/pulled by a couple others, and then A THIRD, this one being maneuvered by MIERFA and OKURII.

The Gate shuts down, and you look over the railing. "What the heck are these things??"

"Our way of breaching the shields," Dammek says, smiling. "I only asked for one, but Princess Millia said we could have three."

"Lucky Break, huh?" Mierfa asks, grinning up at you.

"Yeah," you nod. You're not sure why you'd need THREE OF THESE THINGS, but hey, if it will help!

You follow the large vehicles through the hallways of the ship as Dammek leads everyone to the SAME HANGAR DOORS you used to get onto the ship in the first place all those months ago.

Then, once they're parked in place, your curiosity gets the better of you...

"So, what are these things?" You ask.

Dammek nods to one of the Cla’dians, who pulls the tarp off of one, revealing a STYLIZED version of one of those fancy TWO SEATER FLYING VEHICLES. But it's... it's very different. Where the ones you'd borrowed so long ago were basically FLYING MOTORCYCLES, these are...

MUCH BIGGER, at least in terms of LENGTH, and DEFINITELY bigger in the back. It looks almost like a DRAGON. It's LANDING GEAR is shaped in the style of FOUR CLAWED FEET, and its engines are LIKE WINGS, folded up and compressed onto the side so it could fit through the Gate. It's front WINDSHIELD is framed inside of a LONG, SWOOPING NECK connected to a rather DRAGON SHAPED HEAD.

The rest of it, though...

It looked like someone took the back end of a GIANT METAL FIREFLY and shoved it on the place of the Dragon's Tail. You can see a bit on top that looks like it was more PROPERLY a tail, but it was sort of CLAMPED INTO PLACE. On second thought, though, it looks a bit like that one BUSTED ENGINE you tricked Trizza with.

"I present to you the Dragonfly," tarp remover said, grinning. "My own personal take on the standard Vespa class personal transport. It's got the basic frame, but with custom angle-able side engine thrusters for peak maneuverability AND a detachable Hyperdrive engine!"

"Detachable?" You ask. "Why?"

"...Uh..." The tarp remover- and you guess INVENTOR of this flying device- laughs nervously as his wings flutter anxiously. "Well I'm not saying it's gonna explode, but it might explode after use? So... Uh..."
"Why would it explode?" You ask. "No. Better question. Don't you have Hyperdrives that don't explode?"

"Well, the ones for Vespas at this scale don't go very far," the INVENTOR says, "also, they can't really punch through a Ship's shield? You'd just go splat against it. So... I made a better version! Ish."

"Ish?" You ask, not familiar with the term's usage here.

"Well, it's basically a fleet ship's hyperdrive condensed down into a miniature form, there's a lot of kinks to work out!" The Inventor responds. "Consider it a Beta Release, if it makes you feel any better. The Alpha version was TONS more unstable. It couldn't even open a stable hyperspace window to begin with! This one at least explodes AFTER you're done using it!"

That does not fill you with confidence. NOT ONE BIT.

"What's your name?" You ask him.

"Sylen," the INVENTOR says, thus named. "Pleasure to meet ya!"

Well, if you're gonna die, you're going to die screaming this guy's name, at least.

A GRUBTUBE video plays.

"To one LILITH ARKADI!" the SUNGLASSES WEARING FACE of some BRONZE BLOOD TROLL appears center screen. "We have what you want. Three little Royal Heirs, all in a row. You're looking to Cull. We're willing to trade. Time and place are in the description. Come and Get Them if you dare. And don't bother trying to bomb the place from orbit. The only thing at those coordinates are a Ring Transmat platform. We won't be there until our cameras see you there in person."

And thus, the video ends.

Your name is COMMANDER LILITH ARKADI. You came all the way OUT HERE to KIDDY TOWN ALTERNIA to do you job and have a good time, and you're feeling DELIBERATELY CALLED OUT RIGHT NOW.

It's been a while since someone DARED to try and OUT PLAY you in a GAME OF WITS, let alone someone just BARELY on the cusp of ASCENSION to the Ranks of the ROYAL ARMY. Two birds with ONE STONE? A risky bet. You'll give them their face to face meet if only so you get to see the light drain from their eyes as you TWIST THE KNIFE.

Oh yes, this is going to be FUN. You might even steal that little TWERP'S SUNGLASSES while you're at it.

Chapter End Notes
Probably could have fit more into this section, but I felt like this was a decent stopping point for a cliffhanger.
ALT:01x10: The Penny Drops (Part 2.)

Chapter Summary

In which things go splat.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"What ever happened to the Drones?" Joey asks you suddenly.

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS, and you blink, shift back in your seat, and look at the girl sitting behind you. Why XEFROS decided you two should be the ones to do this, you have no idea...

But in the slowly building SUNLIGHT, bathing EVERYTHING around you with GOLDEN ORANGE LIGHT, you can't help but feel like it was THE RIGHT CHOICE.

"Um...What?" You ask.

"The Imperial Drones Trizza had moving the Stargate," Joey clarifies, "we saw them when you guys took it, but they vanished after that."

"Oh... Yeah." You laugh nervously. "Trizza had them shoved into the engine reactors to burn them up and away so they didn't report back to anyone that we'd stolen a Stargate."

"...Huh," Joey blinks, the nods in acceptance. "I guess that makes sense."

"Not that it did us any good," you shrug, and turn back around so you're not staring eyes first at your CRUSH for the rest of the conversation. "Didn't stop us from having to deal with today, at any rate."

"Nope," Joey giggles. "But maybe that's not such a bad thing. I've been having fun, for the most part."

"Well, that and you've got the awesome powers of swarm control now," You add, trying to sound casual.

Damn it, why did you have to fall for the ALIEN?? After that one stupid attempt to try and talk to her you just HAVEN'T HAD THE COURAGE to try again, or the time.

It's been a VERY BUSY COUPLE OF MONTHS.

Maybe after this you'll have time to take a break and really TALK THINGS OUT.

Your name is COMMANDER LILITH ARKADI, and as your ship, The ABYSS BRINGER, drops out of HYPERSPACE and begins its DESCENDING APPROACH towards ALTERNIA,
you can't help but feel... EXCITED.

What stupid kids are these to challenge YOU to a fight? Oh sure, they didn't phrase it like they expected a fight, but that's almost certainly what it's going to be.

You're a SEA DWELLER, one of the HIGHEST BLOODS POSSIBLE outside of THE ROYAL HUE. The outcome of them challenging you to meet in a DESERT is exceedingly obvious as a trap. They probably expect you'll DRY UP or something.

Fat chance.

The COORDINATES are set to a set of OLD RUINS in the DESERT SECTION of Alternia, where a LONE RING PLATFORM lie in wait. The meeting is scheduled for the EARLIEST PART OF THE SUN'S RISE. Likely, they'd expect you to park with your ship's windshields FACING IT so you'd be BLINDED. Idiots. You'll park the OPPOSITE WAY with your back to the sun for the sheer INTIMIDATION VALUE. Their little ploy won't work here on you. You're TOO GOOD at these mind games.

"Aaaand she's planting the Abyss exactly where we wanted her to," Dammek's voice floats out of the tinny speakers. "Meeting's not for another ten minutes, but she's already ringing in with an assault team. Probably going to try laying an ambush."

You're once again MIERFA DURGAS, and you can't help but smile as you hear the good news playing over the DRAGONFLY'S on board radio.

"Such a shame," You say, "it's going to go to waste since we had a full five days to plan this out."

"Indeed, such a shame," Dammek agrees. "I hope she enjoys the fireworks, though." There's a pause, then he says, "Alright, Plan Crybaby, let's rock it and jam."

As the SIDE PODS FIRE, lifting the Dragonfly's MASSIVE BULK off of a desert dune, you lift up the LANDING GEAR, and then you ACCELERATE FORWARDS towards the DISTANT OUTLINE of the ABYSS BRINGER, the SUN'S GLARE, hiding you from sight of any ships sensors.

You let the ENGINES REV UP to full speed, and then give the signal to Joey, "Cry baby cry."

"Make your Momma sigh," Joey completes from behind you as she powers up the HYPERDRIVE. "Engaging Hyperdrive."

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you take that as your cue to start up some BAD ASS OPENING THEME MUSIC to some ANIMATED TV SHOW you watched last Swep as this operation begins, and Joey and Mierfa's DRAGONFLY launches into a hyperspace window, leaving behind only TWO TRAILING FIRE TRAILS as sign of it ever being there.
Hurtling through Hyperspace, your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and it's only thanks to a song Xefros grabbed OFF OF THE INTERNET that you're aware of the timing necessary to shut down the Hyperdrive at JUST THE RIGHT MOMENT.

- There's no use with all your gimmicks -

Your fingers hover over the disengage button.

- SO CHECK THIS OUT! -

You flick the switch, and your DRAGONFLY emerges from Hyperspace on the OTHER SIDE of the ABYSS BRINGER'S SHIELDS- that is to say, INSIDE THE SHIELDs, and STARING STRAIGHT UP ITS REAR END ENGINES.

- Login you damned ones/ Crush the 'won't you compromise' -

The Abyss Bringer's AUTOMATED GUNNER TURRETS are all pointed the wrong way, and so in the few precious moments of LINE UP you have from them, you flick the NEXT SWITCH, and the HYPERDRIVE DISENGAGES.

- The Noise comes, we are ready to bow -

A bolt at the front of the Dragonfly disconnects, and then SEVERAL MORE BOLTS in the back pull away, and then MIERFA swings the MAIN BODY of the Dragonfly UPWARDS, leaving the Hyperdrive to hurtle forwards on carried momentum and SIDE MOUNTED ROCKETS into the ABYSS BRINGER'S ENGINES.

- What about the Antidote for the jammed and hypnotized? -

It impacts the BACK, and then, predictably, EXPLODES.

- Rend the lie that covers; Who's the real sucker now? -

You watch with AWE and A LITTLE BIT OF RELIEF as the ABYSS BRINGER loses power all across the ship- SHIELDS GOING DOWN, and the whole thing beginning to DRIFT DRAMATICALLY towards the ground below.

- Like flowers blooming in a riot, we'll embrace this fresh pain. -

Your name is LILITH ARKADI, and you have NO IDEA where this music is suddenly coming from, or WHY IT STARTED after your SHIP LOST POWER.

- Leaving this stagnant city and tossing aside all words of doubt. -

But as a bunch of KIDDY TROLLS IN DESERT CAMO UNIFORMS burst out of the dunes around you and your ESCORT TEAM, wielding GUNS that look INCREDIBLY DEADLY, you've got a SNEAKING SUSPICION as to what happened.
And then you're SHOT POINT BLANK through the KNEES by one stupid kid with DEER ANTLERS and SUNGLASSES.

-Database, Database, Just living in the Database, WOAH OH!-

You're JOEY AGAIN, and Mierfa expertly flies you around the EXTERIOR OF THE ABYSS BRINGER as it's going down.

-The wall of pure fiction's cracking in my head, and the addiction of the world still spreads/-

You take your RECENTLY GIFTED LASER CUTTER and SLASH THROUGH the parts of the HULL you were told to CUT INTO. Mostly, you do that by raising your hand gripping the cutter upwards, and let the FORWARDS MOMENTUM of the Dragonfly do most of the CUTTING FOR YOU.

-In the Database, Database, I'm struggling in the Database, WOAH OH!/-

A CUT HERE, a SNIP THERE, and soon enough pretty much every EXTERIOR MOUNTED POWER CONDUIT that could be used to REROUTE POWER is severed. The Abyss Bringer won't be getting power back to anything fast enough to prevent themselves from CRASHING into the DESERT BELOW.

-It doesn't even matter if there is no hope/ as the Madness of the system grows/-

A few more GUN SHOTS from their team's TRUSTY FIREARMS put down the rest of your bodyguards, leaving you all critically positioned around the RING PLATFORM.

-Database, Database, just living in the Database/-

You watch those stupid KIDDY TROLLS use the RING PLATFORM to ESCAPE, and you barely have the time to hear STUPID SUNGLASSES say "CHECKMATE" before they vanish into thin air.

-Database, Database/-

And then the SHADOW OF YOUR SHIP falls over you and you realize just exactly how STUPID YOU WERE to underestimate a COUPLE OF KIDS.

-Just Say Woah, Woah, Woah Woah!-

Your name is LILITH ARKADI, and you should have just BOMBED THIS PLACE FROM ORB-
And then with a loud, sickening CRUNCH, the ABYSS BRINGER crashes down onto the RING PLATFORM SITE, destroying it and ANYTHING ELSE caught beneath the ship's MASSIVE GIRTH by grinding it into paste.

You're once again Joey Claire, and you take a deep breath as the music goes silent.

Everything goes silent.

Well, until you hear the muted sounds of a RING TRANSPORT, and then GUN FIRE. Dammek, Salazl, and Okurii have gotten onboard and are CLEANING UP THE SURVIVORS. You just... you hope that most of them decide to SURRENDER.

That's when IMPERIAL DRONES begin bursting out through EXTERIOR DOORS.

...Well, shit.

"Callie!" Mierfa yells. "We've got Imperial Drones! We're clearing out of line of sight- TAKE THEM OUT!"

"On it!" Callie's voice comes over the line, and then a moment later, as we rocketed upwards higher and higher into the air, GOLDEN ORANGE SQUID SHAPED missiles came flying out of the CLOAKED BASE about half a mile away.

The Imperial Drones didn't know what hit them.

You're Mierfa Durgas again, and soon, the HORDE OF IMPERIAL DRONES and the sounds of GUN FIRE have finally tapered off from the downed ship.

You keep the DRAGONFLY hovering over the ship, waiting for something to happen, and as you do so, you notice the LARGE HOLE in the back of the ship that was made when the HYPERDRIVE EXPLODED.

It looks like it carved out a large chunk of SPHERICAL SPACE when it went. That... could be a rather dangerous ANTI-SHIP weapon if you could figure out how to make it explode on demand.

It's only when you hear Dammek's voice over the radios again that you sigh in relief and allow yourself to relax.

"Ship's cleared. Looks like it was a skeleton crew of real Trolls, and the major gaps were filled in with Imperial Drones." There's a pause, then he says, "Most of that skeleton crew's dead, but not by us. Joey, we might need to put that laser cutter through another test."

You glance back at Joey, and she shrugs.

"Alright," You say into the radio, "we're coming in for a landing."

And land you do, somehow managing to land on the CRASH-ANGLED DECK next to an ENTRY HATCH. You're going to have to thank whoever had the bright idea to put MAGNETS in the feet, otherwise this wouldn't be a stable angle to park at- not one bit.
As you and Joey climb out from the seats, she turns to look at you with an expression that seems...

Considering?

"Nice flying!" She seems to settle for, and then with a face turning red, turns around and heads towards the door.

You're left stupefied for a moment, leaning against the Dragonfly before you slap your cheeks and go after her.

Get a Grip, Mierfa! You tell yourself. You can handle this!

You're JOEY CLAIRE again and DAMN IT you're SUCH A COWARD. "Nice Flying"?? That's all you can say??

Nice Flying!??

AAARGH. You've had ALL MORNING to say something and. ARGH. STUPID. DUMB DUMB STUPID. COWARD!!!

GUH.

As you and Mierfa walk through the hallways, guided by a CLEAR TRAIL of dead IMPERIAL DRONES, you try to get your thoughts in order. Maybe you could say something? Maybe... maybe... no, that boat's sailed for today. Maybe tomorrow. Urgh.

You eventually find Dammek and Okurii standing at the door leading to what looks like some kind of MEDICAL BAY, going by the signage.

"It's not pretty," Okurii warns you. "Really, really not."

You gulp, and then Dammek opens the door.

What you find is... Is HORRIFYING.

It's another one of those ORGANIC CAGES for one of the Crystals, but this one has SICKLY GROWTHS hanging off of it... Growths that you quickly realize used to be TROLLS.

"Is this...?" Mierfa trails off. "The thing? The purple one??"

"We'll have to go through the files to be sure, but... Yeah." Dammek nods. "It looks like Arkadi got her hands on one of these things and was experimenting on it. Probably she had her own plans for using it before she got redirected to Alternia."

You take out your LASER CUTTER, eyeing the CAGE.

"Are they dead?" You ask.
"There's no life signs as far as the Abyss's few operational scanners can tell," Okurii says. "So they're about as dead as they can be."

"Good," You swallow, throat feeling dry.

And then you ignite the laser cutter.

Chapter End Notes

Wanted a more satisfying conclusion to this chapter but there really isn't one I could come up with. Probably should've just waited to post the last chapter and then have tacked on this part onto it. Oh well.
ALT:01x11: Season Unending

Chapter Summary

In which Dammek makes a proper NEMESIS.

Chapter Notes

Maaaaaybe need to up the rating, but for now I'll settle for updating the tags.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE and you've got a LOT ON YOUR MIND.

Back home, you'd usually take a bath when you wanted to sort through a lot of HEAVY WEIGHT on your mind. But the All Your Base doesn't have baths. It has showers. Close enough, you suppose.

You're not what you'd call IMPULSIVE... not... not really? You like to PUZZLE your way through a situation. But you can think on your feet with the best of them, though. You can make a decision in the heat of the moment that will likely carry you through to SUCCESS, but... Why is it when it comes to a matter of the HEART that you're so SLOW at making a decision??

You know that MIERFA likes you, and you know that YOU like her...

Like? Like is... Like is probably NOT THE RIGHT WORD here.

You'll admit your first, initial attraction towards Mierfa was surface level that you weren't really quite aware of. Over the months as you've tried to squish those feelings down, you have gotten to know her as a freind, and, alas, that surface level attraction seems to have just grown deeper.

Things would be so much simpler if you could bury these feeling away and just never have to deal with them, but knowing that Mierfa almost certainly feels the same way... there's no way you can leave things hanging after that.

As much as you were ANNOYED that Roxy was clinging almost immediately towards your COUSIN and flirting like mad... sometimes you wish you could be a bit more like her in that regard. Acting without overthinking, especially when it comes to matters of the HEART so...

So...

Why don't you?

You can't leave this situation hanging for any longer than it has been. Mierfa did, technically, try making the first move, even if she backed out at the last moment. The only thing that came out of THAT was you realizing that this situation even existed in the first place. So...
Why don't you just do something??

You've both been dancing around each other and not saying what you clearly want to say for long enough that... that you're not sure anything WILL ever happen if you don't do something. And then there's the whole MIDDLE OF A REBELLION thing going on that... if you... if either of you end up dying without resolving this, that'd make the other person feel HORRIBLE for not acting sooner and...

And...

You should totally just do something about this.

You run your hands through your hair. There's no point putting it off. You... there's a decent chance that even if you live through the next few years of active rebellion, you might never go back to earth. So... So WHO THE HELL CARES if you're restricting yourself to Earth's KINDA LIMITED Romantic options??? Because you're going to have to face it, Joey, you weren't exactly a SOCIAL BUTTERFLY who was MAKING FRIENDS OR BREAKING HEARTS, now were you? You didn't have many friends except for JUDE'S and none of THEM really stood out as potential romantic interests. Hell, the only real romantic interest you DID HAVE was some stupid CELEBRITY CRUSH that, really, was never going anywhere to begin with!!

And.... AND...

And Mierfa is right here in a VERY REAL WAY that could actually GO SOMEWHERE.

You've both been dancing around this for long enough. You're both being so afraid of... of what? Being hurt? Of making a mistake and loosing something?? That stuff can be worked through if you talk it through! ...But... but you're never going to get anywhere if you don't TALK about it in the first place.

SO WHY NOT GO DO SOMETHING RIGHT FUCKING NOW?!

You reach out with your MENTAL EXTENSIONS- the ARAI SWARM- and search the ship. You've kept a beetle near just about everyone so you could keep tabs of where they were, and the one you'd set for Mierfa is outside her room, meaning she's inside it still.

Right. You can try to do what she tried to do the first time. You'll go talk to her in her room about this. Nobody else is near by and could interrupt so...

You shut off the water and wrap a towel around yourself before exiting the stall. Normally you'd just go straight to your room and get dressed but right now you've built up this courage inside you and you're afraid that if you went to your room and stalled by getting dressed you'd just loose it all and THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN. Not now. Not today.

You've stalled for LONG ENOUGH.

It's time to pull the metaphorical trigger on this thing.

YOU'RE DOING THIS THING.
YOU'RE MAKING IT HAPPEN.

You head down the hall from the showers to the bedrooms and then knock on Mierfa's door.

She opens it and you quickly say that you need to talk before she can say anything else and you enter the room and close it behind you before you even take in the fact that she was clearly not fully dressed before you knocked. (Her shorts are not sitting straight on her hips and her shirt is on backwards.) Well. Okay that's fine. You're in here wearing a towel and are still soaking wet so...

You nearly lose all your confidence realizing how this has to look from an outside perspective. You had a SMALL SPEECH figured out in your head but it just completely FLEW THE COOP like one of Jude's BIRDS.

You stifle that by shoving that fear into a random Arai (Poor Callie, suddenly having to deal with an Arai that coincidentally started shivering in fear when she started putting together some sandwiches) and try to block out everything else.

"Mierfa," you say. "I... It's come to my attention that-" Oh god that sounds so much like you're going to turn her down- "That I might have a big crush on you and you might have a crush on me too so I'm just going to-" to do what? What did you come in here to say?? You forgot. You- this is a bad idea why did you think this was a good idea-- NO!! "I'm Going to kiss you right now and hope that I really haven't severely misinterpreted this situation at all!!!" You shout that out so fast that you're not even sure it came out as a proper sentence, and then you're grabbing Mierfa by her backwards shirt and you fucking KISS HER ON THE LIPS.

You pull back a few seconds later, looking fearfully into Mierfa's eyes and hoping you didn't just screw things up.

"You haven't misinterpreted anything at all, Claire!" She says, sounding VERY EXCITED, and then she pushes in and- and- It takes a solid two seconds to comprehend that she's DEFINITELY kissing you back so you reach up and grab her head and deepen the kiss.

Your name is Joey Claire and your brain just sort of stops working in any coherent manner after that.

---

Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE. About thirty seconds ago, this poor little ARAI BEETLE started shivering in fear for some reason. You don't know why- you were just making a SALAD SANDWICH- but just when you started trying to comfort it, it suddenly just expanded its wings and started VIBRATING them very RAPIDLY, as if trying to take off but firmly, stubbornly sitting in place.

After about five, maybe ten seconds of that, it stilled down again, then took off flying at a breakneck pace going somewhere else in the ship.

"Huh... that was weird." You muse over the situation for a moment. You suppose JOEY must have been feeling some RATHER STRONG EMOTIONS just now, for it to spread across the MENTAL CONNECTIONS she has to the Arai beetles. She's done a rather decent job at keeping her emotions separated from them for the most part, so for that to overcome her mental training and have an Arai flutter so dramatically...
Well, maybe it was just the one.

You go for the nearest intercom, "Hey, did anyone else noticed an Arai beetle get absurdly flustered for a moment?"

You get a reply from Xefros a moment later- but he's laughing so hard you can barely make out the words 'Hell Fucking Yes!' and variations there of.

You suppose it wasn't just your one little beetle then.

"Where's Joey?" You ask next.

Xefros calms down enough to inform you that he has A DECENT IDEA, but he's SO NOT GOING TO INTERRUPT.

You take that as a sign that it was a GOOD KIND OF FLUSTERED and not bad.

Your name is DAMMEK the "TETRARCH"- although it's kind of a USELESS TITLE at this point because the only one who's calling you that is HIVEKEEP and YOURSELF. Mainly because it's your CODE NAME and your teammates have shown a STARTLING DISDAIN towards code names for individual people.

As you're purusing through the COMMANDER'S PRIVATE COMPUER for any signs of IMPORTANT INFORMATION- namely, regarding the CORRUPTED CAGE in the medbay- you stumble across COMMUNICATIONS LOGS- privately encrypted ones, from the Ship's COMMANDER to someone called THE TACTICIAN.

You've HEARD OF THIS GUY- supposedly he's one of the BIG SHOTS like Arkadi was, one day expected to MAKE IT TO THE TOP and become the Empress' RIGHT HANDS. You wonder what that means for these logs.

You open one.

...

...

Oh boy is that some RAUNCHY PALE SHIT. They really need a PILE for stuff like this, because CLEARLY an intergalactic communications line just ISN'T CUTTING IT. You're of one mind to just pretend you NEVER SAW THIS, although you're STARTLINGLY SURPRISED to discover that the RUTHLESS BACK STABBER Arkadi was the CALMER MIND OF THE TWO.

This could make for some EXCELENT BLACKMAIL material, though...

As you're MULLING THIS OVER, you notice an INCOMING CALL, from this VERY SAME TACTICIAN.

...Oh this could either be GOOD, or be VERY BAD.

The Automated Process for RECORDING THE CALLS activates the moment you hit ACCEPT
"Lilith, finally, I've been trying to get through to you for two hours!" The SEA DWELLER MALE on the other end isn't even looking at the camera, instead already turning around in his chair as if he expected the call to not go through so soon. "How goes the cleansing of- WAIT A MINUTE. You're Not Lilith!!!"

"Eeeenope," you decide on saying. "This is definitely not Lilith Arkadi you're speaking to."

"WHO ARE YOU?" The TACTICIAN growls, leaning into the frame. "WHERE. IS. LILITH!?"

"Uh... That's a... difficult question to answer," you say.

"WHICH?" He presses. "WHICH ONE???

"The second one?" You shrug. "I'm..." Eh, Might as well. "The Tetrarch. As for Commander Arkadi... Well, I think she's presently a Purple smear across the Bottom of the Abyss??"

The TACTICIAN stares across the screen for a moment, then he asks a very serious question in a very low tone of voice. "Did you put her there?"

"Why yes, yes I did," you answer without flinching.

He sits there for a moment, and then... Something breaks within him.

"YOU. KILLED. MY. MOIRAIL."

"Well, technichally, her ship fell on her, I only just shot her knees out so she couldn't run out from under it," you helpfully supply.

"YOU! KILLED!! MY!!! MOIRAIL!!!!"

"Okay, I guess if you wanna put it that way, then yes, I did kill her." You agree.

"YOU. TETRARCH. YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE REBELS, AREN'T YOU!?" The Tactician asks, yelling, near hysterical. "YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONES SHE WAS SENT TO KILL!!"

"Well... yeah, I suppose that's true," you say. "I mean, I'm not part of any major cell or anything. It's really just a small band of me, and, like..." You count it out on your fingers in clear view of the camera just to screw with the guy. "Six other people? Like, not even worth sending her out here to deal with. I mean, hell, we don't even want Alternia in Open Rebellion at this stage. Just don't have the numbers for it." A bold faced lie but WHAT THE HELL. WHY NOT???

The Tactician sits there, stunned for a moment. "Then... HOW THE BLOODY FUCKING HELL DID YOU MANAGE TO KILL LILITH ARKADI!!?"

"Dude, I told you, we crashed her ship," You answer.

"HOW DID YOU DO THAT??!!"
"Oh, that's an easy one, we took out the engines." Not gonna tell him HOW though. "It just sunk like a rock and everything beneath her just went..." You make a SPLAT sound and give a sly little hand gesture, mimicking rocks and dust flying to the side.

He doesn't even ask how the hell you got past the shields- this TACTICIAN just ROARS IN RAGE.

"THEN TETRARCH OF THE REBELLION! I DON'T CARE IF ALTERNIA IS IN OPEN REBELLION OR NOT!! I WILL COME TO THAT PLANET AND SLAG THE ENTIRE THING TO GLASS AND INCINERATE EVERYTHING YOU LOVE AND HOLD DEAR FOR THIS SLIGHT!!!" He AMBITIOUSLY DECREES.

"You know, I don't think the Empress would like that very much," you offer, but the damn idiot just doesn't care.

"SO WHAT?! AFTER I'M DONE WITH YOU I'LL GO BLOW UP HER FLAGSHIP MYSELF!!" the Tactician roars. "YOU MIGHT AS WELL DECLARE ALTERNIA IN FULL REBELLION!!! NOT EVEN THE COMBINED MIGHT OF EVERY CHILD ON THAT PLANET COULD STOP ME NOW!!"

"...Wow, you really were the more insane one of the two, weren't you?" You ask. You're starting to see the need of having A PROPER MOIRAIL.

He doesn't even reply to that. "JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE, TETRARCH! AS SOON AS I GET MY FLEET DISENGAGED AND SET TO HYPERSPACE YOU WILL BE CRUSHED JUST AS THOROUGHLY AS MY LILITH WAS UNDERNEATH HER OWN SHIP- AS YOU SO CLAIM!!!"

"Well, it's not really a claim? But it'd be hard to get your proof if you really wanted it so-"

"PREPARE YOURSELF, TETRARCH!!! YOU WILL RUE THE DAY YOU MADE AN ENEMY OF ME- DRAGUM AKASHI- THE TACTICIAN OF THE EMPIRE!!!"

And thus, he cuts the transmission and you can't help but sit there and think...

"I am SO uploading this to Grubtube." Preferably under the title 'Local Rebel gets First Official Nemesis.'
FOLLOW THE ARAI where a lot of them are gathering, and you find the buggers SWARMING Mierfa's door instead.

Joey likely doesn't even realize what's going on. You hope nobody else besides Callie has noticed their ERRATIC BEHAVIOR. You try your best to get them to scatter, but short of grabbing them with TELEKENESIS, or borrowing a CAPTCHALOG DECK from the ARMORY, they're not going anywhere.

You feel a little weird just standing there, you go to your room, fetch a book, and set up in the hallway entrance to try and keep people from going down there and seeing the obvious. Your Moirail, while certainly not counting on you to do this, will certainly appreciate that you're giving her the alone time she and Mierfa have so desperately needed.

That said, when Joey finally comes out of Mierfa's room about half of your book's length later, wearing the other girl's spare clothes at that, looking satisfied at the events that transpired and VERY CONFUSED by the swarm of Arai Beetles around the door, you can't help but give her a thumbs up from across the hall.

She gives you a GOOFY GRIN and a thumbs up in return, then quickly absconds into her room, dragging the swarm of Arai beetles with her. A minute later, she slips back out, dressed in her usual clothes, and then heads back into Mierfa's room. This time, the Arai spread out across the ship, and take up their usual favored spots.

You'll go finish your book in your room, you guess.

---

**Dear Journal.**

**Well. I did it. We did it. That is to say. we're... Uh.**

**We That is to say**

**Mierfa's now my girlfriend, or the troll flush red equivalent.**

**And I think I'm really into girls, too.**

**Yeah.**

**We're both pretty happy about this development.**

-Joey

"Xef, do trolls get Married?" Joey asks you as you the second she enters your room for your next MUSIC JAM SESSION.

"Uh... Married?" You blink back at her. "What's that?"

"Okay, I guess that answers that question," Joey sighs, sitting down next to you, and then leaning
back against Sleepyhead. "It's... uh, well, matesprits that decide they're gonna be matesprits for as long as they both shall live? 'Til Death do they part? On Earth, usually one party takes the name of the other."

"Oh... Huh," You muse on that for a moment. "Well. No we don't really have anything like that per-say? I mean, generally matesprits stay matesprites until either they break the quadrant or one dies, so it's... yeah, we don't do something like that."

"Good to know." Joey nods.

"Sooo..." You try to broach the question respectfully. "How'd things with Mierfa go?"

And then her face goes red and she tells you in as few words as coherently possible how things went.

You get the gist, though. You guess the first time for any kind of interspecies SHENANIGANS would be pretty... uh... hold on, carry the syllable, divide by mumble...
"Amazing and Surprising and Amazing and Terrifying and Did I mention Amazing already?"

"Yes, Joey," You tell her, giving her a hug. "You mentioned how amazing it was about three times in a row now."

"Sorry," she blushes.

"It's fine," You tell her. "Honestly, I think it's good that's the thought whirling around in your head right now."

"It is?" She asks.

"You don't see it so much in visual media," you say, "but some of the, ah, romance writers who base their stories off of reality kind of agree when they and their Matesprits hooked up, that 'amazing' tended to be the thing that stuck around the most for the next few days." You nod. "Yeah, I'd say that's the pretty universal gut reaction to when you know you've got your Matesprit."

Joey smiles at that. "Thanks, Xef."

"Anytime," you grin. "Now, let's get to making some music!!"

...That's when Dammek screws everything up by calling you all to the bridge.

You watch the video.

Then you decide you're going to TELEKENTICALLY STRANGLE HIS ASS into the FUCKING SUN!!!

Your name is OKURII LEIJON, and you're HONESTLY feeling just about as mad as Xefros is at DAMMEK RIGHT NOW.

"You... fucking... Idiot!!" You growl at him. "YOU TAUNTED THE MOIRAIL OF THE LADY WE JUST KILLED INTO COMING TO TRY TO KILL US!!!" And worse??? "WORSE. YOU
"Relax, would you?!" Dammek says, glarring beneath his shades at you. "We've got a solid two months for him to get to us by ship. He's clear on the other side of the Galaxy."

"SO!?!" You ask.

"So, by then," Dammek smirks. "Cla'dia's shipyards will have finished the Prototype ship I designed, and we can prove it's worth by KICKING THIS GUY'S ASS!!"

"...What exactly is this ship you've been telling us exactly nothing about, anyways?" Callie asks.

"Yes, Dammek," you look him in his sunglasses covered eyes. "What is this SHIP, and what makes it so special?"

And then Dammek smirks. "Gather around, Kiddos, and lemme tell you about the Megaship."

Chapter End Notes

This is technically the end of ALTERNIA's FIRST SEASON.

Also, I spent entirely too long redrawing a Homestuck panel today. WHOO.

Happy Halloween.
SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1996.

"I..." Your name is JUDE HARLEY. "I can't believe it."

And your BIG SISTER is apparently a BADASS EMPIRE FIGHTING REBEL just like in the STAR WARS FILMS.

"That's... an interesting way to take out an enemy," JOLINAR remarks through Carter's mouth as the RECENTLY DECODED VIDEO FILE closes. "I shudder to imagine how that must have felt for its Commander."

CAPTAIN CARTER picks up a moment later, "Using a Hyperdrive to bypass a shield, in atmosphere? That's incredible! If we can retrofit a Hyperdrive onto one of those Death Gliders we recovered from Apophis' attack fleet, maybe we could do something similar the next time we're under attack?"

"It is certainly a very unique way of disabling an enemy," TEAL'C remarks.

"All I can think," COLONEL O'NEILL says, "is that she's definitely Harley's daughter."

"No argument there, Colonel," You chime in. "That's... that's Joey out there. My sister! Kicking ass and Chewing gum!" Except Joey's probably already all out of GUM. It's been a few years already, after all, and you CAN'T IMAGINE that pitiful POCKET FULL OF GUM STICKS lasting this long.

You can't help but admit to yourself how JEALOUS you are that she's gotten to do all of this. Makes you wish a little that you'd had a bit more COURAGE and leaped through the Gate with her.

"How long until you can decode the next mission report, Captain?" GENERAL HAMMOND asks.

"Shouldn't be any longer than a couple more hours, a day max," Carter answers. "It should be ready by the time we get back from the next scouting mission."

"Speaking of," Hammond says, nodding over at the stairwell, as SKAARA comes running up from the control room. "Skaara, Report?"

"Probe reported back footprints around the gate, Sir," Skaara answers. "The Gate's been recently used."
"Finally," Jolinar and Carter speak at the same time— it's a weird sound of both Carter's normal voice and Jolinar's modulated one sort of fighting over each other every syllable. After a moment of brief confusion over who should speak, Carter takes over. "Hopefully it's the Tok'ra's current homeworld."

"SG-1," Hammond nods to Colonel O'neill. "Gear up and head out. Mission is a Go."

"Yes, Sir," O'neill says, getting up from his chair.

A few minutes later, you're watching as SG-1 goes through the Gate. If there were a sound to Wormhole Travel, you would assume it would be loud and screechy.

When the Gate shuts off seconds after the transmission is completed, you sit there, staring at the thing.

Out there, somewhere in the Universe, your sister is doing things. And here you are... stuck on Base because people might want to kill you.

You can't go anywhere. You can't do anything but keep Jade safe.

You can't help but be a little bit mad about Skaara refusing to take care of his niece. At this point it's pretty clear that Daniel isn't coming back and it just seems wrong to keep Jade away from her family on Abydos...

But it's too late at this point.

For all that her familial status is "Foster," she might as well be legally adopted at this point. Frasier isn't going to let Jade out of her sight because of the genetic manipulations, and Roxy's basically taken to the girl just as firmly as she has her own daughter, Rose, and her own adopted son, John. And then there's the whole fact that the four of them—Jade, Nepeta, Rose, and John—have basically become as close knit friends as infants can become.

You hear, vaguely, someone telling General Hammond he's gotten a phone call, but you ignore it, continuing to stare at the Stargate.

How easy would it be to just... Dial an address and never come back? Constant adventure? Never ending excitement??

...But that'd be what your PA did. He chose to work on the puzzle of the Stargate over being a proper father to you and Joey for so very long...

You think...

You're not quite sure what you think.
friends wherever we go? From Earth??"

This just causes them all to tighten their grips on their weapons more.

"Sir," Carter interjects, "maybe it'd be better if WE handle this?"

"Oh, yeah, sure," you say.

Carter steps forward, taking center position, looking across the bunch of them, looking for someone in particular, you'd guess, by the way she pauses to take them in. Some of them seem SOMEWHAT INTIMIDATED by her staring at them, and take a half-step back in alarm.

Finally, she settles on one of them in particular. "Martouf, Lantash," and when she speaks, it's Jolinar's voice. "I was hoping to see you again."

"...Jolinar?" The one she's looking at asks in the same echoing voice as he removes his face mask, "You're... You're alive?" He looks rather ASTONISHED, if you do say so.

"Have been for a while," Jolinar says. "We've been searching through the backup bases trying to find you all, but they've all been abandoned. This was our last shot at finding you through the Addresses I knew."

"You're working with the Tau'ri?" this MARTOUF/LANTASH sounds annoyed, and you're not sure which one. There's a pause, then his voice is human. "What happened to Rosha?"

"It's a long story," Jolinar says. "Please, we've come all this way to talk with the Council. Lower your weapons, please."

Whoever is dominant, you're not sure who, nods to his FELLOW TOK'RA, you guess, and they lower their weapons.

"With us," the human host says, "when I tell you to leave your weapons with the guards, please do. You'll get them back when you leave."

"Figured you'd say something like that," you say.

And so you're lead through the DESERT ENVIRONMENT of this planet through some dunes.

"Quick question," Skaara voices, "why have all these secret base planets been uninhabited deserts?"

"Obviously it's so that the Goa'uld cannot track them down on living worlds," Teal'c notes.

"Ah, I thought that might be why," Skaara nods, a bit too much like Daniel for your liking. Kid's been starting to act a bit more like him lately, even going so far as to pick up where Jackson and Harley LEFT OFF on the whole 'FOUR RACES' thing from EARNEST'S PLANET.

Soon, you come to a HIDDEN RING PLATFORM, and are sent... UNDERGROUND? Yeah, it looks underground.

You're brought through the CRYSTALINE TUNNELS, and pass by what looks like a MED BAY.
"Wait!" Jolinar says, pausing when she sees someone's inside. "Is that Selmak?"

"Yes," the Tok'ra guy says. "Selmak's host, Saroosh, is dying."

"May I talk with her?" Jolinar asks.

"Yes, please," comes a distorted, elderly voice from inside. "Come in! Come in! I was hoping you might return."

This Martouf/Lantash guy shakes his head, and gives a command to the guards to wait outside. "We'll be but a minute. Someone go inform the Council Selmak wished to speak with the visitors."

You enter this MED BAY, and find an ELDERLY WOMAN lying on a stone bed. She smiles warmly at Carter/Jolinar.

"Jolinar, you've changed hosts!" She observes.

"It's a long story we've to tell the Council," Jolinar says, going over to kneel at the woman's bedside. "We're hoping... they'll be willing to form an Alliance."

"An alliance, hm?" Selmak chuckles. "I see you and your host have your plans like always. I hope this one pans out."

"How long do you have?" Jolinar asks.

"The Doctors say if I can find a new host, I should be able to survive," Selmak says, "otherwise, I might go with Saroosh." She eyes you and the rest of SG-1 with a humoring look. "I'd ask if any of you would like to stay and visit with me for a while, but I think Jolinar has something else in mind already." She looks to Jolinar, then says, "May I speak with your host, dear?"

"Of course." There's a pause, then Carter's voice comes out of her body next, "Hi. I'm Samantha Carter. It's a pleasure to meet you, Ma'am."

"Ma'am, hah," Selmak laughs. "It's been a while since anyone has called me 'Ma'am'!" She looks Carter over for a few moments, then asks, "Do you regret any of it?"

"I..." Carter pauses for a moment, then shakes her head. "No. I was wary at first- we didn't know the Tok'ra even existed as a real thing until I met Jolinar- but she's been a wonderful friend. I don't regret any of it."

"That's good," Selmak smiles, as if she knows something you don't. "If I pass today, I want you to take care of her, would you Samantha Carter? Jolinar gets into so much trouble when she's on her own."

You try to fight back the urge to laugh- because your first thought is 'She'll fight right in, then.'

"I will," Carter nods.
You are now SAMANTHA CARTER.

"You propose an Alliance, Jolinar, but what exactly do you have in mind?" The Tok'ra woman infront of you- GARSHAW OF BELOTE and her host YOSUF- seems very CONCERNED.

As Jolinar explains, you can FEEL HER WORRY. The idea of bringing in a single ambassador from Earth to be blended with a Tok'ra, while leaving Jolinar with you, doesn't seem to be a popular one at the moment.

It's only suggesting that it could save SELMAK that gets them to seriously consider it.

However, they wish to VET THIS NEW MEMBER first, and until that can be done, only YOU and COLONEL O'NEILL are allowed to leave.

The timing works out just WONDERFULLY, however, as DAVIS STRIDER comes through the Gate along with SG-3, to inform you that your DAD IS DYING.

You can't help but feel that this is maybe the universe giving you a SIGN. Jolinar agrees that it feels a little too COINCIDENTAL to be anything else but fate. And so you and Colonel O'neill, along with Strider, return back to Earth, while SG-3 stays behind.

As you're rushed to the HOSPITAL where your DAD is being held for the moment, you explain to Hammond about the circumstances regarding all of this, and he quickly agrees to write up the CLEARANCE PAPERWORK to let your Dad in on the BIG SECRET.

The conversation you and your Dad have in the minutes that follow have him skeptical about it all. He thinks you're making it up TO SPARE AN OLD MAN'S FEELINGS. Well, until you let Jolinar talk to him, that is.

Jolinar convinces him that it's all true, or atleast, gives him enough hope that he can survive this.

And so you and Colonel O'neill ferry him back to the SGC for going through the Gate.

"Captain Carter," You're paused half-way to the Gate room by JUDE, however. He looks you in the eyes and says, "I hope you and your Dad get through this."

You nod, and say, "I hope so too."

"Good luck!" And with that, Jude leaves you be.

"...A kid?" Your Dad asks as you resume the march to the Gate. "Why are kids down here in a Military Base?"

"That's an even longer story," You say, feeling like you and Jolinar both have said that a LOT today.

Your Dad is NATURALLY SURPRISED that the Stargate is even real. Although, you do catch him muttering something about "the weirdest dream ever" as you go through the Gate.
You are now JOLINAR, and you're feeling MIGHTY ANGRY upon finding out that the BASE IS UNDER ATTACK.

You know it wasn't anything YOU DID, or any of the SGC team members, which means there's A TRAITOR among the group.

While Colonel O'neill lends his aid to HELP EVACUATE, like the rest of SG-1 and SG-3 are, Carter waits in the background with MARTOUF/LANTASH while her father and SELMAK converse and get to know each other before the blending.

"...So what's to become of us, Jolinar?" Lantash asks of you.

"I'm not sure what you mean," you say, even as Carter lets you speak. "I thought you'd made it fairly clear that if I went on that mission there wasn't going to be an 'us' any more."

"Because we both thought you were going to die!" Lantash hisses, angry and fearful and you can't blame him. "And if Rosha is dead... we were at least half right."

"Don't act so smug," you remark. "It doesn't look well on you." And thus, feeling Carter wants to say something, you slip back and let her speak.

"I'm sorry things didn't work out between you two," Carter says.

There's a moment's pause, and then Martouf speaks. "I'm sorry as well. Lantash is very annoyed by today- he claims mostly because of the Goa'uld attacking, more so than anything else. But..." He gives a hapless shrug.

You scoff- mentally, of course. Of course Lantash would claim to only be ANNOYED by the Goa'uld. You know better. You and he both had thought you'd hit a metaphorical jackpot when you both had new hosts who were likewise attracted to each other. That he'd rather you have stayed and not risked it going on that mission...

What a SELFISH little Symbiote he's been.

"Jolinar's mostly annoyed with him, right now," Carter supplies. "I think..." she gives you a sort of mental nudge.

What? What does she want you to say? That you're just bitter he wasn't more supportive or something?!

"Yeah, I think she's just annoyed that he didn't support her on the last mission," Carter says, smiling faintly. "I know the feeling, a little." She glances over at her Father.

...Oh.

"I see," Martouf nods. "It's hard when the people we care about don't seem to want to support us in what we want to do."

Carter looks back at him, smiling a bit fuller now. "Hopefully if we all survive today, we can work it all out."
"Yes, that's-" Martouf's agreement is interrupted as you hear Selmak speak.

"Give an old woman one last kiss?" Semlak delivers in the usual, humor filled tone you're used to, and carter does a double take as you turn to watch Selmak jump hosts from Saroosh into Jacob Carter. Mouth to Mouth.

Carter feels squeamish, just a little bit, and you're inclined to agree. It's... almost sort of the equivalent of your respective PARENTIAL FIGURES making out, except in this case one of those two people are JUMPING BODIES and...

Well.

Honestly you're not quite sure what to make of any of this, not until Saroosh passes on, and the medics take her body away from the table.

"We'll have to wait for Selmak to heal his body," Lantash speaks. "Then we can evacuate with everyone else."

"I wonder how they found us?" you can't help but ask.

"Ask and you shall receive!" and then COLONEL O'NEILL comes in along with SKAARA, TEAL'C, and GARSHAW. "We found a Rattlesnake among the Gardeners."

"Excuse me? What kind of metaphor is that?" Lantash asks, frowning.

"Cordesh was compromised," Garshaw explains. "As far as we can tell he was caught on his last mission, and had his symbiote pulled out from his host and replaced with a Goa'uld, then sent back to pretend to be Cordesh."

"That's..." you can't believe it. "How could they have found him out?"

"No," Carter interjects, "a better question is how long has he been compromised?"

"At least long enough that we've had to change bases faster than you all could catch up with us," Martouf remarks. "I thought they had to have some way of tracking us."

"We've dealt with this traitor now," Garshaw says. "And we've decided to detour briefly to Earth instead of the next base, just in case."

She switches to her Host, Yosuf. "The Council has decided that an Alliance is worth pursuing. We might not have caught this traitor without your arrival provoking him into early action."

Gee, thanks.

"SG-3's dialing out as we speak," O'neill says. "Is Jacob...?"

"We can't move him yet, Sir," Carter says. "Martouf and I will wait here for him to wake up, and we'll go after you the moment he's awake."

"...Fine," O'neill says. "But I want Teal'c waiting with you for some extra muscle, in case you need it."
And there's no debate about it, by the tone of his voice.

You're JUDE HARLEY once again, and you're WAITING WITH BAITED BREATH for the last of SG-1 to return through the gate.

And then- SUDDENLY- the incoming wormhole comes in, and Carter, Teal'c, Carter's DAD, and some OTHER GUY come through the gate along side a BURST OF FLYING SAND.

You can finally EXHALE IN RELIEF.

Everyone made it back home in one piece.

...You just wish your PA could have been here for it.

Chapter End Notes

Decided it was actually easier to condense this two part episode into a single chapter. I know, right, I'm not being very consistent on what I break up into two parters and what ones I don't. :P

As TOUCHSTONE got butterflied away... next episode up SG-1 side is A MATTER OF TIME.
SEPTEMBER 26TH, 1996.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, and you're honestly feeling pretty good about today. SG-2 is ALL OFF DUTY for the next week, no missions in sight. SG-1 is OFF WORLD on a ROUTINE MISSION TO ABYDOS, and nothing wrong ever happens on Abydos anymore, it feels like. Earth has made an ALLIANCE with the TOK'RA, and secured a MINING CONTRACT for a NEW ELEMENT called TRINIUM.

Plus, in the reason that SG-2 is off duty, you happened to be in the RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME for all of ONE MINUTE to stop a ROGUE BRANCH of the NID from swiping some DHD CONTROL CRYSTALS from a LAB SAFE.

(You stared at the team leader who was not supposed to be there. He stared at you. Then you and your team shot those bastards with your ZAT GUNS before any of them could react. Good day!)

And so all that YOU HAVE TO DO today is SIT IN JAKE HARLEY’S OLD OFFICE (now technically JUDE HARLEY’S OFFICE since the Kid's petitioned (Okay, more like INSISTED) to take over management of his PA’S PERSONAL PROJECTS) and keep FOUR RAMBUNCTIOUS TYKES occupied while Jude and CASSANDRA sort out Jake Harley’s ATROCIOUS FILE KEEPING SYSTEM.

Apparently old JAKE HARLEY liked to keep EXTENSIVE RECORD of a lot of THINGS THAT DIDN’T NEED TO BE KEPT RECORD OF.

"Another bank statement from 1980," Jude frowned. "I do NOT want to know why Pa was spending this much money on PET SUPPLIES! Joey says we didn't even get Tesseract until she was three!"

"Here's one from 1991," Cassandra said, frowning as well. "...What's 'PlushRump.Com'?"

"Ah!" You yelp, reaching over to grab that. "You'll find out when you're older! Preferably older than me!!" You look at the bill and sure enough, there's one of your BRO’S SIDE VENTURES listed on this bank statement. That's a LOT of SIXES AND NINES. Damn it. Just when you thought things couldn't get weirder.

"Davish!!" Rose tugs at your pant leg, and you look down at the girl.
"What is it?" You ask, and the purple eyed girl just points over towards NEPETA, who seems to be building up towards a SNEEZE.

Oh.

Crap.

"CHU!" the little cat-girl sneezes like a kitten- but her wings flare out and a SUDDEN BURST OF NEON ORANGE LIGHT flares out from the FEATHERY THINGS, temporarily making the room seem like it's been filled by TWO TINY WING SHAPED SUNS.

Thank god for your SUNGLASSES, you think as the glow fades away, and you go to help little Nepeta clean her nose with a kleenex.

"Erugh," Jude groans as he likely blinks the spots out of his eyes. "How long before she gets control over that again, do you think?"

"Nurse Ka'turnal seemed to think she should regain control after another two weeks or so," You say, frowning as even Nepeta blinks her eyes from the strain of the recent double flash.

Her eyes water up, she starts breathing heavily. Even little JOHN knows enough about what's gone wrong to mutter what sounds like an "Uhoh."

"Back in a minute!" You say, scooping Nepeta up off the floor and quickly scooting out of the office before her crying upsets the other three into crying.

And CRY SHE DOES the moment you've got the office door closed.

"Ssssh! C'mon, little crow, it'll pass." Maybe you should consider getting her GOGGLES instead of SUNGLASSES. At least those could shield the SIDES OF HER EYES from any wing flares that the Sunglasses just aren't.

You start walking her around the hallways, trying to calm her down. Just when you've STARTED TO GET A HANDLE ON THOSE FRESH NEON BLUE WATERWORKS, that's when the GATE ALARM sounds off, and you're sighing in dismay. Because Nepeta takes the alarms as just another reason to start CRYING LIKE MAD. Even worse than just the eye flashing.

Then, there's a voice over the base intercom- "STRIDER AND HARLEY TO THE GATE CONTROL ROOM."

Aw. COME. ON.

Well, you hope nobody minds you bringing a CRYING CAT-CROW GIRL along for the ride.

You've just about managed to calm her down again by the time you and Jude make your way into the CONTROL ROOM.

Jude, of course, has Jade in arm, she seems a bit UPSET as well, though you can't imagine why.

"What's up?" You ask.

"Incoming wormhole, and a strange signal on the IDC channel," Hammond says. "Walter, play it out."
And thus Walter does his job.

The SLOW, RHYTHMIC PULSING that comes out of the speakers sounds... ODDLY FAMILIAR.

"Uh oh... That's definitely a signal of some kind," Jude says, handing Jade over to you and oh GOSH WHY now you've got two kids in arm. He starts typing at a keyboard. "Let's speed it up a bit..."

You look to HAMMOND, silently asking "Why is the kid here?"

Hammond answers your question with a KNOWING NOD towards the Gate.

OH. Right. Because CATER AND JOLINAR are OFF WORLD, and thus, Jude Harley, SON of the guy who helped GET THE GATE PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND and probably knows more about the Base's systems than a kid his age should.

Speaking of. "Who's off world?"

"SG units 1, 4, 6, and 10," Hammond answers.

"Ah! There is a pattern but it's still too slow!" Jude exclaims as he plays back a slightly faster sounding signal. "Speeding it up even more, and...!"
And then a SCREECHY DIALUP TONE runs through the speakers and the computers identify it as...

"SG-10'S IDC!" Walter exclaims.

"Better open the iris," You say, frowning. "Or else we're gonna hear some loud thwumps next."

"Right," Hammond nods to Walter, and he opens the IRIS.

The Gate sits there, active, idle, for what seems like an eternity. It's really just three seconds, then you hand off Jade back to Jude and try the radio. "SG-10, this is SGC. The Door's Open, over."

...But nothing happens. There's not even a REPLY BACK from the other side.

"Come on, Boyd," you hear Hammond whisper.

Nepeta starts sniffing- whimpering again- picking up on the ANXIOUS FEELING in the room.

And then the Stargate SHUTS DOWN.

"What happened?" Hammond asked. "Why didn't they come through?"

"Probably for the same reason their IDC came through so slowly, Sir," You say, growing serious as you shift Nepeta in your arms a bit. "They're in trouble."

"Strider, get any SG-2 team members currently on base ready to suit up and head out the minute we get solid probe data back," Hammond says. "Walter, get a MALP on the ramp in five minutes or faster."
"Yes, sir." Walter gets up from his seat.

"Jude," you say, "let's get these tykes back to the office."

"Right," Jude nods.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, and you've got a feeling today is going to be a VERY LONG DAY.

"Alright!" You say to your team about six minutes later. You say YOUR TEAM because the commander- FERRETTI- is out of town visiting FAMILY. "Major Henry Boyd and his team went to P3W-451 to investigate why all life there suddenly up and died recently. The minute-" You stress "THE MINUTE" a second time as the Gate begins dialing. ".-We get solid intel on what's on the other side of that Gate, we're going through and rescuing them."

"SIR!" Your team SALUTES, and you head up to the CONTROL ROOM.

Cassandra and Jude are standing there observing- no kids in sight. (You ran into Doc Fraiser on the way back to Harley's office and handed the tykes all off to her for the next few minutes.) Jude, you can understand, but Cassandra?

"I've got a bad feeling about this," she says without prompting, staring at the gate. "We shouldn't be dialing to this planet."

"We'll see what we get from the probe," Hammond says. "If it's truely that bad... well... the rescue mission is scrubbed."

"Hopefully it's just a malfunctioning Stargate or DHD," Jude says, but he doesn't sound HOPEFUL.

"Chevron Seven, LOCKED!" Walter informs before the WAA WAA KAWOOSH goes off. "Sending MALP."

The probe goes through the Gate, and Cassandra lets out a heavy breath as the thing gets sent through the wormhole.

"It's too late now," she mutters. "We're going to have to deal with whatever's on the other side now."

"Way to be pessimistic," you say. "Could just be a storm came up on them suddenly, or--"

RED.

Nothing but RED fills the screen as the MALP begins sending data back through the wormhole.

"...The fuck is this shit?" You swear, regardless of the kids present.

"Crap," Jude swears as well, sitting down and working at a keyboard. "It's Redshifted!"

"What's that mean, exactly?" Cassandra asks, her voice full of fear that you're starting to feel as well.
"The light we're receiving is extremely short on wavelengths," Jude says. "Roxy was telling me about this a few years ago. It's basically... well, it's not good, that's for sure. I'm adjusting the data to be filtered properly."

The images on the screen begin resolving, and soon enough, you've got a SOLID IMAGE of SG-10 running AWAY FROM THE DHD, frozen in lockstep as they fearfully glance back over their shoulders.

"What in God's name...?" Hammond mutters. "Why aren't they moving?"

"This is all the data we've received," Walter answers. "Three frames in the last minute. Er. Four."

The screen updates forwards another frame- imperceptibly, the SAND being kicked up around SG-10's FEET has drifted somewhat.

"The Malp should still respond to controls," you say. "Pan up."

"Right," Walter nods, and inputs the commands.

Another frame later- the camera drifts upwards ever so slightly. Another frame- more slightly higher. And another, just ever so slightly higher too.

Frame after frame, you gradually get a GOOD LOOK at what they're running from.

"Is that some kind of storm cloud?" You ask.

"No," Jude says, voice clammy. "I'm going to try enhancing the picture a bit better once we get a solid look at it. I really hope I'm wrong."

After about SIX MINUTES, and only ELEVEN FRAMES have really shown up.

But they're terrifying FRAMES nevertheless, especially once Jude highlights a SPECIFIC FRAME.

"Is that what I think it is?" Cassandra asks, voice barely above a whisper.

"It's a black hole," Jude answers, voice likewise just a whisper. "A recently formed one, too, I'd guess from the field around it. Didn't this planet have a binary star system?"

"It did, yes," Hammond answers.

"...Then I'd say one of the stars just collapsed and is pulling in everything around it." Jude says, voice still nothing above a whisper. "The stellar matter from the other sun- making that swirly thing around it. Asteroids..."

"The planets in the solar system?" you offer.

"Yeah," Jude nods.

"Shut it down," Cassandra requests- no. ORDERS. DEMANDS. "Shut it down NOW."

You look to Hammond, "Kid's right. There's nothing we can do for them."
Hammond reluctantly nods, agreeing, "Shut it down."

Walter types in the command- and frowns when the computer errors at him. He types it in again, and it errors a second time... "The... The Gate won't disengage."

"Did you try again?" Hammond asks.

"Twice, sir," Walter answers.

"We're screwed," Cassandra states the obvious, and then collapses into the first available empty chair. "We are so totally screwed it's not even funny."

Of course the kid would be afraid of black holes. The appearance of one in OBSERVABLE RANGE at HANKA was why the SGC had built an observatory. And that was just WEEKS before...

Before her whole planet was wiped out.

"Damn it," you swear. "There goes my vacation."

"I'm going to go contact the President," Hammond says. "Hopefully the Gate will time out soon enough and we won't have to worry about this any longer."

And thus, he goes upstairs.

You consider your options for a moment, then realize you know SHIT about how the Gate actually works. Better ask someone who might have a somewhat better understanding.

"Jude," you say, "what options do we have?"

"Uh..." The kid blinks, and looks up at you. "You're asking me??"

"You're a Harley, and the next best thing we've got to Carter around here," you say. "Plus you navigated your way through the Signal problem and the red-shifting already. Give it a shot. What can we do?"

"...Hrm," Jude muses on it. "...If the gate doesn't shut down on its own, we could try pulling the main power supply from it. That seems to shut down a Gate pretty quickly."

You find Seargent SILER and task him with discharging the capacitors connecting the STARGATE to the power grid EARLY. See if that does any good. By the time he's finished DOING THAT, though... the Gate has reached its THIRTY-EIGHT MINUTE WINDOW and... stubbornly remains active.

Worse than that, the wormhole's eventhorizon has... uh...

STARTED SPINNING.

That's when Hammond comes back down from his office. He just stares at the Gate for a minute, before asking, "Do I even want to know why it's doing that?"
"Probably not, Sir," you answer. "How'd talking with the President go?"

"I couldn't get through," he answers.

"We've lost communications with anyplace above Level 24!" some hapless technician reports then. "Floors under it are... uh... kind of funky?"

"Funky how?" Jude asks, turning in his chair to face the technician.

"Like... sort of sped up on a video tape in fastforwards?" the Technician answers.

"...How do we sound to them?" he asks.

"...Slow like a walkman loosing power, was the description I got," the technician answers.

"...Bloody hell," Jude swears, sounding quite a bit like his PA. "Time Dilation. We're experiencing it on our side now."

"Time Dilation?" Cassandra asks, speaking up for the first time in almost... thirty minutes now?

"That's why the camera feed is so slow from the MALP," Jude says. "The closer you get to a black hole, the slower time gets. We're experiencing the exact same thing right now, even though we're nowhere NEAR the actual Black Hole."

"So basically the closer we are to the Stargate, the slower time is moving?" Hammond summarizes.

"Pretty much," Jude answers with a grim nod.

"That explains the communications problems," Hammond says. "I'm going to go to the surface and attempt to contact the President that way. See if you can shut the Stargate down in the meantime."

And thus, he heads off to go do that.

"Siler!" You call into the Gate Room, "With me to the Power Vault. We're going to shut this thing down manually."

"I'll dig up what breakers you need to pull," Walter says, and with that, you go to the POWER ROOM.

"You know," Siler says as you head into the breaker room. "I had a bad feeling when I drove in to work this morning. I said to myself, 'Siler, I'm just not sure it's worth it to come in today."

"Hah," You laugh, dryly. "Well, it's not like anyone would have noticed for a while, that's for sure."

With Walter and Jude in your ears directing you to the RIGHT POWER BREAKERS, you quickly begin pulling switches and DISCONNECTING THE GATE from the power grid.

None of it works.

So, you're told to try the MAIN BREAKER.
You and Siler get a SHOCKING REBUTTAL for trying it from the Breaker box itself. You're... just gonna... pass out for a minute...

You are now CASSANDRA FRAISER, and the sudden LIGHTNING STORM surrounding the Stargate makes everyone DUCK FOR COVER. Everyone except you. You just sit there and STARE, watching as the wormhole's EVENTHORIZON just flickers and destabilizes... but inevitably...

Stays active.

The smoke filling the room begins to behave STRANGELY, though.

It starts drifting towards the Stargate's still SWIRLING EVENTHORIZON, and then is SUCKED IN like it's being pulled into a -

A BLACK HOLE.

You grab a PEN with a cute little BRACELET CHAIN on it from the nearest desk and run down into the GATE ROOM. You seriously hope you're wrong about this.

You hold the pen out towards the gate from the bottom of the ramp, and then let go of it.

Instead of the object falling towards the floor and dangling from your wrist... the chain goes TAUGHT around your hand as the pen seems PULLED towards the Stargate.

That strong? All the way from the bottom of the ramp??

You pull you hand out of the chain, and then, just... let it go.

FWOOSH-SCHLORP!

The Pen FLIES into the STARGATE. No, you suppose it'd be more accurate to say it FELL into the Stargate.

"CLOSE THE IRIS!" you yell up to the control room. "CLOSE IT RIGHT NOW!!"

Jude has no problem with typing in the code himself.

The IRIS slides closed, and you take a few stabilizing breaths...

Not that it does any good for your nerves.

You KNEW dialing to this planet was a bad idea. You're not sure HOW YOU KNEW, but you just KNEW.

Your name is DAVIS STRIDER, and as you're getting BANDAGED UP for your troubles in the
infirmary by DOC FRAISER, a NURSE comes in, leading a STRIKE TEAM dressed in black uniforms and pointing guns everywhere.

"Oh what now," You groan, sitting up. "Put those things away! There are kids sleeping nearby!" You point over at a NEARBY COT where the four kids seem to be sound asleep- or are doing a decent job of pretending.

You're not actually sure how this TIME DILATION STUFF is affecting them so it might actually be NAP TIME for them. Also, you're not quite sure HOW LONG you were knocked out for either, so...

The leader of the team steps forwards. "I'm Colonel Cromwell, US Special Forces. The Pentagon sent us to stop an alien incursion. Who are you?"

"Dave Strider. And there's no aliens incurring wraiths anywhere," You gripe. "Just a fucking Black Hole."

"...Say What Now?" this CROMWELL guy asks, blinking.

"Doc, am I good to go?" You ask.

"Your burns aren't as bad as Silers, but don't over do it, Davis," she says.

"Right," you get up from your chair. "Follow me."

And thus you lead them to the GATE ROOM.

"That's the Stargate, and yeah," you point at the IRIS SEALED GATE. "We dialed a planet that's being eaten by a Black Hole. Didn't realize it was a bad thing 'til the damned Gate wouldn't shut off. That was about... uh..."

You look to Jude, who seemed to be busy giving Cassandra a COMFORTING HUG, then over to WALTER.

"It's been about fifty minutes in here," Walter says.

"You guys are running slow," CROMWELL says, "you've been out of contact for five hours now."

"Even longer, actually-" And then like the mother of all TIME GODS, in comes GENERAL HAMMOND, dressed up for a meeting with the President. "Colonel Frank Cromwell, I presume?"

"That's me," Cromwell observes Hammond. "You must be Hammond. I was wondering where you were."

"Washington," he answers, "There and back again. It's been almost two whole days topside so far."

You look to your watch, and frown, "Well that's just not fair," Cromwell even taps his own watch out of annoyance, but says nothing. "What's the plan, General?" You ask.

"We discussed options all night long," Hammond says. "Personally, I put forwards a plan that was inspired by Colonel O'neill and Captain Carter's impromptu trip to Antarctica."
"Oh?" You ask. "Did you now?"

"The Pentagon agreed that it's worth a shot, and it's being pushed forwards as our PLAN A." Hammond says, "A special, focused shaped charge bomb is being designed as we speak. Possibly finished, already, given the time differences. We're to detonate it at a set distance away from the Stargate's Eventhorizon, and pray that when it blows, it jumps the Wormhole to any other Stargate along the line and we can shut it down safely."

"Alright," you say. "What if it fails?"

"Then we destroy the entire SGC with the base self destruct and hope that it takes the Gate and the Wormhole with it," Hammond says. "This was actually going to be their Plan A, believe it or not. But the idea of using the Second Stargate to reboot the program inspired me to put my idea forwards, half formed as it was at the time. Now, a base wide scuttling is just Plan B, though I wish it were more along the lines of Plan Z. Honestly." He shakes his head. "Why people's first idea when something goes wrong is to just bomb it all out of existance I have no idea. I swear, it seems like half the people in Washington right now just want to blow things up regardless of the consequences."

"That's Politics for you," Cromwell dryly notes. "So how long 'til that bomb gets here?"

"No clue," Hammond shrugs. "However, I'm going to order a base wide evacuation in the meantime. If this Plan A fails, we're going to need everyone evacuated anyways for Plan B."

"I'll stay behind for Plan B, Sir," you volunteer. "We're going to need two people to set the Base Self Destruct, so I'll be one."

"I might as well be the other one," Cromwell also volunteers. You eye the guy suspiciously. He seems like a dude with an AGENDA.

"Fine by me," you say. "Jude, why don't you take Cassie and the kids up to the surface."

Jude considers that, then nods. "Right, good luck, Dave."

And So....

YOU WAIT.

Hours pass as you, once again CASSANDRA, wait for the BOMB TO ARRIVE. You and Jude help ROXY and JANET keep the KIDS OCCUPIED, in the mean time, but your thoughts are dragged downwards, towards the Stargate.

Towards the BLACK HOLE threatening to eat your new homeworld.

You feel like this BOMB IDEA has some great potential to work out- again, not sure where that feeling is coming from- and that the backup plan- JUST BLOWING EVERYTHING UP- is the worst possible idea ever.

Jude asks Roxy what the math would be, hypothetically, if something like this were to happen, because she apparently still doesn't have FULL CLEARANCE to know everything going on in the SGC- by choice, you've heard. She knows just enough to know there's a PORTAL TO OTHER
PLACES, but not what it is, how it works, or any of the other pertinent details.

She considers it, musing on the details, and then tells you both that A SITUATION LIKE THIS should be theoretically impossible by what everyone knows about MODERN RELATIVITY. But, she admits that she's AT LEAST A GOOD TWO YEARS out of date on CURRENT THEORIES and hasn't had the time to CATCH UP with the current notions.

However, it seems the question has SPARKED HER INTEREST, and you see a GLIMMER in her eyes that you've often seen around the SGC- usually from Carter, though.

You wouldn't be surprised if she asks for full clearance sooner or later. Another two hours later, she does, citing that she's got to 'face her fears about what happened with Jake!'

That gets your mind ticking.

You're back to being Dave Strider again. It's not going to be a VERY LONG WAIT down here- though it is one punctuated by RANDOM SHOCKWAVES as GRAVITY STARTS DISTORTING around the GATE, making it seem longer than it has any right being.

One of the WINDOWS is starting to CRACK.

"So... why are you here, Cromwell?" You ask, once it's only the two of you here.

"I wanted to make things right with Colonel O'neill," he answers. "We served together once. Made a mistake, I don't think I ever rightly made it right with him. When I heard he worked here, and the base was under incursion, I... wanted to pay him back."

"I see." You nod. "Can't fault that."

And then SILER comes into the room alongside JUDE and CASSIE and one ROXY EGBERT, who you have no idea why she's here- she didn't have clearance last you knew. Miss Roxy and Siler are working to carry the EXPLOSIVE DEVICE the size of SILER'S CHEST into the room, and Jude and Cassie follow along with several large heavy looking BUNDLES OF ROPE and a SMALL HAND POWERED WINCH, respectively.

"You got better fast," you note, glancing towards Siler.

"It's been a few days," he answers, smiling wryly.

Ah. Of course it has.

"And I didn't expect to see you two in here again," you add, looking at Jude and Cassie.

"Facing my fears," is all Cassie says to you, glancing nervously at the Gate.

"Also," Jude adds, "we needed people light enough to get pulled back in before the bomb goes off-"

"No way," you decide.

"Definitely No!" Roxy agrees. "You two are NOT going into that room with a BOMB!"
"I'll do it," You say.

"Same, I'll-" Cromwell is cut off as a LARGE TREMOR SHAKES THE ROOM, breaking the CENTER WINDOW, and sending GLASS flying towards the Stargate.

You stare out after it, watching as the shards seem to slow down as they get closer and closer, and then...

**CRIIIINNNKLLLLEEE THHHWWHUUUUUUUMMMPP.**

The Iris vibrates visibly. Like a PIECE OF TITANIUM bending and flexing like WATER in slow motion.

"...Yeah, we're not sending you two in there," You say.

"...Fair point," Jude concedes. "We'll, uh, we'll help pull you back in if we need to."

"Alright," you say. "Fair enough."

In a SHORT amount of time later, relative to YOU of course, you've got THREE LONG ROPES trailing out towards the GATE through the CONVENIENTLY BROKEN WINDOW. The bomb is hanging, suspended from the CENTER ONE, and you and CROMWELL are on either side, RAPPELLING SIDEWAYS towards the Gate.

It feels like you're going DOWN HILL from the top of EVEREST, though. Gravity gets NOTICEABLY HEAVIER the closer to the Gate you get.

~~"DAVISLOOKOUTDAVIS!!"~~

You look upwards, and see the kids all yelling, leaning out the center window as the two SIDE ONES have clearly broken and their GLASS IS RAPIDLY ACCELERATING TOWARDS YOU!

"SHIT!" Cromwell swears, and you both BRACE FOR IMPACT.

The Glass SHOWERS OVER YOU, and then HITS THE IRIS.

This time, it hits with enough force to cause the damned thing to COLLAPSE INTO THE EVENTHORIZON...

And it looks like something out of a BLOODY NIGHTMARE. The MINOR SWIRLING from before has progressed into a full blown TORNADO/HURRICANE that you're watching from ABOVE THE EYE OF THE STORM ITSELF. It certainly is making a GOD AWFUL NOISE like a storm, that's for sure.

"CLOSE ENOUGH!" you decide, yelling over the SURPRISINGLY LOUD EVENTHORIZON. "SET IT FOR TWENTY SECONDS!"

"RIGHT!" Cromwell sets the bomb, and you and him begin rappelling upwards...

Once you're a good distance away, and the Bomb is set in the angle you were told to put it at, you reach for the RED PULLCORD AND-
You hesitate. Some INSTINCT yells in your head not to pull it and you WAIT.

Then, there's another GRAVITY WAVE that you feel in your BONES as you're YANKED DOWNWARDS towards the gate. Your hand slips free from the detonation cord without pulling it.

You stop just a few inches closer to where you started your ASCENT.

Cromwell isn't so lucky, as his ROPE SNAPS and he goes flying into the STARGATE. HORROR is ETCHED onto his face.

There's nothing you can do as he gets sucked into the eventhorizon- SCHLLOOOORRPH- even the sound is distorted.

And then he's gone, sent to P3W-451 in one piece, if he was lucky. If not... you don't want to think about the 'if not.'

You ascend back up to the bomb, and PULL THE CORD, and then continue climbing up. It goes faster now, as you can see SILER, ROXY, JUDE, AND CASSIE all pulling you up.

As you get closer to them, they speed up and the BOMB SLOWS DOWN.

It's the longest TWENTY SECOND COUNT DOWN you've ever witnessed, but you're PULLED INTO THE COMMAND ROOM and down beneath a desk just as it hits ZERO.

There's a mighty WHITE FLASH from the Gate Room that floods into the Command room and you're ONCE AGAIN GLAD you've got your SHADES ON.

Still, you close your eyes because DAMN IS THAT BRIGHT and lasting a LOT LONGER than it needs to-

And then the SOUND HITS YOU, a deafening, rushed WHOOOSH that goes by faster than it should have, and then the sound is gone, the light is gone, and you feel LIGHTER.

The five of you get to your feet, and look out into the Gate Room.

EVERYTHING is FINELY DUSTED with a layer of BLACK ASH, except for the WORMHOLE EVENTHROIZON.

The perfectly normal wall of water, that shuts down all on its own for a LACK OF POWER three seconds later.

Casually, Roxy picks up the nearest phone and DIALS SOME SURFACE PHONE. "Hammond?" She begins, a grin starting to form on her face. "We did it."

You think now's about as good of a time as any to CRASH TO THE FLOOR.

When you open your eyes next, it's to the LOVELY SIGHT of Nepeta leaning against your chest, peering at you with those LIVELY ORANGE EYES of hers.
You're in the infirmary, you notice, and not alone at that.

"Hey, Dave," FERRETTI grins at you, looking up from his NEWSPAPER. "Did I miss anything?"

"Nah," you croak out. "What day is it?"

Ferretti checks his newspaper, then reports, "OCTOBER 10TH, 1996."

You lean back into your pillow as you put an arm protectively around Nepeta and laugh.

"Two weeks," You say instinctively. "I wonder if I can get overtime pay for this shit?"

"Probably," Ferretti says, smiling. "Hammond's saying you might be getting a Promotion."

"Seriously?" You laugh. "Like I did anything."

"Dave, you climbed towards a BLACK HOLE and threw a bomb in its face, all while already dealing with an electrical shock to the heart," Ferretti says, smile shifting into a grin. "Takes courage to do something like that. If that's not worthy of a promotion, I dunno what is."

"I'll take the pay if they're going to give it to me," You say, sighing. "Out of curiosity, how'd O'neill take the news?"

"You mean about the whole Black Hole thing?" Ferretti asks, frowning. "He was kind of mad he missed the whole thing but--"

"Colonel Cromwell," You clarify. "How did he react about Colonel Cromwell."

"Oh. That," Ferretti muses on it for a moment, then says, "I think you'd better ask him face to face."

"...Maybe tomorrow," You say. "I think I've earned a nap."

"That you have, definitely," Ferretti says. "Sleep well, Major Davis."

"Mmmrh. Whatever, Freddy," you bite back as you close your eyes.

He laughs, and you feel that everything's RIGHT IN THE WORLD again.

It only occurs to you as you drift off that you were RIGHT. Today really WAS a freaking long ass day. Two Weeks!

That's just great.

Chapter End Notes

Alternate title for this episode; "Knight of Time." As far as SBURB Classpects go, which aren't quite technically a thing here in this crossover, Cassie might well be a SEER CLASS, but of the ASPECT, I'm not quite sure. Doom or Time seem likely fits,
but we'll see. Jude is role playing a little bit, trying to act like his PA’s PAGE OF HOPE classpect, but it's not quite the fit for him that it should be. Dave Strider is still Dave Strider, though, Knight of Time through and through. Roxy's starting to get in touch with her ROGUE OF VOID side of things, too. Naturally, a BLACK HOLE would garner her attention in some way.

Next episode SG1 side is "The Fifth Race."
Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE, and you're quite sure that you dialed the WRONG PLANET.

"This looks NOTHING like the abandoned planet we were supposed to dial into," MIERFA DURGAS agrees with you.

"Either we dialed wrong, or this planet got some people in the mean time," JOEY CLAIRE muses.

"I'm pretty sure it's that last one," Xefros says, "Considering this situation."

The situation in question being that the four of you are currently BOUND to a LARGE METAL STRUCTURE of MOFANG ORIGIN by way of GRAVITY FIELD. Said gravity field is also KEEPING IT IN THE AIR, meaning you can't just walk away from it.

At first everything had been fine, and then you came across this MOFANG DEVICE outside of some SMALL, PARKED SHUTTLE, also of Mofang Design. You saw it distantly, and approached it without thinking, annnnd... everyone got trapped.

Then, the stupid thing started FLYING UPWARDS and you saw that instead of a DESERTED PLANET, the whole place seemed to have been overtaken by MOFANG OUTPOSTS. You can't see any PEOPLE, MOFANG OR NOT, moving about below you, though, which is QUITE WORRISOME.

"I'm sorry," you say. "I should've thought what it could have been before approaching it."

"It's fine!" Joey says, and the others nod, but...

No. You know you screwed up. There's no going back from this. You should have thought things through better. You shouldn't have just assumed that everything would be alright. You're not forgivable for something like this.

And so you turn around on the MULTI SIDED OBJECT, and pry a panel loose. "Prepare yourselves! I'm going to try shorting this thing out!"

Inside is a MESS OF WIRES AND CABLES reflecting how you FEEL INSIDE. You reach in, and just start YANKING OUT WIRES. CUTTING CONNECTIONS. CUTTING TIES.

You'll get them out of this but you just- YOU CAN'T KEEP BEING AROUND THEM. You screwed up too badly this time! It's UNFORGIVABLE!!
You pull out something like a POWER SOURCE, and then the thing runs a SHOCKING CURRENT RUNNING THROUGH YOUR HEART.

This is it, you think as you fly away faster than the Gravity field can pull you back in. This is how it ends. You watch the ORB descend safely, and you fall towards your imminent death! Goodbye, world---!

YOU SNAP AWAKE in your LAB as you fall out of the CHAIR YOU'D FALLEN ASLEEP IN.

You land on the floor with a WHUMP, and your heart is racing and your breath is erratic and and that dream was not how reality went at all. It hadn't been a tangled mess of wires. It'd been a PERFECTLY REASONABLE control panel and you'd gotten everyone down safely.

You're all OKAY.

It was JUST A NIGHTMARE induced by a LACK OF SLIME.

That doesn't leave your MIND of any comfort, however.

You screwed up yesterday. You screwed up and nearly gotten you and your friends killed and you KNOW that's irreconcilable. You can't do that again. You just can't. You're going to screw up again some day and SOMEONE WILL GET HURT. There's no walking that back. There isn't. There just ISN'T.

You've got to spare them all from any future mistakes.

And so you exit your lab and go to your ROOM. Well, it wasn't ever really so much you LAB to begin with. More a RE-PURPOSED ENGINE ROOM. Maybe now Salazl can get it all back into working order without your stupid shoddy rewiring jobs getting in the way.

You enter your room, and pause upon seeing your LUSUS. She's been UP THIS ENTIRE TIME, waiting for you to return.

She gets up off her feet and licks your face. "Aww, okay, okay. I'm here." You whisper. "It was just a bad dream."

But it wasn't JUST a dream. It was how things could have gone.

You start EMPTYING OUT YOUR FEW MEAGER POSSESSIONS into a BAG, pausing only to WRITE A NOTE.

"I'm sorry, I screwed up. I didn't think and I almost ruined everything. I can't do this anymore. Goodbye."

That should do it.

And so you put on your BAG, dress up for DESERT EXPLORATION, and make your way down the hallway, your LUSUS worryingly following you.

It's still at that TIME OF DAY when everyone's ASLEEP, so you try to be quiet. You pass by Joey's Room- door left open and empty, home only to some ARAI BEETLES, also slumbering. Naturally, she's spending the time in Mierfa's room now.
And that's a whole other thing you're feeling guilty about all of a sudden. You'd kind of had a suspicion they'd fall FLUSHED, and kind of... written a thing about it in your PRIVATE JOURNAL. If they ever saw that...

You take the NOTE, and leave it on JOEY'S EMPTY BED. She'll find it sooner or later.

You then head back down the hallway. Dammek won't care beyond the fact you're leaving the Rebellion high and dry. Mierfa, Okurii, and Salazl you barely knew anyways- so they probably won't care that you're gone. Joey? Maybe. But she's got Mierfa and the others and she'll GET OVER IT. It's better for her if you're gone. You're nothing but trouble.

Xefros...

He won't care one way or the other, you bet.

You enter the GATE ROOM, and enter in a PASSCODE on the dialing computer for a BACKDOOR PROGRAM you designed.

Random Stargate Roulette, here goes nothing.

The STARGATE whirls to life- locking chevrons faster than if you'd dialed manually, but not so fast to be an Incoming Wormhole- it'll even READ as "Incoming" on the system's logs, rather than "Outgoing."

WAA WAA- KAWOOSH!

You and your Lusus run into the Gate's event horizon the moment it's stabilized, and then you're POPPING OUT at Kaptar's gate. Because OF COURSE IT'D BE KAPTAR. The Gate shuts down behind you a second later, and you hurry over to the DHD, wary of the LONE SENTRY positioned to watch the Gate. FEY likely has already seen your arrival, and will tell Joey the moment she comes looking- if she comes looking.

So, you dial AN ADDRESS you know is an UNINHABITED WORLD, and then go through the GATE AGAIN. You'll have to HOP GATES a few more times just to be sure they can't track you.

WAA WAA, KAWOOSH. WAA WAA, KAWOOSH. WAA WAA, KAWOOSH. WAA WAA, KAWOOSH.

Finally, you settle on some random ass planet that looks to be MOSTLY TROPICAL JUNGLE.

When the Gate shuts down behind you, you exhale in relief.

"There, thoroughly shuffled," you say to your LUSUS, patting her on the head.

WOLF-MOM looks at you and gives you a growl that says "You should just head back."

No. You shake your head. You can't. This is for the best.

THIS IS FOR THE BEST.

You start marching through the JUNGLE along the OBVIOUS PATH. There are PEOPLE who live here on... what was it again? PSW-978? People who the ALTERNIAN EMPIRE deemed NON
THREATENING, and NON EXPLOITABLE, and thus left it alone with NO SHIP to stay in orbit.

You're not sure what kind of people they are, but you're going to STEER CLEAR OF THEM regardless. No need giving them any kind of leads if they somehow manage to track you here. You LEAVE THE BEATEN PATH.

It's only an hour later than you realize you really had NO PLAN except 'get away.' You didn't pack any food, you didn't pack any water, and you stupidly OVER DRESSED for this kind of planet.

Worst of all, you're HUNGRY. Your stomach growls at you, and WOLF-MOM gives you a KNOWING LOOK.

"Yes, I know, I'm an idiot," you tell her. "I did a stupid thing twice over and now am probably going to starve to death." You frown, she's giving you THAT LOOK now. "Oh, don't give me that look! You could have tried harder to stop me, you know!"

Wolf-Mom just keeps on giving you THAT LOOK.

Damn it all.

You keep marching, looking for a source of foot.

...FOOD.

YOU MEAN FOOD.

You're so hungry... you... urgh.

Eventually, you find some kind of BREAD AND CHEESE looking thing cooking on a STONE PLATE atop a SMALL FIRE in a small clearing.

You don't see anyone around, so you quickly scoop it up and jostle it hand to hand as you quickly abscond deeper into the jungle.

You hope whoever that was will assume it was just a wild animal that got to it. Really, who just leaves something like that out in the open unattended for?? Just asking to be stolen from, leaving it like that.

Then you step into some COMICALLY OBVIOUS ROPE TRAP and end up HEAD OVER HEELS, staring into the eyes of your LUSUS- who just barks once in confirmation of "You are an idiot."

A moment later, your view shifts as you're suddenly SWUNG AROUND and staring straight into the TEAL EYES of an adult HUNTER TROLL. Their face is covered in a MASK made out of hide, their HORNS are broken in different places to the point of unrecognizability, and their hair is RAGGEDY AND UNEVEN.

"Well..." They say, voice gruff and unidentifiable towards gender. "I never expected to run into a kid all the way out here, let alone a sneak thief."
Oh great, it was THEIR FOOD you stole, wasn’t it?

"Ahaha... hi?" You giggle nervously. "Sorry, but I was hungry."

"You're not the only one," Adult Troll says, eying you. "Damn Natives keep swiping my food, so I set up a trap. One that you triggered."

And then, they draw a KNIFE. You close your eyes, bracing for the impact of the knife to your body.

You hit the ground with a THUD, instead.

"Oww..." You open your eyes and see that this TROLL cut the rope.

"Come," they say, "I'll fix you a proper meal."

And so you follow them through the forest until you come up to a LARGE, SHODDILY MADE GATE with a CRUDE PUZZLE LOCK on it. They solve it with PRACTICED EASE, and then lead you into a small GROTTO. There's a LARGE TREE in the center of it, upon which a SMALL HUT RESIDES.

"What's your name?" the Troll asks of you as you cross a small WOODEN PLANK, roughly hewn together, and come to the BASE OF THE TREE.

"Does it matter?" You ask as you climb a small ladder after the troll. WOLF MOM stays down below to KEEP WATCH.

"Perhaps not," they answer, offering you a SMALL SEAT made out of ROUGH HIDE and probably LEAVES. You sit on it. "But if you're to be staying here for any period of time, I suppose it's only natural that I ask it."

"I'm not sure I am staying or not," You admit. "I'm kind of on the run."

"From the Empire?" The troll asks, eyeing you suspiciously.

"No," you shake your head. "From my friends."

"Trying to kill you, eh?" the troll chuckles as they turn to start COOKING SOMETHING on a skillet. It smells like MEAT.

"No," you say. "I... I just screwed up and nearly got us all killed. That's all. They say it's fine but I'm sure they're mad at me."

"Did you ask them about this?" The troll asks.

"They just say it's fine," You answer.

"Then it's likely fine, and you're overreacting."

"But I'm NOT!" You yell. "It was my fault! I was the one who acted without thinking! I was the one who activated that Trap!" You press your hands to your chest. "I... I'm the one who's in the wrong
here. I screwed up! Sure it worked out fine this time, but if I stay around, the next time I screw up could get everyone killed!” You think back to the SHIP CRASH, and wonder HOW THE HELL you survived it in the first place.

Sheer luck, that's how.

"I see," the Troll muses, staring at you for a moment before returning to the cooking. "That's some tight pain in your chest, isn't it? It's not just this incident either, is it?"

"No..." you admit. "I'm afraid that every time I open my mouth or try to do something I'm screwing everybody over. They don't even need me there. Salazl's better at running the Base's systems anyways. I just made a mess out of it. He'll be glad I'm gone. Joey and Mierfa don't need me there fantasizing about their relationship. Okurii doesn't even like me, not even romantically not liking me! I'm so far down her not liking radar that I'm not even an option! That's all the good I'd be to her anyways!"

"Now is that really true?" The troll asks.

"...What else am I supposed to be to her?" You ask. "I'm not attracted to her flush ways, she's already serving as an Auspticise for Xefros and Dammek- and they... they don't care. I could have MAYBE been Xefros' Moirail but he's got Joey for that now. And Dammek... all he cares about is himself." You slump back into your chair. "I'm useless to them. The best thing I ever gave them was a Stargate Subnetwork program, and that can be used by anyone on any gate and they don't need ME anymore."

"Here," The troll then offers you a PLATE with a SLAB OF MEAT on it. It's pretty THIN looking, hence why it cooked so fast, but it smells PRETTY APPETIZING. Though, that's probably because You HAVENT EATEN anything but that BAIT.

You take it, and start eating, and as you do, the Troll talks.

"I think you're definitely overreacting," they say. "You're taking these compounded personal issues, and at the first sign of trouble, your instinct is to rabbit. Accidents happen, the world moves on."

"But... I could have hurt them," you protest.

"But did you really hurt them?" they ask.

"...No??"

"Then there's no harm."

"But--!" They shake their head, and you go silent.

"I've made my own fair share of mistakes, kid." They remove their mask, revealing a SOMEWHAT FEMININE FACE, though it's VERY SCARRED. It looks like they fought off a HUNDRED TROLLS AT ONCE. Also... are those ROPE BURNS around their neck? "Nearly died because of it. Came here to Haven to sort my thoughts out afterwards. Been here since... well, since Alternia had a working Stargate. I guess that's back in working order again if you're here. Unless you came from a colony?"

"No," You shake your head. "Alternia. We... we made our own Gate."
"Did you now?" They ask, leaning forwards. "Tell me, how did it happen?"

"I... I sent design schematics and parts to Dammek, and he built it in his basement," you answer.

"So you helped design a brand new Stargate?"

"No. I just... I just sent him the designs. Other people made them, I was the middleman." Useless job, anyone else could have done it- maybe even better.

"Well, of course other people made them!" The troll says. "The Stargates came from an alien space ship in the first place! We trolls re-purposed them! But that's not my question. YOUR GATE. Did you help design it?"

"I... I did make my own tweaks to it," You admit. "Nothing major, really."

"I bet you're selling yourself short," the troll says. "You probably did very major work on it."

"...I doubt that."

"Fine," they say. "Let's move on to something else. This... Fantasizing thing. It's not nearly so bad as you let on, I'll bet."

"But it is!" You say.

"So what if it is? Everyone fantasizes." They troll shakes their head. "I certainly had my own fair share of daydreams. Sometimes regarding my own enemies!"

"...I drew pictures," you explain. "I wrote stories."

"And people do that about fictional characters, often times played by real live people!" The troll says. "It's been a thing since before books and movies were a thing! Back in my day, Plays were all the rage and LET ME TELL YOU! Some of the bootlegged play scripts floating around were... ahhem." Their face goes blush-tier teal. "But you could tell it was based off of certain actors."

"I suppose..." You say. "I still feel weird, though."

"Understandable," The Troll nods.

"Who are you, exactly?" You ask.

"Me?" The troll smiles mysteriously. "Just someone who made a mistake and hid themselves away fearing the consequences if they proved to not be dead." Then, with a motion towards you half eaten meal, "Finish eating, or it will get cold."

You do such, trying to finish as fast as you safely can.

"Haven is not what I'd call a hospitable world," your companion says as you finish eating. "The creatures here are... some are smart, some are dumb. Predators and Prey exist in abundance. It would not be wise to spend your time here for long. Alternia abandoned this place long ago, made its excuses, but I know why."
"Why, then?" You ask.

"Once upon a time, it was thought, maybe this place could be a new home world, one where the sun wouldn't blind us by staring at it," the Troll says. "The Great Sea Worm proved them wrong. Just one was enough to send even the toughest of Seadwellers to their watery graves. Its hide was resistant to technological weapons- only a blade of sharpened edge could deal damage, but even that..." They shake their heads. "Not even the Empress could stop just the one they fought." Then, with a smile, they add, "They gave up upon learning there were MORE. But... they never tried the one trick that could work. I killed one with it."

"Just the one?" You ask.

"I let it eat me. I killed it where it's flesh was soft and vulnerable, and carved my way out," The Troll explains. "Then I found out I'd angered its Mate doing so. It's *Very Pregnant Mate.*" She gives you a flat look, and says, "If you wish to stay here, I would wholeheartedly recommend you avoid the sea facing shore. These creatures can hold a grudge for a VERY long time."

"Duly noted," You say, swallowing.

The Galaxy has a penchant for LARGE, TERRIFYING, MURDERBEASTS, it seems.

"Now, then, tell me of your friends. Of your adventures. But! Tell me Nothing of what you think they think, just how they act," they continue.

And so you do.

"Joey's an Alien. She came from another world. She's... she's nice. All the time Nice. Like, I don't think she had a mean bone in her body," you frown. "She's probably the only one who would come after me, I think."

"Ah ah," the troll wags a finger at you. "None of that, I said."

"...Fine." You nod. "...Joey arriving was what set everything in motion. She dialed Alternia to escape being killed. But then Dammek got captured by the Heiress, and Joey and Xefros came to me to help."

"Why you?" your companion asks.

"...Because Dammek ordered them to come to me?"

"And why would he do that?"

"Because he wanted me to keep a Control Crystal safe."

"He obviously trusts you enough to do that," they observe.

"But I didn't. I hid it away in a box in my hive and then we went and broke onto the Heiress's ship and then I was stuck in the engine room and we were crashing and..." You stop as they put a hand on your shoulder, and tell you to BREATHE. So you do.

"Slowly, then. Slowly." They say. "What happened when you were crashing?"

You think back on it, and... and... "I saved us. I got the engines running and slowed us down enough
so we didn't burn up in the atmosphere."

And so they- she? You think this troll might be a SHE but her voice and physical build just doesn't match- continue to walk you through various missions, and adventures, until the SUN begins to set.

"...Funny," you say. "I've gotten so used to being awake at odd hours that I didn't even notice it was day time."

And then you have to force back a Yawn because you're feeling RATHER TIRED from all that hiking and you were SERIOUSLY ignoring that all this time.

"Ah, yes, that happens," the Troll smiles. "Now. I suppose the question is, are you staying the night, or will you return to your friends?"

"...I can't return," you say, shaking your head. "I... I can't."

"Can't or Won't?"

"Is there a difference?"

"There is."

"Tell me, then!"

"Why should I when you already know it?" And with that, the Troll gets up, and heads over to start climbing down the ladder. "I will take you to one of my safe houses, that you should be able to get your Lusus into. You can spend the night there and mull over your options."

A small WEIGHT OPERATED elevator is all that keeps you and WOLF-MOM separated from the outside world.

It's a NOISY JUNGLE.

You close your eyes and try to sleep through it, but your MIND JUST REFUSES TO SHUT DOWN.

Are you really over-reacting? Should you just... go home?

Home...

Your HEART longs for going back to HOME, but you don't even know what HOME IS anymore. Your HIVE? The SHIP? And given the INCOMING THREAT that Dammek's brought down on your heads... would it even be worth staying there?

You honestly have no clue what to do.

You're LONGING FOR A PLACE that doesn't seem to exist. How is that even possible? Are you just searching for a FEELING? What kind of feeling are you wanting, even? Love? Acceptance? Companionship??
You just don't know.

YOU JUST DON'T KNOW.

You end up STARING OUT at the stars, and the CONSTELLATIONS that are so UNFAMILIAR. You generally have an IDEA of what's nearby and what isn't, though, planet address wise, which would make the THREE GLARINGLY OBVIOUS stars that are larger than the others the THREE SUNS that the Mofang blew up some time ago.

The light from those SUPER NOVAS is only just reaching Haven, faster than anywhere else in the Galaxy because of how close this planet is to their location. The Mofang and Alternia have entered a bit of a stalemate since then. "Negotiations" the Media branch of the Empire says, but everyone knows it's just HOGWASH. The Sorian Empire is gearing up for a MAJOR FRONTAL ASSAULT, and has been for MONTHS. Alternia has been SHUFFLING FLEETS AROUND like A MAD TROLL to protect the areas of VITAL IMPORTANCE.

It's...

It's frightening to watch a star DIE OUT like that in slow motion. Exploding, exploding, always exploding. Just the light shining ever so slightly brighter for a time and then...

And then what?

Actually, you frown. How exactly does a BOMB turn a SUN into an even larger bomb??

They'd have to... they'd have to force the sun to stop the current REACTION fueling its eternal explosion of flame, somehow, and force it to colapse under its own weight... then...

But that would mean...

But SURELY the amount of time required to DO that would be greater than what was observed by the survivors, right???

...Unless...

Unless something VERY FUNKY was going on.

...Like with that trap you encountered. The Gravity it produced, but at a much larger SCALE? Could it be enough to draw in enough STELLAR MATTER from a star and cause it to go Nova?

Could it....

It almost certainly could be. That device itself was STRONG ENOUGH to break free of the planet's gravity and lift itself into the air. That kind of gravity manipulation, but turned around onto itself... making a denser internal core instead of lighter? While ALSO being strong enough to pull four people onto its surface...? Or stronger. Definitely stronger. Enough to...

But that much Gravity would basically only be found naturally in-- Which would result in--!

That's... that's a SUFFICIENTLY TERRIFYING IDEA.
The MOFANG have created a WEAPONIZED TEMPORARY BLACK HOLE.

That- that device you were strapped to might very well have turned itself into a BLACK HOLE if you hadn't disarmed it first... or maybe, not even armed it in the first place.

Which brings you right back around to your EARLIER CONUNDRUM.

Do you stay, or do you return?

At the very least, you need to WARN THEM that this might be what the Mofang have in their back pocket...

But...

But......

But what?

What's holding you back here? Why don't you want to go back? Why do you WANT to isolate yourself from them???

That thought, as much as anything else, is what keeps you awake until sheer exhaustion finally pulls you into a fitful night's sleep.

Chapter End Notes

"HAVEN" world concept is borrowed from the age of the same name from MYST 4: REVELATION.
Chapter Summary

Joey tames the Purple Crystal.

Chapter Notes

In case you missed it, ALTERNIA CHAPTER 02X01 was uploaded last night. You might be a bit confused by this chapter- even though it's not a PART 1/PART 2 situation, more of a MEANWHILE- if you haven't read it already.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

THWUMP. THWUMP. THWUMP.

Mrrr...?

THWUMP. THWUMP. THWUMP. KA-THWUMP.

Wait. What??

WAAA WAAA! KAWOOOSH!

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and your eyes snap open the moment you hear the STARGATE OPEN.

You fling yourself out of the SOPOR SLIME and without even cleaning up first throw on a pair of pants so you can run out towards the gate- cuebat in hand.

Joey and Mierfa, as a matter of course, are already there by the time you reach the room, and beat you there because of the fact that they aren't covered in Sopor slime and didn't have to watch their step to avoid slipping. Dammek and Okurii are but seconds behind you, dripping slime behind them and about as half dressed as you are. Salazl and Callie fail to make any kind of appearance what so ever.

And then, before you can take in anything more than that, the STARGATE SHUTS DOWN.

"The hell was that?" Dammek asks. "A miss-dial?"

"Did anyone come through?" Okurii asks.

"No idea," Joey skips up the stairs to the bridge, and checks the DIALING COMPUTER. "Looks like an Incoming Wormhole, no signals through one way or the other." She frowns. "But there's something weird about the visitor log."
"What's weird about it?" You ask, following after her.

"Am I just misreading this?" Joey asks, pointing at the screen. "Or is it saying there were negative two arrivals?"

You read the screen and... "What the hell? That's got to be a bug."

"Lemme see that," Okurii carefully ascends the stairs so as not to slip, and takes a look at the screen. "Negative Two? That's not possible at all." She frowns, tapping at the screen and trying to bring up a SECURITY CAMERA FEED. "...And that's even more suspicious."

"What is?" Dammek asks, not moving from where he's still standing, staring at the Gate.

"The Cameras went down when the Gate activated, and for some reason- erased the last five minutes leading UP to it activating," Okurii informs.

"Did we get hacked??" Mierfa asks, frowning up at the bridge from where she's standing at the base of the stairs. "Did someone remote hack us and Gate in??"

"Yes and No, I'd say," Dammek says, frowning. "Yes, we got hacked, but it wasn't remote, and they Didn't Gate In." He turns, affixing you with a certain look. "Split up. Xef, Joey, go check on Callie. Mierfa and I will go check on Salazl. Okurii, wait here incase they Dial back in. And see if you can figure out where the hell they dialed out TO while you're at it."

Oh.

SHIT.

"You think they Gated Out?" Okurii asks.

"One or both of them," Dammek nods.

"Okay," Okurii nods. "I'll check."

And with that decided, you and Joey go check the first obvious place that Callie would be- the ENGINE ROOM/HER LAB. There's no sign of her. You then go to her Room in the dorm hallway and find...

It's been emptied, and her LUSUS is missing as well.

"Shit," Joey swears.

You exit Callie's room just in time to find Dammek and Mierfa dragging an Irate SALAZL out of his room.

"What the hell, guys?! Can't a troll get some sleep in peace for a change!?" He gripes.

"Callie's Missing," you explain, moving over to join them outside Salazl's room.

"So's her Lusus," Joey adds, following. "And most of the stuff in her room, too."
"What?" Salazl frowns. "That's not- Who would take her AND her stuff AND her Lusus?"

"Callie herself would," Dammek says, frowning. "She's rabbited."

"Why would she do that?" Mierfa asks.

"...Yesterday," Joey says- barely above a whisper, but it carries the weight of a sledgehammer nonetheless. "When we got trapped on that Mofang device she... She kept blaming herself for getting us trapped on it."

"So that's why she asked me that," Dammek sighed, massaging at the bridge of his nose. "I didn't think- Damn it."

"What?" You look at Dammek, glaring. "DID you DO?"

"Nothing!" He holds up his hands defensively. "She just... she asked me if I thought if she handled disarming the device righ!" And then he looks guilty. "...And I said I couldn't say for sure because I wasn't there. I meant to see her work on it, but..."

"Dammit, Dammek," Joey planted a hand against her forehead loud enough to make a slapping sound. "You didn't mean to say it but you said-"

"I basically said I should have been there instead of her," Dammek interjects- finishing the sentence. "Damn it. I'm an idiot, I didn't even think about that."

 Damn straight you are, you refrain from saying.

"It's fine," Joey says, "I don't think any of us noticed how down she was feeling. She was smiling like she was okay! That's.. urhg. That's such a cheaty way of dealing with things."

"Agreed," Mierfa nodded. "I didn't see anything wrong either. At the time. Looking back, though..." She sighs. "Okay. Let's go back and see if Okurii figured out where the hell Callie went."

"I'd say Outside," Salazl guesses.

"She hacked the Gate," You tell him, much to his surprise. "Didn't you hear it Dialing earlier?"

"Uh..." Salazl blinks. "I was kind of busy having a pleasant dream involving giant bee hive compu-servers at the time?"

"...Of course you were." You remark dryly.

"I think," Okurii begins, "I found a list of potential addresses the Computer could have pulled from."

"Could have?" You ask.

"Callie set the gate to shuffle and jumped the first wormhole out," Okurii explains.

"...Why would she do that?" You can't help but ask.
"Your guess is as good as mine," she shakes her head. "Anyways, one of those addresses is Kaptar, so since you and Joey were scheduled to go through today anyways...?"

"I'll ask Fey when I get there," Joey says. "Maybe she saw something."

"I'll go with," Mierfa says. "If she stayed on Kaptar and went hiking, I can go after her, and if not, I can come back with a no go and keep searching from here."

"Sounds like a plan," Okurii nods. "I'll get Dammek to look over the list and see if Callie mentioned anything else to him that he might've overheard and didn't think anything about, just incase this 'random shuffle' wasn't so random."

And so, you, Joey, and Mierfa go through the Stargate to Kaptar.

Almost immediately on the other side, Joey is beset upon by the LONE SENTRY ARAI. It lands on her head and Joey spaces out for a few seconds.

"Callie was here!" She exclaims. "Fey saw the address!!"

"Show me which glyph. I'll write it down and take it back to Base," Mierfa says, going over to the DHD, and doing just as she said, writing down the Glyphs Callie was seen using. "Good luck with gem training," she finishes, giving Joey a kiss on the lips before dialing Alternia.

"You too!" Joey says, smiling as Mierfa heads back through the gate.

Despite the circumstances, you can't help but smile.

The Royal Purple Crystal pulses angrily as you and Joey remove its container from the captchaologue card it's been resting in- retrieved thanks to a borrowed modus from the SHIP'S ARMORY. The section of CAGE the crystal was stubbornly attached to writhes, expands, hits the walls of the plastic container, and then shrinks back down on recoil.

Fey- who you're only partly able to hear when you're not paying attention after tagging along to a bunch of these training session things- remarks something along the lines of "Fascinating." You're much too distracted by the angry presence in this little plastic jar focus on the finer points to voice a verbal refusal of that remark, though.

"It's been doing this ever since I cut it loose. I don't think it liked whatever Arkadi was doing to it," Joey says.

[No,] Fey remarks, [I suppose it wouldn't.]

Joey takes off her jacket and puts it on the floor to sit on. Your heart skips a beat as you realize she's been wearing another one of the shirts she borrowed from Callie, LIME GREEN SIGN and all.

You honestly wish someone had realized she'd been feeling this way, but you've all been so caught up in everything else that nobody noticed.

You're distantly aware that she's wearing the NECKLACE that you made for her
WRIGGLING/BIRTH DAY, with the RED GEMSTONE presently afixed to it. If things go well today, then that Purple one will join it around Joey's neck.

As the resident RUST BLOOD, GHOST COMMUNING PSYCHIC, Fey has had you here while Joey works on mastering the Red Crystal. Mostly just as a precaution, incase some WAYWARD SPIRIT tries to take control.

Not the LICH, of course, he's long dead and Fey has confirmed there's NO RESIDUAL PRESENSE of his in the crystal, but even so...

[We're going to attempt to use both Administration and Undeath to commune with Alteration,] Fey tells Joey. [To... 'reset' it's programming, so to speak.]

"Alright," Joey nods, and sets the canister with the Purple gemstone down on the ground in front of her. Then, she closes her eyes and says, "Here goes nothing."

And also possibly everything.

You see a WARM, GREEN GLOW emanate from Joey's heart- the crystal attached to her skin beneath her shirt, technicahlly- and then a DEEP RED GLOW from the crystal around her neck. A moment later- the PURPLE CRYSTAL in the jar begins to glow as well, even as the CAGE FRAGMENT shrieks- literally- and begins writhing within the plastic container which... doesn't really seem all that secure all of a sudden.

Joey frowns suddenly, eyebrows narrowing downwards in annoyance.

[Focus, Joey! Do not let your thoughts wander!] Fey warns. [I know you're concerned for your friend but Focus!]

The Cage Fragment within the container STRETCHES MORE, seemingly aiming to EXPAND AND EXPAND AND EXPAND without end. The plastic container starts to BEND OUTWARDS, trying to contain it.

[Joey!! I said Focus!] Fey's voice sounds FRIGHTENED to you.

"I am!" Joey counters, also sounding a little bit scared.

And then the container breaks and the PURPLE GEM and its CAGE FRAGMENT launch directly at Joey.

You reach out with your TELEKENESIS, trying to slow it down---

The next thing you know, you're coming back around to CONSCIOUSNESS being HELD up against a HIVE WALL by a BUNCH OF ARAI BEETLES- angry ones at that. Angry ones with EYES GLOWING PURPLE.

You DARE to look down and see that you're... uh... KIND OF SUSPENDED OVER A LONG, SEEMINGLY BOTTOMLESS PIT.

Also, your CHEST HURTS something fierce. Almost like that time you picked a fight with a teammate's CAT LUSUS and got scratched up.
That had not been a good day, and neither was this.

[XEFROS!] You hear Fey's voice distantly echo into your head- she's panicking, just like you feel like you should be. [WHERE ARE YOU!?!]

"H-here!" you call out and DAMN IT your throat feels slick with blood.

A moment later- you HEAR BUZZING- and then a SWARM OF ARAI BEETLES with the standard YELLOW EYES comes flying into view from around some corner you can't see.

[Please try not to panic!] the Polyarch advises, as that swarm splits into TWO- half of which fly down and around at an odd angle to possibly form some kind of SAFETY NET beneath you. The other half begins NON VIOLENTLY ATTACKING the Arai holding you to the wall, mostly by grabbing and PULLING THEM AWAY FROM YOU.

Naturally, gravity takes hold and a moment later you're FALLING, but it's not a long fall, you're CAUGHT by the second half of the swarm, and they lift you up onto a SAFE LEDGE that you can get onto off of them.

That half of the swarm then immediately flies down and joins their friends in restraining the PURPLE EYED ONES. After a moment or two of extra struggling, the purple eyes FADE AWAY. Then, they all come up to join you, with a few of them guiding you through some HIDDEN TUNNELS back into the MAIN HIVE COMPLEX.

It looks... A LOT MESSIER than it did a... well, it certainly wasn't just a few seconds ago.

FEY is disconnected from her HIVE, and is resting, looking slightly BLOODIED in places, against a pillar. Resting in one of her long APENDAGE ARMS is JOEY’S JACKET, and at her 'feet' is...

A piece of Joey's shirt? But torn up and rather RIPPED LOOKING. "What happened?" You ask, feeling at your own chest and shirt- which is ALSO DEFINITELY RIPPED UP A LITTLE and that WAS BLEEDING for sure, but it seems to be scabbing over already. OW. "The last thing I remember was trying to stop the thing from hitting Joey, then..."

[Alteration resisted your powers,] Fey says, voice sounding worry. [You entered some kind of trance trying to pull it off of her as it... it did something. I wasn't sure what until I managed to pry loose a piece of her shirt. There were animal hairs on it- some kind of wolf based creature, I'd say from what happened.]

You close your eyes- and you see CALLIE'S LUSUS for a moment, replaced in an instant by something more MONSTROUS- your eyes open as you remember what happened. "It changed her into a Wolf Lusus!"

[Tried to, at any rate, I don't think it quite succeeded. Not enough DNA to work off of from these hairs.] Fey fixes you with the mental equivalent of a LOOK. [What else do you remember?]

You think back...

"We tried to restrain her. She... Joey hit me!" You remember now- the searing sensation of CLAWS raking across your chest before you HIT SOMETHING hard. "Then what happened? I can't
[You hit a wall, and a swarm of Beetles took you off into the distance. And then I got flung into a wall.] Fey's body SHUDDERS, as reliving the impact. [I, too, blacked out for a moment. When I recovered, Joey was gone. I sent a swarm to find you and her.]

"She can't have gotten too far," you say, frowning. "It's... just the same old areas we're ever walking on, right?"

[If she sticks to the usual paths, yes, but if she starts climbing the cliffs she-- AAH!!] Fey shudders again, and then collapses to the floor- body audibly groaning in a PAINED WAY.

"Hey..." you go over to check on the POLYARCH. "Are you okay?"

[No. I'm not. Haven't been since giving Administration to Joey. Hitting walls not helping either. Will recover.]

You frown. She clearly isn't going to recover at this rate, you realize, if ever.

"You're dying."

There's a BITTER CHUCKLE from the Polyarch's thought waves. [I suppose I am. Does not matter. Species will survive as long as we can find Joey.]

That....

Damn it all.

[And there she is,] Fey says, reaching out with a claw and touching your forehead and suddenly you feel DISTANT from your body, looking down upon a FAMILIAR temple entrance, across which a RED FURRED, BIPEDAL version of CALLIE'S LUSUS is stalking around, hands on head, growling, and clearly STRUGGLING against whatever was going on inside her head.

And since she's wearing Joey's torn up looking clothes, is surrounded by a BUNCH MORE of those PURPLE EYED ARAI, and CLEARLY has all three crystals on her, it's got to be JOEY.

You're pulled back to yourself a moment later, and Fey surrounds you with some of her beetles.

[These Troll customs are still so strange to me and her both, but I know she trusts you. You are her MOIRAIL. Bring her back safe.]

You nod.

Right.

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH. Your MOIRAIL IS COUNTING ON YOU.

You can DO THIS.
"JOEY!" you call out the second you step out onto the temple floor.

She turns around- eyes glowing VIOLET PURPLE, just like the GEMSTONE stuck to her forehead, the ones around her neck and on her chest are silent. Incidentally, you can see that there's a THIN RING of that CAGE MATERIAL wrapping around Joey's head, holding that Purple crystal there like it's some kind of CROWN.

"Joey! C'mon! It's just some stupid crystal that doesn't know what the hell it's doing!" You say. "You've got this!" There's a flicker of green light from her heart, and the Arai all pause in their movements around her. That's enough of a confirmation that she's still in there to lend you the confidence to step up and pull her into a hug.

"MRRH!?" The startled yelp would be hilarious coming from an actual Wolf Lusus. As it is, you just stroke at her head.

"Sssshhh." You soothe, even as the ARAI buzz angrily. "You've got this, Joey."

Soon, the buzzing halts, and then a WASH OF WARM RED AND GREEN LIGHT emerges from those two crystals, overwhelming the PURPLE CRYSTAL, and though you're not sure how much time passes, soon enough instead of a WERE-WOLF LUSUS you've got a determined Joey in arm, who's already reaching up to pull that danged purple crystal WANNA-BE-CROWN off of her head.

"GAH!" She yells out as it comes loose with a POP, then drops it to the floor.

You and she both back away from the offending object, and stare down as it as the CAGE PORTION writhes and twists on the floor, almost SCREECHING in dismay as it finally RUNS OUT OF ENERGY and DIES OUT.

Disconcertingly, as it does die, it does so by letting loose a PUFF OF STEAM, and collapsing flat into a pile of DUST, leaving only the CRYSTAL behind.

"Owwww..." Joey gripes, putting her hands onto her forehead. "I've got such a headache."

"I'll bet," You offer, trying to sound humorous, but not quite succeeding even to your own standards. "...Is it... dead?"

"Reset," Joey nods. "It's not going to be causing any more wild uncontrolled transformations on anybody ever again."

To prove her point, she bends down, picks up the crystal, and holds it up to the SUNLIGHT.

The crystal looks... PALER now, almost. Like it's gone from a ROYAL PURPLE to a LIGHT LAVENDER.

But that's impossible, isn't it? A crystal can't change its color just like that, can it??

"Brr..." Joey shivers. "It's actually surprisingly cold out here when you suddenly don't have fur anymore."

"Fey's got your jacket inside," you try to say, but you only get to "your" before Joey yells "FEY!!" in horror, and takes off at a run into the temple complex, heading for the Hive. "Right. That."
You take off after her.

Fey's clearly breathing heavily by the time you find her again. The poor POLYARCH is surrounded by her concerned SWARM, and the EGG BARNACLES around the hive are all PULSING A DANGEROUS, WARNING RED.

"Fey!" Joey kneels down next to the Polyarch, and she starts whispering. You catch brief moments of EMOTIONAL OUTPUT from her as you watch the crystal on her chest pulse green. She's asking what she can do, even if not out loud.

[--Record...] You hear Fey's voice, weak and static filled, and this time it's not from a lack of you PAYING ATTENTION. [...]Polyarch Ability... genetics...

"R...Right!" Joey nods, and then she puts the purple crystal onto her necklace. It GLOWS- this time a SOOTHING, PALE LAVENDER LIGHT- as she then reaches a hand out, and touches FEY'S BODY.

The crystal definitely changed.

And now, in a way that was WHOLLY INTENTIONAL, so was Joey. Not in any drastic ways like you could see before with the Crystal's attack on her, but there's suddenly this feeling of her entire PRESENCE in the room becoming GRANDER. You feel like there should be a LIGHT SHOW beyond the minor glows the gemstones are giving out. Maybe some MUSIC playing too...

But there's nothing more, and soon, the glow stops, and Joey pulls her hand away from Fey, a sad smile on her face. "I'll take care of them," she says, responding to something from Fey you didn't hear.

You can feel a slight pulse of CONTENTMENT from Fey...

And then you hear her speak her final words, [Do it.]

And then the RED CRYSTAL FLASHES and the POLYARCH's body goes silent, and you can FEEL her soul departing her body to...

To the Red Crystal.

"What... What was that?" You ask.

Joey takes a deep breath, then, grabbing her jacket from the floor and putting it on, tells you. "While I was copying her biology, I realized I could save her soul and more importantly, her memories, onto the Red Crystal. She said that the history of this world alone is worth saving, so... She's not technichally dead?? Just... turned into a library resource?"

"Still..." You look towards the silent Polyarch's frame, feeling uncomfortably dead.

"When we get the Arai to Diaspora," Joey continues. "I'll find a Barnacle that's not... too fully developed? I guess? I'll imprint Fey's memories back into it and hatch it and she'll, be kind of alive again?"

"Kind of like a Feytwo?" You ask.
"Mmh." Joey nods. "Doubt she'll ever be a Polyarch again, but... I think the stress got to her. I know it's feeling like an impossible task already." She looks around the hive. "We need to get these Barnacles off world."

It takes you and Joey about half an hour to SAFELY DISCONNECT the Arai Barnacles from the HIVE, into which they go onto the CAPTCHA CARDS. You're not sure HOW this mater-to-card system even works, but it's both equal measures TERRIFYING and CONVENIENT.

As you did all of that, Joey spread out her APPARENTLY SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED RANGE to draw in EVERY ARAI left on the Planet to her. Most go into cards as well, there are just too many to safely bring through the Gate at once. And then with all of that done, and KAPTAR officially left as a DEAD WORLD, you go to the gate and Dial to DIASPORA. No sense putting this off for any longer, after all.

Joey had already marked out a place on the planet for a new Arai HIVE, and HUNTER, who was on GATE GUARD DUTY today it seems, courteously escorts you up to the small CLIFF AREA Joey thought would work for it.

Soon, the ARAI BARNACLES are transplanted to their new home, and almost all of the KAPTAR SWARM are left behind to TEND TO THEM, with only a small fraction of them left behind to join Joey's personal swarm back on Alternia.

"So the new neighbors moved in, huh?" Hunter asks. "Hope the local wildlife doesn't try to eat them."

"If we can get a new Polyarch, they'll be fine long term," Joey says. "In the short term, I've given them some lasting commands to follow while I'm not here. Things like 'don't harass any wildlife larger than them.'"

A little bit more of ensuring everything from Kaptar has SETTLED IN, Joey approaches a SPECIFIC BARNACLE, and begins using energy from the THREE DIFFERENT CRYSTALS at the same time on it.

And then, after a repeat of BECQUEREL'S HATCHING, Joey is holding a FLEDGLING ARAI BEETLE, different from the others in that its shell has what look like TRANSLUCENT RED GEMSTONES encrusted in the back shell, and the legs have a BLACK TINT to them, rather than the NORMAL CARAPACE SUNSET ORANGE of every other beetle around.

"And here she is!" Joey smiles, although tears brim in her eyes. "Feytwo!"

You listen for any kind of MENTAL SIGNALS from the freshly hatched beetle... But just like BECQUEREL, or any of the other SWARM on the Base... you don't hear a thing.

Your journey back to ALTERNIA is a somber one. As you're exiting the Gate and it shuts off behind you, Mierfa and Okurii see that SOMETHING CLEARLY HAPPENED, and they rush down to talk.

You take FEYTWO from Joey and promise to take her straight to BECQUEREL so the two hatchlings can get to know each other. As you walk towards the DORM HALLWAYS, you hear Mierfa
exclaim in concern upon seeing the DISASTROUS STATE of Joey's clothing.

Okurii hops a few steps after you, and looks like she wants to ask you about what happened.

You shake your head and say 'later,' pausing only to look back at the Stargate and HOPE that Callie comes back through right then and there to put all this heartache behind you.

...

But she doesn't.

And that makes you REALLY MAD for some reason you can't quite pin down.

Chapter End Notes

...And I only just realized as I was uploading this, that this is Joey having lost yet another Mother Figure before she really got a chance to know her for longer.

Damn it.
OCTOBER 25TH, 1996.

Your name is JUDE HARLEY and you think you might be able to FILL YOUR PA'S SHOES after all.

"Pa thought that this 'meaning of life' stuff from Earnest's planet was something important," you summarize, putting up slide after slide of PHOTOS taken during SG-1's VISIT to the planet, before the team designation SG-1 was even really a thing. "So, that's why I think we need to visit... uh..."

You look to Cassandra, who says, "P3R-272."

"So that's why we need to visit P3R-272, to investigate this inscription of language found on the floor of the Gate Room!" You continue to rehearse, "It matches one of the four Languages found on Earnet's planet, and as we can safely assume that the one marked with the Norse symbol here is representative of Thor's race, it makes sense that the race that owns this language is their Ally!"

You stand there for a moment, and Cassandra gives you a half-wary smile.

"I need to do this again, right?" You hang your head.

"You almost had it if not for flubbing the planet designation!" Cassandra offers, and you know she's giving you an ENCOURAGING SMILE even without looking. It's the same one she's given for the last FIVE TIMES you've tried this, after all.

"Right..." And so you try again.

"And that's why I feel that we NEED to investigate P3R-272!" You conclude for what feels like the HUNDRETH TIME, but is here, and now, the only one that counts. SG-1 sits at the table infront of you, and GENERAL HAMMOND sits to your side. Hiding just out of sight down the stairwell to the Gate Room is Cassandra, who gives you a DOUBLE THUMBS UP indicating that you delivered it perfectly.

"You make a good point, Jude," Hammond syas.

"...Sir," O'neill begins- clearly exasperated for having to sit through what basically amounts to a MIDDLE SCHOOL REPORT.
"And it's just the kind of point I wanted to hear," Hammond continues, giving O'neill a SILENCING LOOK. "Your Father and Doctor Jackson both made it very clear to me on that day we rescued Earnest that this could be the biggest clue to the reason we exist in this universe. With both of them gone, I wasn't sure anyone else cared to investigate. Your request to go to 272 is granted, and I'm authorizing SG-1 to take you through the Gate to 272 to investigate this personally."

You feel ELATED and EXCITED in ways you haven't felt since... since...

Since you saw the Stargate FIRST OPEN.

But you try to CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM upon looking at SG-1’s reactions.

CARTER seems hopeful, Skaara's had a look of interest since you brought up the LANGUAGE POINTS, and Teal'c... Teal'c's as impassive as always.

O'neill is the only detractor, frowning in a way that seems...

Like he doesn't want to risk this.

Seems like he's still a little bit mad he missed out on SHOVING A BOMB IN THE FACE OF A BLACKHOLE.

"Alright," he finally says, "I guess we go for it. Dunno what you expect to find, though, Harley. It's just a square room."

"That just means it has something to hide," you smile at him, hoping it changes his mind.

It doesn't.

The moment you arrive on P3R-272, the Colonel is already petitioning to return back to Earth.

Of course, naturally, his decision to do such coincides with CROSSING THE CIRCLE OF ALIEN TEXT on the floor- summoning some kind of DEVICE on the wall opposite the Stargate.

"I do believe Jude Harley was correct in there being something hidden here, Colonel O'neill," Teal'c remarks, and goes over to observe the device for himself.

You look at the device yourself, at your LOW ANGLE relative to the ground, you can see that it's ROUND, and has a SCREEN IN THE MIDDLE, glinting with some kind of LIGHT.

"Yeah, yeah," O'neill shakes his head. "What's in that thing anyways?"

"A black void full of colorful lights," Teal'c reports backing away from the object's VIEWING SCREEN.

"Lemme see that," Colonel O'neill goes over to it and looks at it. "Wow. A little light viewer. That's just great. Can we go now?"

And then as the Colonel moves to step away, the DEVICE CHANGES, growing HANDS from the wall in some kind of ORGANIC WAY.
"Woah!" You gasp. "It changed forms!"

And then it does so much more than that, changing forms AGAIN by having those hands REACH OUT and grab the Colonel by the head, forcing him to LOOK INTO THE DEVICE'S SCREEN.

Then, he screams, and all sense of pride at being PROVEN RIGHT fades away as the device lets him go and he falls to the floor.

"Colonel! Colonel!" As SG-1's team-members go to check on him, you rush over to the DHD and begin DIALING EARTH.

You feel like you've made a HORRIBLE MISTAKE.

An hour later, the Colonel is awake again, and then cleared by Frasier as having found nothing wrong. Thus, you go to the MISSION DEBRIEFING.

Colonel O'neill is even more ANNOYED and SNIPPY at the whole idea of this mission even after the fact, trying to get out of it as quickly as possible. He's so not wanting to deal with it that he's DOODLING SOMETHING on a notepad. You get a brief look at it and see something that looks like a CRYSTALLINE TRIANGLE.

Carter asks him if he's feeling alright and then:

"I'm telling you, Carter, there's nothing cruvus with me!"

...Silence fills the room.

"What?" he frowns.

"What was that?" Skaara asks.

"What was what?" O'neill asks.

"That word you just said," Skaara clarifies.

"What word?" O'neill frowns.

"Uh, in context I think you meant 'wrong' but you said..." Skaara looks towards Teal'c, who supplies the word O'neill said.

"Cruvus. You said 'cravus,' Colonel O'neill."

"No I didn't." O'neill protests.

"Yes, you did," even Hammond heard it.

"No, I didn't! There's nothing cruvus with me and I didn't say whatever weird word it is you think I said!"
"But you just did it again, Sir!" Carter says.

"Did what!" O'neill is clearly getting exasperated.

"Said 'cruvus,'" Carter explains.

"I'm telling you, I didn't," O'neill says. "Are we done here, Sir?"

"You're dismissed for now," Hammond says, "just don't leave the base."

"...Fair enough," and with that, O'neill takes the page he'd been doodling on the entire briefing from the notepad and leaves.

"...This is all my fault, isn't it?" You finally ask once the Colonel has left the room.

"No, Jude," Carter shakes her head. "I don't think it's your fault at all."

"I want someone watching him at all times," Hammond orders.

"I will take first watch," Teal'c says, and gets up to go follow the Colonel.

"You know," Cassie frowns as you spin around in PA'S OFFICE CHAIR. "I can't help but remember when Janet kept telling me not to look at the light bulbs in the house because it'd be like looking at the sun. Except, instead of getting burn in on my eyes, it sounds like Colonel O'neill's got something burned into his brain."

"Pretty much," you say, stopping your spinning to stare at the PHOTOGRAPHS on your PA'S DESK of the TWO SAMPLES of this BLOCKY, ANCIENT LANGUAGE that you have available.

Your PA was certain that the FOUR LANGUAGES on Earnest's planet were a form of ROSETTA STONE- the same sentence written out in different languages. But if that's the case, then what does this sample from P3R-272 mean? You're tempted to go raid DR. JACKSON'S OLD OFFICE- Technically Skaara's office now, you suppose, since he's taken it up for continuing his own studies of EARTH'S LANGUAGES- just to see if there were any books in there that could help in this situation, but to be honest if that's the case, then Skaara's probably already reading through it.

Language was never really your STRONG SUIT anyways. You were always more into the CODES AND CRYPTOLOGICAL stuff.

That's when Carter peeks her head into the office, and asks you and Cassie to come with her to look at something.

You follow her to Skaara's/Jackson's Office, ironically enough, and she points you at a BLACKBOARD covered in MATH that MAKES NO SENSE.

"The Colonel drew this. Skaara and Teal'c says he drew it all out in about thirty seconds. Do you have any idea what this could mean?" She asks.
"Uh..." you look at it. "I guess it could be a form of code? Can't imagine it's any real math if it doesn't equal out, though."

Really, though, you think you've caused enough damage at this point, why are they bringing you into this even more?

"It looks like real math to me, though," Cassie says. "It looks like the math calculations we used to do back in school."

"Huh?" Carter asks, looking at her. "What do you mean?"

"It's base eight, like what we used on Hanka," Cassie says, and suddenly stuff clicks into place. Stuff like why Cassie found EARTH MATH so confusing at first and needed you to explain it out at least once properly and then she suddenly GOT A LOT BETTER AT IT a lot faster.

And actually, shifting the numbers around...

Carter pieces it together just at the same time you do- writing down a small change above one of the Colonel's numbers and...

"It's Base Eight," Carter echoes, astonished. "Why didn't I see it sooner?" She points at certain points, "It's a Base Eight version of the Stargate distance calculation algorithm!"

"It is?" You ask, surprised.

"Yes, look," Carter points at a line. "Calculations figured out by six points, a point of origin and-" She pauses. "Wait, this is different." She looks it over. "Six points, then TWO points of Origin? Wait, there's also Power calculations involved here too..."

"Eight symbols," You realize. "It's a calculation for an Eight Symbol address! Like what Joey used to go to Alternia!"

"Exactly that!" Carter stands there, staring for a moment, then, closes her eyes. And when she opens them again, JOLINAR SPEAKS. "This is revolutionary. I found it hard to believe that Eight Symbol addresses were anything but myth, and yet seeing it laid out in front of me is..."

"Do you think we could use this to reach Alternia?" You ask.

"I have no idea," Jolinar answers. "And Carter is too caught up in working her own calculations to answer that question right now. Sorry."

"It's fine," you say.

"So..." Cassie ventures. "How did Colonel O'neill figure this out?"

"That... that is the question, isn't it?" Jolinar frowns. "It's almost like..."

Whatever she was going to say is interrupted as an ALARM SOUNDS, and you hear someone call for "GENERAL HAMMOND AND CAPTAIN CARTER TO THE CONTROL ROOM."

You and Cassie follow Jolinar/Carter up there, because why not, and find Colonel O'neill WRITING
"I'd stop if I could, Sir," O'neill is in the middle of saying, "But I CAN'T!"

"Stop him!" Hammond motions towards Teal'c.

"Wait, don't!" Jolinar says.

"What?" Hammond and O'neill ask in equal surprise.

"This could be the key to letting us Dial Eight Symbol Addresses!" Jolinar says.

"Colonel!" You add, "That math problem you wrote is a power AND distance calculation formula for the Gates!"

"I did what now!?" Colonel O'neill then stops writing- pausing for a moment before his hand reaches out and taps the ENTER KEY. "Aw crap."

And then THE ENTIRE COMPUTER SYSTEMS SHUT DOWN, and REBOOT.

Jolinar/Carter goes over to a computer, presently showing a BLACK SCREEN full of THE NEWLY COMPILED CODE, and this time you hear Carter speak, "My god, this code is incredible. If I'm reading this right our power consumption should be streamlined by a good ten-twenty- maybe even thirty percent!"

And then the GATE ADDRESS REPOSITORY SCREEN comes up. First, showing all of the CURRENTLY KNOWN ADDRESSES. Then, a RED GATE appears among the sea of GREEN GATES. Then another, and another, and then several more in a RAPIDLY GROWING NUMBER.

"Carter," O'neill manages to stand up from where he was sitting, and stares at the screen. "What the hell did I just do?"

"Sir, this is incredible!" Carter gasps. "You somehow streamlined the stellar drift calculations too! It's giving us addresses faster than-- wait." She frowns, as the list of Stargates continues to grow, and grow, and grow until it finally stops. "It can't be, that's too many to-" Then, the computer RUNS A SCAN on the addresses, and spits up an ERROR MESSAGE.

You can see that it reads: [ERROR: 216 Addresses not found from Abydos Cartouche Library.]

"That's impossible," Jolinar speaks next. "These Gate addresses are unknown to BOTH the Goa'uld and Tok'ra! How did you add these??"

"I did what now?" O'neill stares on, a horrified look in his eyes.

"Captain Carter," General Hammond begins, "just what is going on here?"

"I think," Cassandra speaks up then- and you all turn to look at her. "I think Colonel O'neill had a LOT of knowledge about the Stargates burned into his brain."

"I'd have to agree with that guess, Sir," Carter adds. "The Distance Calculations, the revamped code he just wrote for our systems- that's nothing compared to the Gate Addresses. Our library of known Gates just quadrupled! The stellar drift calculations are still running, and we might be getting even
more large updates like this going forwards."

That sinks in for a moment, and then Jolinar adds her two cents, "**Carter and I are of the same belief that Colonel O'neill seems to have the entire knowledge of the Gate Builders within his head. It might not even be limited TO the Stargates themselves.**"

"...Well," Colonel O'neill begins. "That's just--" And then he lets loose a string of ALIEN WORDS that you don't understand at all...

Although, you HEAVILY SUSPECT quite a few of them are SWEAR WORDS.

"His brain activity has increased by over 500%," Dr. Fraiser says after a RECENT SCAN. "I know it's inaccurate to say that we only ever use 10% of our brains at a time, but in this case? Colonel O'neill might as well have been using only 10% of his brain at any given time before now." She pauses, then says, "I think it's only going to get worse."

O'neill says something in this ALIEN LANGUAGE that Skaara quickly writes down for translation later.

"Worse HOW?" Hammond presses.

"Cassie's Burn In metaphor works pretty well," Fraiser says, "except, let's think of it less like light searing on an eyeball, and more like... a computer, with a fairly empty harddrive that's suddenly had a ton of data dumped onto it. More data than it can safely process, so it starts trying to overwrite what little data was on there to begin with in an attempt to keep running. Things like spoken Language get changed over first, then skills like Math are upgraded to insane levels, and then..." She shakes her head. "If we can't figure out a way to stop it, Colonel O'neill might just cease to exist as the man we know. Best case he becomes a walking talking Repository of Knowledge."

"But worst case?" Hammond asks.

"Worst case, Colonel O'neill's brain deletes the wrong information and he flat out dies."

Great, as if you didn't have ENOUGH guilt weighing down on your conscience.

You and Cassie decide to stay with COLONEL O'NEILL while Carter and Teal'c go to one of the NEWLY ADDED PLANETS in hopes of finding the RACE OF ALIENS that built this "Repository of Knowledge" in the first place. Apparently this planet- you think it was called P9Q-281- had some of the SAME WRITING on this other planet near the Gate.

Here's to hoping they're still alive.

Skaara has put together a PRETTY DECENT GUESS at translating this ALIEN LANGUAGE by having O'neill read the ROSETTA STONE MESSAGE from Earnest's planet- and hey, he can READ this alien writing as well now- and so he stayed behind to serve as TRANSLATOR to O'neill, who...
Well, he's stopped speaking English entirely at this point, and has started building something TRULY FASCINATING.

He started by PLUCKING the POWER CORE out of a JAFFA STAFF WEAPON- one of MANY left in cold storage- and then began gathering MATERIALS from around the base, putting together something that looks... kind of VAGUELY like what you saw him SKETCHING back in the Conference Room earlier.

YOU START TAKING EXHAUSTIVE NOTES as he puts this Device together.

You... you have the SNEAKING SUSPICION that this device might be some kind of POWER GENERATOR. It all FITS with what you've seen so far from him. The GATE DISTANCE AND POWER CALCULATIONS, the EXTENDED ADDRESS DATABASE, the Refined POWER INPUT CALCULATIONS.

Whatever knowledge is taking root in the Colonel's Mind is VERY CLEARLY trying to SEND HIM SOMEWHERE ELSE. Somewhere with an EIGHT SYMBOL ADDRESS.

After a while, Skaara goes to check in with the General, and you, Cassie, and Janet Fraiser are left to keep O'neill company as he BUILDS.

"This is so far beyond my field of expertise I have no idea what I'm even looking at," Janet remarks casually as O'neill pauses in his construction of the device to TEST SOMETHING.

It GLOWS AND HUMS for a few moments before he shuts it off and RESUMES BUILDING.

Yep. Definitely SOME KIND OF BATTERY.

You wonder... was this what your PA was trying to recreate? Is this device somehow IN MINIATURE what those GIANT CAPACITOR THINGS in the Attic of the Florida House were for that Stargate that sent Joey to Alternia?

That's when things go from BAD TO WORSE, and Skaara comes in, a panicked expression on his face. SG-1 IS TRAPPED on a planet with A STALLED DHD, and A RISING, DEADLY SUN.

You're almost reminded of Joey's descriptions of ALTERNIA'S SUN. A HOT, RED GIANT STAR that blinds all who stare at it and makes the DAY TIME HOURS inhospitable to all except those WHO WILLINGLY SUFFER THROUGH IT or have ADAPTED TO IT in some way.

Carter, Teal'c, and two other random people you've NEVER EVEN MET don't have that luxury of time, though.

Colonel O'neill puts aside his POWER THINGY, and begins SKETCHING something almost immediately. Less than half an hour later, he's got a SET OF DHD BLUEPRINTS drawn up, and they're sent through to P9Q-281. Less than five minutes after that, SG-1 returns to earth safely.

You'd be IMPRESSED if not for your RISING GUILT LEVELS. This is ALL YOUR FAULT for pressing to investigate this planet. You were such an idiot to press for it. YOU'RE JUST A KID! You're not MEANT for this kind of stressful RESPONSIBILITY!!!

Ten minutes later, O'neill manages to write out one LAST ENGLISH SENTENCE on paper- 'I NEED TO GO THROUGH THE STARGATE.'
And then he stops responding to any attempts to talk to him whatsoever, because clearly...
ENGLISH NO LONGER MAKES ANY SENSE TO HIM.

About three minutes after that, THE BASE GOES ON ALERT as the STARGATE TRIES TO DIAL OUT all on its own. O'neill then takes off with his COMPLETED POWER THING, and heads off to the POWER ROOM.

You and Cassie follow him out of a sense of TRYING TO KEEP HIM OUT OF DANGER.

You watch as the Colonel HOOKS the thing onto a METAL DOOR somehow, and then uses CABLES to connect the battery thing to the MAIN BREAKER. Then, he activates it, and there's a VERY LOUD, DRONING HUM emerging from the device.

Predictably, O'neill heads to the GATE ROOM next.

You enter the Control room just in time to watch CHEVRON FIVE LOCK.

"These power readings are the physical result of the distance calculations," Carter was explaining to Hammond. "I think we're watching the Gate dial an eight symbol address under controlled circumstances!"

"But where did that extra power come from?" Hammond asks.

"O'neill's battery thing got attached to the power room," You tell them. "I think it's like all of those generators Pa was trying to fix so we could dial after Joey!"

"Seriously?" Carter asks- even as CHEVRON SIX finally locks. "That little device gave us Ten Times the normal energy draw from a standard wormhole?"

"Yup," you nod.

"I don't like this," Hammond says. "We have no idea where this Gate connection will even go."

"CHEVRON SEVEN... ENCODED!" Walter calls out. "It's not the Point of Origin!"

The Gate CONTINUES TO DIAL.

"It's good," Cassie says. "I get the feeling... it's all going to work out for the best if we let this finish to the end."

You give GENERAL HAMMOND a pointed look, reminding him about the LAST FEELING Cassie verbalized about being a BAD THING.

Namely, dialing to a BLACK HOLE ORBITING PLANET.

"...Fine," Hammond consents with a nod. "We let O'neill go through. No GDO, though. We can't risk that security risk."

"Chevron Eight...!"

KA-THWUMP.
"LOCKED!"

**WAA WAA! KAWOOGGGGGGGGGHHH!**

The UNSTABLE VORTEX that shoots out is... SMALLER than what you recall from the LAST EIGHT SYMBOL ADDRESS you witnessed. It's only just SLIGHTLY LONGER than the standard vortex from a normal wormhole...

"Where-ever O'neill's dialed," you say, "it's not as far away as Alternia is."

Surprisingly, with that said, O'neill gives you a bemused look, and then he turns and leaves for the Gate Room.

You don't follow him this time.

He goes through the Gate.

You stare after, even as the computers try to TRACK HIS PROGRESS across the Galaxy... no, beyond it, even.

The Gate shuts down a minute later. Carter, at Hammond's order, tries to reboot the system to get the IRIS operational again, as it seems to not be working.

Another two minutes pass as that FAILS TO HAPPEN entirely. Carter can't reboot the system at all.

And then the GATE STARTS DIALING IN.

Cassie smiles and you feel... OPTIMISTIC.

Six chevrons lock in rapid sequence- a pause- a seventh- a pause- then an EIGHTH before the **WAA WAA! KAWOOSH!**

Several moments pass in tense silence as GUARDS AIM GUNS at the Gate, just in case...

And then out comes Colonel O'neill, looking tired, but looking relieved.

"Oh, Lucy," he intones- sounding just as exhausted as he looks. "I'm home."

...And it looks like Colonel O'neill is back to being 100% HIM again.

(Hammond is also HAPPY as well- mainly because as the Gate shuts down, ALL SYSTEM CONTROLS all return to normal.)

---

The POWER GENERATOR still has some ENERGY LEFT IN IT. It's not a whole LOT, but Carter runs through her own DATA CALCULATIONS using the DATA COMPRESSION FORMULA sent from Alternia, and figures that IT'S JUST BARELY ENOUGH ENERGY LEFT to attempt to dial Alternia and SEND A RETURN MESSAGE.

And so here you sit, before a camera, trying to think of what to say.
"...Hey, Joey," You smile, waving at the camera. "There's a lot we need to talk about, I guess. We're still, ah, decompressing your letter you sent to us. Last thing we read was the report on you getting that Purple Crystal. Yikes! Sounds like a real nightmare to me, y'know?"

You aren't sure what to say for a moment. So, you decide to get to the heart of the matter, "Pa's dead, Joey. He- He died. Someone broke into the house and shot him dead so they could steal the Stargate that sent you to Alternia. He-" you choke up a bit. "He died a little bit before we got your message. He was trying to find a way to get to you, or to bring you home..."

Your throat clogs up.

"I guess, ironically, we've kind of got the power to get to you mostly dropped into our laps just like you got your way to contact us. Captain Carter says she's including that formula stuff in our return transmission too." You try to think of what else to say. "Roxy and Alec got married. They've got two kids now! Rose and John. We're an Aunt and Uncle! I guess? Of a sort?" You pause, then add, "I'm also basically a Big Bro now, too. We... Pa took in this girl. Jade. She's... She'll be one this December. We've got some pictures and video we're sending your way too. You'd like her."

What else is there to say?

"I'm not really sure what else I'm supposed to say here, Joey." You say. "I miss you, alot. There's so much I want to say and tell you but I'm not sure what I can actually say here without-" you force back a sob and the tears. "Without... yknow. Crying. We Harley men aren't supposed to cry easily!!" You try to puff out your chest in a mimic of PA, but... it falls flat. You're feeling the TEARS IN YOUR EYES ANYWAYS. "I... I'm trying to be strong here, Joey. For Jade. For Roxy and Alec, and even Aunt Jane. It's- It's been tough. Sometimes I-" you sniff. "I feel like I'm not doing everything I could be or should be and I just... I want to stop what I'm doing and go hide in a corner but..."

But you're not that weak.

"But for cryin' out loud," you borrow O'neill's catch phrase, "Joey! I helped Davis throw a BOMB at a Stargate connected to a BLACK HOLE and saved the EARTH! Even if-" Your vision BLURS beneath your glasses as the waterworks flow freely. "Even if I'm scared that neither of us are ever going to see eachother in person again, I- I'm helping! You're helping! We're both doing something amazing and I JUST-" You sob. "I WISH PA COULD STILL BE HERE TO SEE WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING!" You fight back the tears, trying to focus on the camera long enough to deliver the last thought in your mind.

"I MISS YOU, JOEY! COME BACK HOME SOON, OKAY!?"

---

"Chevron One Encoded."

With the ALTERNIAN DHD CRYSTALS set into the DIALING COMPUTER to provide the ALTERNATE SYMBOL SET, and the computer MATCHING GLYPHS so that the Dialing computer can use the local Earth Gate Glyphs to connect to the Alternia Stargate- you sit, ANXIOUSLY, in the Control Room as the STARGATE dials a FAMILIAR SET OF EIGHT SYMBOLS. The IRIS has been set so as to CONTAIN THE EVENTHORIZON that's SURE TO
"Chevron Two Encoded."

You and Cassie stand alongside Captain Carter, and General Hammond as you watch the Gate SPIN.

"Chevron Three Encoded."

"Message is prepared," Carter reports. "I've got the computer ready to broadcast it through the wormhole the moment it opens."

"Chevron Four Encoded."

"Here's hoping Joey's still on the other side to receive it," Hammond says.

"Chevron Five Encoded."

"Yeah," You say, throat dry. "Here's hoping."

"Chevron Six Encoded."

Cassie takes your left hand with her right, and smiles at you. "It'll work out alright, just you wait and see."

"Chevron Seven... Encoded!!"

"Here goes," Carter takes a deep breath.

"Chevron EIGHT..." KATHWUMP. "LOCKED!"

WAAAAA WAAAAAA!

The KAWOOSH sounds ODDLY MUTED beneath the IRIS, and much more drawn out than it would be from an ordinary wormhole. The moment it finishes, however, you hear the Gate SHUTTING DOWN.

"File successfully transmitted," Carter reports. "Whether or not anyone was receiving... I guess we'll have to wait and see."

You really, really hope JOEY got this message.

Chapter End Notes

I've been of the opinion that this POWER THING O'neill made was a PROTOTYPE Z.P.M.
"Sleep well?" You're asked the moment you climb up into the tree hive based CAMP.

Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE, and you almost certainly DID NOT SLEEP WELL.

"My back is sore, and I couldn't sleep at all, and you look way too smug and happy to be properly awake this early in the morning," You tell your STILL UNNAMED TEAL BLOODED... FRIEND? ACQUAINTANCE?

The adult troll just laughs. "You get used to it. Be glad I came and fetched you before the Natives started their morning rituals."

"Who are these Natives anyways?" you ask, glancing out the window at the lagoon.

"Small, monkey like creatures. They don't seem like much at first glance, but when they get to singing in the mornings..." The Troll laughs again. "Well, you'll hear soon enough."

About five minutes into a LARGE BREAKFAST, you start hearing lots of LONG, ECHOING CRIES. It almost sounds... MELODIOS to some degree. Well, as melodious as MONKEY CRIES can be, you suppose.

"Ah, and there they go," your companion smiles. "Right on schedule."

This continues on wards for about THREE MINUTES before there's a sudden, interrupting, very loud cry of "EEEE EOO EEEEEEE!!"

And then everything goes silent.

"And there's the Razormouth's to end the show," your companion chuckles. "Also right on schedule."

"Razormouths?" You ask.

"Think a wolf like creature, except lizard instead of wolf, and a mouth full of teeth so sharp they might as well be razors."

Ah. Terrifying concept, that one.

"So," she asks you. "Have you made a decision as to whether or not you'll be staying or going?"
You close your eyes, wincing. "I think..." What do you want to do? "I think I should go back. I realized something last night, which kept me up late."

"Oh? What was that?" Your companion asked.

"...The device that I nearly killed us all with might have been a lesser or, improperly activated version of the device the Mofang used to blow up a couple of stars recently," you say.

"Mofang?" They frown. "I haven't heard of them."

"You're out of the loop, I guess," you say. "The Sorian Empire is fighting against the Alternian Empire- Mofang versus Trolls. A while ago, the Empress took control over some minor outpost and the Mofang Emperor took offense. He blew up a few stars to prove a point and right now everyone's been circling their pieces and preparing for their own full frontal assaults."

"I see," they say, frowning. "This is your reason for returning?"

"Nobody could figure out how the Mofang did it," you say. "Sure, the Empire's news channels say they know, but it's clearly just propaganda. They're just as stumped as everyone else. If I'm right..." You shake your head. "I'd be hurting my friends more by letting them walk into that unprepared. I..." you gulp. "I'm torn in two by two different fears. One that they'll get hurt because I'm there, and one that they'll get hurt because I'm NOT there and I could have done something..."

"Ah, I see," Your troll companion nods, knowingly. "The coin flip. Heads or Tails."

"Right now, I think the fear of this Mofang warhead is outweighing everything else," you say. "I... I need to go back."

"Do you plan on staying there?" they ask. "Do you ever plan on returning here?"

"...I don't know?" You answer.

"Then you have not truly made up your mind," they say.

There's several moments of silence passing between you two before they speak again, "My name is Latula Pyrope. What is your name?"

"Callie Ohphee," you say.

"Callie, may I be honest with you for a moment?" LATULA asks, and you nod. "Callie, I think you're stubbornly trying to commit to the idea of running away even knowing that you shouldn't."

"I... Suppose," you begin.

"There's no supposing about it," Latula says. "You're cutting off contact from people who care about you. Your friends. Your team. People you yourself care about. You're feeling that is you keep them at arm's length, you won't have to worry about hurting them by doing something wrong and that eventually they'll be better off by just forgetting about you."

"But they will be!" you argue.

"They won't." Latula leans in, locking her teal eyes against your STILL GREY ones. "They're going
to keep looking for you unless you return, and they're not going to stop worrying about you even IF you tell them that everything's fine and wear a mask of smiles. Because it's NOT fine. You're still conflicted inside. They'll still be hurt by the fact that you left in the first place. They won't be better off by you leaving at all! Running away is NOT the solution to any of your problems here! Not now, and not going forwards.

"Then why are you here, Latula?" You ask. "Didn't you leave people behind when you came here?"

"None that didn't want me dead," Latula answers, pointing to her scarred neck. "I hung for it. I'm still not sure how I survived other than that the crowd was not fully paying attention to if I'd truly died or not. My exile was not what I ever wanted- and is not self imposed. I have no choice to allow me to return to Alternia. YOU, however, DO. There is nothing keeping you here on Haven but your own self directed anger towards yourself."

You consider that... and you honestly find no way to argue against it.

You stand before the DHD, WOLF MOM at your side, and reach out for the plates...

You hesitate, fear gripping your heart again.

You're not ready to confront them, a voice whispers in the back of your mind, you'll just make them upset by returning and- and-

THWUNK.

You pressed the first glyph's plate, and the STARGATE whirls to attention.

You reach for the second glyph- hesitation trying to stop you again but you push past it.

TWHUNK.

And the second one is set.

You reach out for THREE and FOUR, and press them both within seconds of each other.

THWUNK. THWUNK.

Five comes next, easier than the rest- THWUNK- and as you reach for SIX....

Your heart skips a beat again.

What if they decide to kick you out?

No! You shake your head. You have to believe they won't.

THWUNK. Six is pressed, and the Gate only needs one more...

You reach out...
KA-THWUNK.

**WAA WAAA! KAWOOOOSH!**

...And you sigh in relief as a connection goes through.

You stand there at the DHD for a moment... wondering... hesitating again.

Even if you don't step through, this act of dialing alone would be enough to have the team curious enough to come through the Gate after looking at the address.

Haven a sanctuary no more, regardless...

You feel Wolf Mom nuzzle your side, and then pushes you towards the Gate.

"Okay, okay!" you say, sighing. "I'll go."

And with that, you re-adjust your back pack, and then step up to the GATE... as you do such, however, you pause as the lighting around you GOES WEIRD, and you look UPWARDS.

There's... there's something WRONG WITH THE SUN. The BRIGHT YELLOW HUE is shifting into the BLOOD RED of ALTERNIA'S SUN.

You push through the Gate before you get caught up in what's almost CERTAINLY GOING TO BE YOUR DEATH if you wait any longer.

For what feels like the FIRST TIME you're PHYSICALLY AWARE of the act of TRANSVERSING THROUGH A WORMHOLE, as if the WHOLE PROCESS is being SLOWED DOWN to a rate that you can observe it at.

The RED WORMHOLE spirals ahead of you- flaring ORANGE as it bends around the SUN, caught up in the GRAVITATIONAL PULL of a MASSIVE SOLAR FLARE, directed straight at the planet you were dialing from.

AND THEN IT'S GONE- the solar flare vanishing, and the wormhole is hurtling straight back down to the planet you just came from.

"The hell?" You ask, even as Wolf Mom stumbles out of the Gate in confusion after you.

That... that wasn't right. That wasn't right at all, was it?

You're back on HAVEN, but it's NIGHT TIME NOW instead of DAY TIME. And there's... there's no ROAD leading from the Gate either.

You go to the DHD and DIAL ALTERNIA again. The connection opens, and you jump through the moment you can.

Instantaneously, you're exiting Alternia's Stargate- but you STUMBLE as you nearly trip down STAIRS that shouldn't be there.

You look around as Wolf mom exits behind you, and you realize...
You REALIZE THAT the ALTERNIA YOU'VE RETURNED TO... is almost certainly NOT the Alternia you wanted to go to.

The Gate shuts down, and you turn around to look behind the Gate...

"...Oh for crying out loud," you lament the moment you see the LARGE LOOMING SHAPE of MOUNT TYRANY in the distance, and above it...

ABOVE IT are SEVERAL LARGER FRIGHTENING WARSHIPS.

Wolf Mom suddenly whimpers from beside you, encouraging you to HIDE. So you do- both of you diving off into some NEARBY BUSHES to hide away as several ADULT, ALTERNIAN SOLDIERS wearing armor that you've only seen in depictions of HISTORY from before the DEMISE OF THE SIGNLESS. They DIAL THE STARGATE, and then step through it, going WHO KNOWS WHERE AND WHEN. You don't care.

Somehow, you've fucking wound up BACK IN TIME.

Either that, or this is the WEIRDEST NIGHTMARE you've ever had.

But just in case this is real, you change shirts from your TRUE LIMEBLOOD SYMBOL to one of your FAKE SHIRTS. This way... nobody should be able to put the pin on you being here in case you INADVERTENTLY CHANGE THINGS.

Oh geeze. You hope that's not a thing that's going to happen.

The first idea that comes to your mind is one that comes from JOEY- or rather, her telling you about a MOVIE from Earth involving a TIME TRAVELER who wrote a letter to his FRIEND at the exact moment he went back in time.

You try to think. What day was it when you left??

No, more importantly, what day is it NOW, and how can you ensure that a letter will get to your friends?

Damn it all, you were NOT PREPARED for a sudden time travel excursion to the past.

TIME TRAVEL IS NOT YOUR THING!

You follow the road INTO TOWN, and you look for the nearest newspaper. Unsurprisingly, you find one rather easily. There's some RUST BLOODED GIRL who looks a bit like Okurii handing them out to anyone who passes by, yelling out the headline.

"NOTORIOUS PIRATE AND GABLIGANT MINDFANG CAPTURED BY DETECTIVE LATULA 'REDGLARE' PYROPE!"

You stop in your tracks upon hearing the name, and gratefully take one of the papers to go read it in peace.
You and Wolf Mom find an EMPTY ALLEYWAY, and you read through the paper's front page. "Late Yesterday Evening, Detective and Legislator Latula Pyrope performed a raid on the Rogue Pirate Flotilla in the Carapacian Sea, razing the fleet to ashes with her Dragon Lusus, and capturing all of the ring leaders in the process, included among them ARANEA SERKET, ALIAS: "MARQUISE, SPINERETTE MINDFANG." You stare at the ASSOCIATED PICTURE and SURE ENOUGH, that's the HUNTER- or rather, HUNTRESS- that you met on Haven. HUNDREDS, possibly even THOUSANDS of years younger, standing, grinning into the camera as she hoists a ONE ARMED, ONE EYED WOMAN onto a BOAT DECK. You continue reading, "'Trial at Mount Tyrany is scheduled to be conducted tomorrow evening, with an expected verdict of-' Oh no."

If you're REMEMBERING YOUR HISTORY RIGHT... "Marquise Spinerette Mindfang" doesn't die until the SUMMONER'S REVOLT. And if the date is right... that isn't going to happen for another HUNDRED YEARS!!

This... this HAS to be the moment Latula was talking about.

Latula Pyrope, who miraculously survived being HANGED after making a MISTAKE, is about to conduct a TRIAL TOMORROW EVENING with the expected verdict of GUILTY, resulting in a death sentence of HANGING for the Pirate woman whose historical cause of death is a BROKEN HEART VIA IMPALEMENT.

History is about to go HORRIBLY, HORRIBLY off the rails unless you do something.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise Solar Flare! :D :D

It was a very large solar flare, too- one large enough to send Callie hurtling BACK IN TIME thousands of years! -one that's likely large enough to fry the planet too, if it hits directly.

EDIT: Why did so many typos sneak through on this one? >_<; I swear that'd better be the last of them.
Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE, and you're not sure WHAT TO DO.

On the one hand, finding a SMALL ROOM at an INN is startling easy to do- especially since you don't plan on actually legitimately CHECKING OUT and they don't expect payment until you do- so you and Wolf-Mom have some free time to sit and consider your actions tomorrow.

Obviously, Latula needs to survive, in order for her to BE alive to convince you to go back when you did.

But then what?

How do you go BACK to the future? Do you just live out your days here until you find a way back? How long would that even be?

If you could just figure out how to HARNESS this phenomenon... Maybe you could use it to change the FUTURE for the BETTER?? Or at the very least... MAYBE steal one of the crystals before it's found? What was left, anyways? ORANGE and CERULEAN? That could explain why you haven't found them yet- your team or Trizza that is. That YOU somehow get your hands on them and bring them FORWARDS into the future??

But the question is HOW. How can you do that?

No, best to deal with this one mission at a time like you've been doing. Save Latula first, THEN deal with the time travel second.

It's fortunate that SUCH A HUGE TRIAL is drawing in people from ALL AROUND, otherwise you'd never be able to get in on your own. As it is, all it takes is a LARGE CLOAK, and nobody can tell you're not supposed to be here.

You manage to SNAG A SEAT near the very front thanks to your APPARENTLY SHORT STATURE compared to everyone else and- huh, surprise of all surprises, that girl who was passing out the NEWSPAPERS yesterday is sitting nearby- writing down stuff as the events go on.

You guess she's also an ASPIRING REPORTER along side passing out the papers.

"Oh, hello!" She smiles at you. "Come to gawk as well, hm?"
"I suppose so," you admit. "Truthfully, I don't expect things to go smoothly at all."

"As expected!" The girl who looks like Okurii says, smiling. "It IS the trial of a notorious pirate and mind controller! Something going wrong is just to be expected."
Ah. Mind control. You'd nearly forgotten about that. That would... almost certainly explain Latula's "MISTAKE."

"Ayakho!" The girl offers you her hand.

"Huh?" you blink. "What?"

"My name, it's Ayakho Megido," she says.

"Ah." You take her hand, and shake it. "Callie-" Uhhh... "Tritoh."

Welp. There's no way anyone's going to be figuring you out based on THAT.

"Nice to meet ya, Callie," AYAKHO says. "Hope it's an entertaining trial!"

"I'm sure it will be."

Soon, THE MASSIVE AUDIENCE SEATING VENUE was filled, and the BULKING GIRTH of HIS HONORABLE TYRANNY emerged from the PIT he called a home. The PIRATES were all sent forth, sentenced quickly and summarily executed without much effort. It was all just a SHOW- building up to the GRAND PRIZE that was Aranea Serket.

You could FEEL THE TENSION building up through the audience.

Soon, a small break was held, and a SPECIAL SEATING BLOCK revealed itself, quickly filled up with HIGHBLOODS. Purple psychic clowns.

They were HERE TO WATCH.

The show was about to begin.

Aranea Serket- sans one arm and one eye- was paraded out with a grin on her face and wearing her FULL PIRATE REGALIA. Half the audience booed, half of them cheered, and those who did neither quickly chose one or the other lest they be culled on sight.

You, personally, chose to boo, fearing what was going to happen.

LATULA "REDGLARE" PYROPE stepped out after her, and the BOO/CHEER RATIO INVERTED. She looks YOUNG. So very young compared to the her you saw on Haven. You'd almost think she was a TEENAGER, with how young she looks, but that's probably just the SLOWED AGING PROCESS the Higher Bloods enjoy showing itself.

She starts listing out the CRIMES that the MARQUIS had committed. And of course, ARANEA makes faces at all of them. Most of them faces of ENJOYMENT of reliving a CHOICE ENCOUNTER; some of them receiving GRIMACES and shakes of the head; others still receiving a look of "eh, that one was alright, I suppose."
Soon, the charges are filed, and Aranea is asked for her plea.

"GUILTY AS HELL, YOUR HONOR!" She yells, boasting, proudly, grinning. "AND I'D DO IT ALL AGAIN IN A HEARTBEAT TOO!"

You're not surprised.

She's sentenced for HANGING.

And that's when you feel a RIPPLE OF RAGE through the crowd- your LIME BLOOD PSYCHIC RESISTANCE letting you feel the tendrils of MIND CONTROL trying to rip into your brain.

YOU RESIST, and you lend some support to AYAKHO next to you out of a fit of... Of sympathy, you guess.

And so when the crowd goes MAD and begins leaping out of their seats to jump into the fray, you sneak in and join them, selling the ILLUSION of your own BEING TURNED. You make sure you're the one who slips the noose around Latula's neck as the crowd grabs HER and forces HER to be hanged instead. You make sure you're the one who BOTCHES THE JOB and fails to properly hang her.

His Honorable Tyranny just roars in anger and admonishment.

Mindfang takes LATULA'S SWORD, and then launches into a FIGHT WITH HIM.

The CLOWNS LAUGH all the while.

And through it all, that poor rust blood girl just stares on, writing down history as it transpires in front of her face.

You feel MINDFANG'S mental controls stop trying to pry into your head, and the rest of the crowd's ANGER DIMINISHES.

You play the part and pull Latula down- not at all needing to fake the horror on your face as you check her for a pulse. You SERIOUSLY HOPE you didn't screw this up. But there is one... A faint, barely there pulse. Her heart is still beating.

You lie your ass off.

"SHE'S DEAD!" You yell, pouring ounce upon every single ounce of horror you can muster into your voice.

And that's when MINDFANG suddenly- somehow- turns the tables on HIS HONORABLE TYRANNY by tricking him into crashing a pillar. A SUPPORT PILLAR. The building begins to collapse. The CROWD FLEES. You?

You drag Latula out of the building. You drag her down the road, watching as the building collapses upon HIS HONORABLE TYRANNY. You don't hold out any hope that Mindfang was crushed within the building because you SEE HER STROLLING out of the ruins with a BLOOD COVERED SWORD, and SATISFIED GRIN ON HER FACE.

"Oi, Lime Blood!" She calls out, upon seeing you with Latula's body.
"Wha-?" You blink- then realize of COURSE she realized you weren't properly under her sway.

"Bury her with this, would ya!?!" And then she tosses Latula's sword to you. "And tell her ghost that if I ever see her ass again, I'm gonna exorcise her!"

You catch it with surprising ease, and say, "I will."

And thus, you part ways.

You drag Latula to WOLF MOM, and have her help carry the poor woman to the Stargate. You make better time than if you'd have gone on foot. By the time you've made it to the STARGATE, Latula is regaining consciousness.

You hide your face as best as you can as you hurriedly tell her that everyone thinks she's dead. Then you tell her of a PLANET she can hide out on for a short time- you even offer to dial the gate for her if she wants to go.

And with a look of UTTER DEFEAT on her face, Latula Pyrope consents to a voluntary exile.

You make sure to give her her sword back before she crosses through the Stargate's eventhorizon. And away. She. Goes.

The gate stays active, however, and you consider going after her. There's not much else you can do here on Alternia. Too much risk of doing something wrong, here.

That's when Ayakho shows up again, smiling faintly.

Of course she'd follow you.

"So." She says. "Do I even want to know what the hell just happened?"

"Probably not," you say.

"Uh huh," she nods, clearly not believing you. "Maybe we should talk on the other side of that?" She points at the still active Gate.

...Well, might as well. You have no idea of this girl's important to history or not anyways.

So you and her go through, WOLF-MOM at your side.

You emerge back into the familiar forests of HAVEN- and see LATULA looking around curiously at the world around her. It's nighttime again on this side. Latula pays you no attention as the gate shuts down, and you and AYAKHO step away from her to discuss things.

"So... what kind of Troll are you, exactly?" She asks. "Showing up at a Trial knowing it's about to go wrong, just to save someone from a botched execution attempt?"

"I..." You shrug. "I suppose I'm psychic."

"A Seer, huh?" Ayakho asks, frowning. "Funny, you don't look blind."
"Four thirteen and so on," You say. "Not every Blind Prophet is a blind prophet."

"Give me a prophecy then," she says.

"...Fine," you say. "Hundreds of years from now the Marquise will find a Matesprit in a man called the Summoner, and they both will lead a revolt against the Alternian Empire that results in all Adults being kicked off of Alternia and the Stargate being removed from the planet."

Latula does glance over at you- apparently having heard that. She frowns deeply, but says nothing.

Ayakho stares at you flatly for a moment, then says, "That didn't even rhyme!"

"Forgive me for not rehearsing in advance," you say. "You put me on the spot."

"Okay, fine." Ayakho crosses her arms, frowning. "So why save Redglare over there?"

"One day she'll save someone from themselves," you say. "Or at least, that's the vision I've seen." Forgetting for just a moment the fact that your 'vision' is little more than LITERALLY THE EVENTS of what, to you, were just YESTERDAY, you do hope that's still a prophecy that's going to come true.

"...So, if this prophecy is true," Ayakho says, "the first one. About people getting kicked off Alternia... is there any way to stop that?"

Oh. Crap. Why does she have to keep asking questions??

"No way to stop it, infact, it will be necessary for some events down the line to even transpire," you say. "However... there is a cavern in the deserts. I've foreseen a place where Trolls, with a Mother Grub of their own hidden away, can live in secrecy of the Empire's sight. I have no idea how they do it-" Half true. "But they remain invisible for years to come. Other prophets will wish to gather there as well, I believe."

"Huh..." Ayakho muses on that. "...Well... that's... Okay. I can believe that."

"Thank you," you say, hoping that you didn't just set up ANOTHER STABLE TIME LOOP by accident.

"I think... I'll be going then," Ayakho says, moving over to the DHD. "I'll be seeing you around, Seer."

A WAA WAA KAWOOSH LATER, and the Rust Blooded girl is gone through the Gate. A moment later, it shuts down.

Latula meanders over to you, and asks, in a voice that sounds much more strained than when you'd first met her, "You're not lying about seeing these things, but you're not a Blind Prophet."

"No, I'm not," you answer, reaching for Wolf-Mom's head and scratching at her fur between her ears. "I'm just someone who ended up in the right place at the right time, and could make a difference. Not that it changes anything."

"You saved my life, I'd say that's a change," Latula says.
"Maybe, maybe not," You frown. "I just want to go home to warn my friends about something. But I can't. I can't go back for thousands and thousands of years more and I have no idea if I'll even live that long."

"...I see," Latula croaks out. "I suppose we're both Exiles then. Wanting to return home but can't."

"I suppose we are," you look towards the Gate. "I'll... stay here a while. Help get you set up."

"It would be appreciated," Latula says.

After all, as it's been said, Misery Loves Company.

About a WEEK into your TEMPORALLY IMPOSED EXILE, you observe THREE SOLAR FLARES on Haven from its surface alone- with the sun going RED before shifting back to normal. You come to the conclusion that these HAVE to be the reason you're SO FAR INTO THE PAST.

But how? How do you take advantage of it?

The answer, simply, is that you just don't have the right TECHNOLOGY here in the past to figure this puzzle out...

So what do you do to make use of it?

It's when one day that Haven's STARGATE OPENS, and a COMPUTER TABLET comes hurtling through, that you realize you've ended up giving yourself the answer- likely after you've already SOLVED THIS PROBLEM.

On the computer tablet is a LISTING of DEPARTURE TIMES, SOLAR FLARE MAGNITUDES, and ESTIMATED ARRIVAL TIMES- both for HAVEN and ALTERNIA- including ONE DATE, far into the future, which is accompanied with a sly bit of LIME GREEN TEXT reading "You're welcome! ;]

Clearly, this was when you got this tablet to you right here and now.

This could be INCREDIBLY USEFUL and also INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS to even consider using more than once.

You decide to run some EXPERIMENTS to confirm the validity of this data before you even dare risk using any of it to return to the FUTURE.

That's the sensible thing to do, isn't it? After all, you wouldn't be any kind of SCIENTIST to send this data in the first place without doing any of the-

The hard.... work to... gather it...

In the first place.

Damn it all.
About a MONTH into your TIME TRANSPLANTED EXILE, you figure you've got ENOUGH DATA confirmed to make use of the FIRST WINDOW you have back to the future. It says it's going to drop you a MONTH after you initially left Alternia, which... is kind of IDEAL for a ONE TO ONE ratio, but... damn it, the next window to SOONER won't be for another TWENTY SOLAR SWEEPS and that's even LESS IDEAL.

You're probably going to get shit from the rest of the team for being gone so long, but damn it, you've missed them.

So... You're going to take it.

You tell Latula you'll be back in... you're not even sure how long it will be, because you might very well return to the past at some point. She says she'll keep her eyes out for you...

And so you dial Alternia, even though you know you're not going to wind up there directly, and you WAIT FOR THE SOLAR FLARE.

Once again, the SUN TURNS RED, and you step through the GATE.

Once more, you see a TWISTED VIEW of space and time through the Wormhole, and ONCE AGAIN, a solar flare VANISHES FROM VIEW before you're stumbling OUT OF THE GATE, again.

Much to your SURPRISE, however, you find XEFROS TRITOH and JOEY CLAIRE standing by the DHD, along side a SMUG LOOKING LATULA.

Wolf mom stumbles out of the Gate behind you, and then it shuts down.

"Uh...." You stare, face likely flushing green. "Hi?"

"Latula told us about your little time travel expedition," Joey says, frowning at you ever so slightly in a way that shows how worried she's been. "We've been checking back once a day since."

"Did I land where I think I did?" You ask. "How long have I been... uh... gone?"

"About a solid month," Xefros says, trying to keep his expression neutral, though failing enough to be able to tell that he's relieved you're back.

"Oh thank goodness." You sigh in relief, then say, "In my defense, I *was* trying to come back when I got stuck."

"We know," Joey says, holding her arms out wide as she gives a forgiving smile. "Now come here so we can hug you!"

You... You hesitate.

You look at Joey, then Xefros, both looking uncertain, but hopeful, that you'll come back to them. You look to Latula, who gives you a knowing smile and a nod.
Gratefully, you run over and let the two of them pull you into a hug.

"We missed you, Callie," one or both of them says and you don't rightly care anymore because you've REALLY MISSED THEM TOO.

Chapter End Notes

Callie's going to THOROUGHLY program in DEADLOCK BLOCKS on the Base's Dialing Computer the minute she gets home to prevent any more accidental time travel trips.
SG1:02X17: Serpent's Song

Chapter Summary

Short, and sweet- Roxy makes a point.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

NOVEMBER 1ST, 1996.

"Hey, Roxy?" Joey's face plays on the video, looking a little nervous. "Can... I just... Can I ask you something?"

Your name is ROXY EGBERT and you're wishing you'd gotten to THIS VIDEO before you'd recorded that one you added to the pile of videos to get sent off to Joey Claire the other day.

"If a friend gets all mad at themselves over something," Joey begins, "And you don't notice... does it make you a bad friend? What if someone tells you... they're sorry for making things so bad for everyone else that they'd rather run away and hide for days at a time? What does that mean?"

She sighs, and you sigh too.

"I know I'm probably not going to get a reply to this any time soon. Hell, maybe the next video you watch in this sequence will be me saying everything's alright and dandy?" She looks a little hopeful, there, but returns to looking nervous. "I'm scared, Roxy. You... you're kind of the closest thing I had to a mother outside of Mom's taped shows. Even if your advice was horrible sometimes-"

You laugh a bitter laugh. Yeah, you DID give some horrible advice on occasion, didn't you?

"It was still better than what I got from Pa a lot of the time." She shakes her head. "I like what I'm doing here on Alternia, Roxy. But... I wish sometimes I just had an easier way to talk with everyone back home that wasn't just a recorded video." She reaches a hand up, grasping at the SOMEWHAT WORN looking shirt over her heart. "And I've lost Fey, and now Callie's..." she sniffs. "I just wish I could talk with people better, y'know?"

Oh, how you know all too well.

"Anyways... thanks for listening, Roxy," she smiles oh so sadly, reaches up for something, and then the video ends.

You sigh, exhaling, and then clicking through to the next thumbnail'd video.

In the background, you hear the STARGATE ALARMS go off- the second time in the last FORTY OR SO MINUTES. Apparently you have a WANTED GUEST on base. You could find out who with your RAISED CLEARANCES but you just can't find it in you to care for the moment.
You push the sound out of your ears, and let the next video- 4RoxyVid7.Mp4- play.

"Hey, Roxy!" Joey smiles, looking happier than she has been on camera. "Have an update regarding that last video. We got some good news about my one friend who went missing. She's... uh..." Joey scratches at the back of her head as she laughs nervously. "Apparently she's found some way to use the Stargates to Time Travel. Accidentally." She shakes her head. "This Latula lady is kind of coy about the how part. I think she's enjoying teasing us for some reason. Maybe we go back and talk with her in the past or something?? Urgh. I dunno." She sighs. "Sometimes this Stargate stuff gives me a headache. At least... for the moment we know she's alive and IS coming back to us! But... Yeah. No idea how or when. Whee! Such fun, isn't it?"

Oh, for sure, Joey, for sure. You're CERTAINLY HAVING A BLAST catching up on all this stuff.

She leans back against a wall, and lets one of those beetle things crawl up onto her lap- the oddly colored one. "In other news, Fey's... kind of surfacing?" Joey begins stroking at the shell of that beetle. "Last night I heard her saying my name in the mental cloud network thing. That and a... feeling, I guess?" Joey frowns. "I think she was trying to reassure me that everything would be okay."

You hope that's the case.

"Anyways," Joey smiles. "Thanks for listening, Roxy." And thus, she reaches up and ends the video.

Interestingly, the next one in the sequence is "4ROXYVIDX.MP4"- with a completely different writing style.

You click it, and wait for it to load.

Appearing on screen is an ADORABLE ALIEN KID, about Joey's age. They're speaking in that ALIEN LANGUAGE, but it seems thanks to one of the other videos, someone figured out how to at least translate it into English text, and so the SUBTITLES play, translating what they're saying for you to read while you watch.

"Hello, Miss Lalonde!" the girl with SWEPT BACK HORNS says, smiling. "I'm Mierfa, Joey's Matesprit!" The translations have a subnote in parenthesis reading "(Girlfriend?)" to which you smile. "I'm just sneaking this in here to let you know- first off- not to worry about her, okay? Joey and Xefros are just off world right now, waiting to see if Callie gets back soon. Um, anyways..." She blushes a bit. "I've been learning a bit about human customs from Joey and apparently it's normal for people to meet the... what's the word? Puh.. Par... Parents of the people they're dating? So... uh, yeah. In lieu of actually meeting you face to face someday, here's a video."

You smile a bit, glad to see that this Mierfa Girl is serious about things enough to do this.

"So... yeah. Hi. I'm Mierfa. Um... I'm not sure what to say here, I guess. Um..."

You're not really sure what you'd say to her either, to be honest.

"I guess I could talk about me for a bit, but that kind of seems egotistical?" She shrugs. "So, uh..."

"Nooo!" you whine to the computer. "Talk about youuuu!!!"

"I like... No. I really, really love Joey. She's smart and funny and kind and..." Mierfa gets a distant
look in her eyes. "To be honest, I was afraid of starting something because I wasn't sure how long 'we' could last, you know? Either... either Joey goes home and never comes back, or one of us dies out here, and neither of those are happy ending for me... or for her." She smiles, though, "I'm glad we got together though. And while I'm sure you don't disapprove- everything Joey's told me about you seems like you'd fit in pretty well over here on Alternia- but if... if anyone DOES disapprove over there that me and her are together, well... I just want them to know that if you don't get to them first, I will find some way to cross heaven and hell just to get over there and whack them over the head!"

She holds up a pair of ORANGE NUNCHUCKS.

Wow. A girl after your own heart.

"And... on this side of things," Mierfa continues. "I'm going to do everything I can to keep Joey safe and out of trouble. Not that she needs it, honestly." She laughs. "Joey's been training with this laser cutter thing she got for her Birthday like it's a sword or something. Not sure why she keeps making these 'vwoosh vwuumm' sounds when she does it, though, but it's super adorawesome!"

Vwoosh? Vwuumm? Oh, Joey!! Did someone get a LIGHTSABER for her birthday? Yes, you think someone did!

Damn it, how the hell can you top that? You'll have to think up something COOL and SUFFICIENTLY TECHNOLOGICALLY AWESOME to go along with it.

Also, ADORAWESOME? You're SO BORROWING THAT at some point.

"Anyways... that's, that's probably going to be it for now." Mierfa concludes. "So, I'll talk to you later. Hopefully in person. Uh... Later!"

And that video ends.

The next ones IN SEQUENCE aren't DECRYPTED YET, unfortunately, so you decide to go check in and see what all the FUSS has been about.

Apparently, all the BIG FUSS has been the BIG BAD of the last few years lying DYING on a table in the medical bay.

"Huh," you say, staring at the guy. "He looks old."

"He is," Skaara says. "His body is aging rapidly, to catch up with his real age. Apophis can't keep him alive anymore."

You think about everything you know about this guy...

"So what happened?"

"The Goa'uld found out about the child, Amaunet went into hiding, chased by Heru'ur, who seemed to want it for himself," Skaara pauses, then adds, "apparently Sokar wanted to take a chunk out of Apophis, so that's who's on the other side of the Gate right now. Sokar."

"Who the heck is Sokar?" You ask.
"Once, long ago, he pretended to the Devil, Satan, here on earth, "Skaara says, "or atleast that's what I've been getting from reading up on the lore."

"I see," you say. "...So we're keeping the Devil we know away from the Devil we don't... why exactly?"

"Amaunet and the child are in hiding," Skaara shrugs. "We're just trying to find out if Apophis knows where."

"Ah," you say, nodding.

Then, a thought occurs to you... "Can I speak with him for a minute, if that's alright?"

"Sure, everyone's had a go at it so far," Skaara says.

And so you go down into the isolation room, and look over the guy.

"Heeeey," you chime, and the dying SYSTEM LORD sends you a WITHERING GLARE.

"I don't even know who you are, can't I just die in peace?" he asks, voice groveling in its echo.

"Nope," You say, "and that's why I'm here. You don't know me, I don't know you, and we're gonna talk about Babies!"

The System Lord huffs. "I AM NOT telling you where My Love is hiding- I don't even know myself."

"Well that's fine, you dumb goof. Because I was gonna talk about MINE!" you say, pulling out your wallet, and showing him a picture of ROSE AND JOHN. "These are my little bundles of joy! One parent to another, I've just got to say that raising babies is one o' tha most fun challenges I've had in YEARS. You're really gonna be missing out."

"Is there a point to this?" Apophis asks. "Taunting me with my failure as both a System Lord AND a Parent?"

"Yah there's a point," you say. "I just wanted to say something, and that was a prelude." You lean in close to him, and whisper. "If you somehow survive all of this, and you EVER think about coming back to Earth and bringing trouble down on me and mine? I'll make sure you wish you Never Came Back in the first place."

And thus, you get up and leave, not even bothering to look and see what kind of HORROR you instilled in the guy.

A short while later, you hear the guy is dead, and that his body's been sent to the Devil himself.

Good riddance, you say.

Chapter End Notes
Shorter chapter today for 2 reasons:
1. I've been drawing that Joey W/Arai Swarm pic I mentioned before in the comments.
2. It's been a stressful couple of weeks.
ARTWORK: "THE SWARMBRINGER"

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
YAY. That's three days of solid work on this piece done.

:) Hope you guys enjoy.
"And that's ANOTHER dead end planet!" Your name is Okurii Leijon, and THIS IS GETTING ANNOYING.

You and your TEAM have just finished searching another planet for MORE CRYSTALS, and so are heading back to the Stargate.

"At this point," Callie Ohphee agrees, "we've pretty much exhausted every potential planet for a Crystal to be on using the existing Alternian Database. So, unless the Empress hid Bronze Orange and Cerulean Blue on a gate-less planet...?"

"That's figuring Trizza doesn't have them yet," Xefros Tritoh says. "So if that's the case..."

"Then we pretty much have to use the Time Travel phenomenon Callie discovered to steal them from the past," Dammek, the self titled "Tetrarch," decides. But he's not wrong.

"It does makes sense," you say. "If blue and orange aren't findable in the present, the only logical conclusion is to start with where we last know they were, and work forwards from there."

"Well, here's hoping we don't get stuck in the past for a few months at a time," Xefros says, reaching out to the DHD to dial the gate.

That's when an INCOMING WORMHOLE dials in- alarmingly, suddenly, and most importantly of all, LIKELY EITHER ALTERNIA or THE HEIRESS.

"Take cover!" you order, and everyone sneaks into position for ambush if it turns out to be TRIZZA.

KA THWUNK! WAAA WAAAA! KAWOOOSH!

The chevrons light up, and the VORTEX expands out from the Stargate.

A moment later, your RADIOS CHIME.

"This is Diaspora to Away Team, come in Away Team," you hear the voice of SEER ALTAIR speaking.

"Uh..." you stand up, and radio out. "This is Okurii, reading you Diaspora. What's up?"

"We've had a vision. A Tryanical Gum Dragon descending upon Alternia with a Stargate- so as to prevent the dialing out from the surface," Altair says. "We believe this is standard practice for an
"invading fleet for planets that have acquired their own Stargates, ah, ‘illegally’?"

"Yeah," You say. "That's pretty standard operating procedure for retaking a planet with a bootleg'd Stargate, according to the database." You frown, as a thought occurs to you, "Why are you calling us offworld first? Wait. How did you even get this Gate Address?"

"The answer to both is 'We Foresaw it,'" Altair says. "We saw that if we dial Alternia to deliver this message, we would only be inviting death upon Diaspora, as they would trace back our planet's address and attack. We saw that if we dialed this address, however, and told you of this development, that you would be able to save the day before everything went wrong."

"Thanks for the heads up, Diaspora," you say.

"Good luck, Away Team," Seer Altair says, and then the wormhole DISENGAGES.

You turn to look at your team.

"Okay," you say, "so if they're right, Dragum's shown up at our doorstep a week early."

"Damn," Dammek says. "The Idiot's left himself wide open if the Seers saw what I'm hoping they saw."

"And just what's that?" Xefros asks.

"Why, us gating onto his ship, disabling the command staff, commandeering an active spaceship, AND getting ourselves access to a second, Proper Materials Grade Stargate, of course," Dammek says, smirking.

"...What about the Megaship?" Callie asks, and that smirk turns to a frown.

"We're a week out from completion. I could gate over to Cla'dia and see if it could be rushed, but..." Dammek shakes his head. "There's no time. The sooner we get on that ship, the better for Alternia."

"As much as I hate to agree, but you're right." You look to Xefros and Callie. "Your call. Think you two can handle something like this?"

Xefros glances at Dammek, then nods. "I can handle it."

"I'm not running away again," Callie declares.

"Alright then," you say. "Dial Alternia, Xefros."

"With pleasure," and with that, Xefros punches in the SEVEN SYMBOLS.

WAAA WAAA! KAWOOOSH!

You decaptchaloge a few of the ACTUAL RIFLES you'd confiscated from Dammek's Hive oh-so-long-ago, pass them out to everyone else, and with a deep breath, you lead the charge through the wormhole.
Your name is DAMMEK, and you'd like to imagine that if this were some kind of CINEMATIC RETELLING of your adventure, some years down the line, that in this moment, the DRAMATIC WORMHOLE SEQUENCE would show the matterstream shooting across the stars towards ALTERNIA, only to VEER OFF at the last second and crash into the HOLDING DOCK of Dragum Akashi's ship- THE THUNDER SWORD.

As it is, you step out of the gate and enter what looks, at first glance, to be just ANOTHER PART of the All Your Base- but that's just due to a SHARED INTERIOR DESIGN across modern vessels.

You raise your rifle, and search the room for any HOSTILES, but you don't see anything. You step down the METAL RAMP- how cute- and take position at the base.

Okurii takes up a spot on the other side of the ramp, and you both do another check... Nothing.

You've gated into A FREAKING CARGO HOLD. There's not even a PROPER DHD in sight- not that that's a problem, likely this gate would be controlled from the SHIP'S COMPUTER. All around you are OLD CARGO BOXES that seemed to be meant for ANOTHER MISSION- likely whatever the Tactician was doing before he tore himself away to come racing to Alternia.

"Looks like we're clear," you say, in a low whisper, and Okurii nods.

"Same," she says, and you both stand up to look back at the GATE, even as it shuts down. Xefros and Callie stand just past the Eventhorizon, looking around while unsteadily holding their own GUNS.

Really, if you'd know Okurii'd held a monopoly on the things all this time...

Well, you can't blame her for keeping your hands away from these things. You'd probably have done something stupid like SHOOT YOUR OWN FOOT the way you've been acting the last few months.

"What first?" Xefros asks.

"We-" You begin, only for Okurii to cut you off.

"Xefros, Callie- we'll go help you liberate the Engine rooms, so you two can barricade yourselves in there, and shut down everything except shields," she says.

"Wait what?!" You ask. "Why would we do that!?!"

Your idea was SO much more sensible- taking out the command staff would be-

Okurii gives you a pointed glare, and continues, "Dammek and I will then go take control of the Bridge while they're distracted from suddenly losing power, and if we can successfully take control of the ship, we'll radio you to restore power so we can land this sucker along side the Base and the Abyss."

...Oh.

"Right," you say. "That's... that could work."
"It's going to have to," Okurii says. "It's just the four of us, after all."

And so she TAKES THE LEAD, making your way down FAMILIAR HALLS towards the ENGINE ROOM- along the way, you pass by a SHIP CONSOLE with a handy SYSTEM ACCESS TABLET resting on a charging dock. Callie takes it and peers at it as you continue down the hallways.

"Looks like they're in stable orbit over the desert," Callie says. "They're... the Commander has the ship on full alert, ready to attack at a moment's notice, but he's... uh..."

"He's doing what?" Okurii asks.

"He's running a planet wide broadwave talking to whoever the hell he can get in touch with. Everyone else can hear him even through what should be private conversations. Urgh, what an egotist," Callie says, tapping a button and patching in the AUDIO FEED.

"--And look, I'd love to help you out here," comes the AL-MIGHTILY FAMILIAR VOICE of TEAL COMMANDER, "but you're barking up the wrong resistance Tree, here, Tactician. We don't have a Tetrarch on our particular roster of Rebels, and we haven't had one since he went and got himself captured by the Heiress. ANYONE claiming to be him doesn't work with us at best, or at worst is someone pretending to be him for the sake of, gee, I dunno, TROLLING YOU?"

"Ouch," you say. "She really doesn't care much about me, does she?"

"THEN YOUR REBELLION ISN'T WORTH MY TIME OF DAY!!" the TACTICIAN, DRAGUM AKASHI, yells. "SOMEONE GET ME THAT LITTLE REBELL 'TETRARCH' AND GET ME HIM NOW SO I CAN ANNOUNCE MY ARRIVAL!"

"Can I just-" you reach for the tablet, but Xefros slaps your hand away from it.

"No!" He says, firmly.

"But-"

"NO!" Xefros repeats.

"All I want is-"

"Hell. No!"

"But-"

"NO!"

You open your mouth.

"Noooo!"

You say nothing, conceding the point, but you still reach out to-
"No!" Xefros adds, for good measure, glaring at you.

...Okay, yeah. You probably deserved that.

A moment later, through the tablet, you hear HIVEKEEP'S VOICE emerge, sounding nervous.

"Um, Hi!" she says. "Is this Dragum Akashi we're speaking to?"

"Yes, this is he," the Tactician sounds almost CORDIAL all of a sudden. "Is this The Tetrarch?"

"No, but I'm an acquaintance of his," HIVEKEEP says. "I'd put you in touch with him but I can't raise him on the coms myself. Got through to a mutual friend of ours, though. Apparently he's stuck on the Loadgapper."

"The loadgapper?" You ask, "Seriously, Hivekeep!? That's the best you can do!?"

"The LOADGAPPER!!?" The Tactician asks, sounding just as incredulous. "For the last TEN MINUTES!?"

"Apparently he's been stuck on it all day." You can JUST IMAGINE that smug little beekeeper shrugging. "Like, literally stuck. Apparently something with the water flow backing up making some kind of suction effect??"

"Okay fine, that's better," you settle for a scowl. You suppose that's a LITTLE LESS EMBARRASSING, all things considered.

"I think his Former Moirail chose the wrong time to prank him," Hivekeep continues. "But now it's really stuck and they're trying their best to unstick him so, uh... please do give him a while longer to get off?"

"HAH!" Xefros laughs, apparently liking the idea of that kind of prank.

"FINE!" Dragum Akashi yells. "I WILL CHECK BACK IN ANOTHER TEN MINUTES! IF HE IS NOT UNSTUCK BY THEN, I'LL---!!" Callie mutes the audio feed as Okurii signals for SILENCE.

Half a minute later, you and her are peering around a corner. You see TWO GUARDS idling outside the Engine Room doors.

She nods to you, and you both snap up your rifles and give off SINGLE SHOTS- perfectly timed so as to sound like only A SINGLE SHOT.

Both guards fall- blood of BRONZE and RUST pouring out of their heads.

You and Okurii keep your eyes trained on the engine room doors... and then SOMEONE COMES OUT, armed to the teeth in armor and OH HELL YES IS THAT A FUCKING PLASMA RIFLE?!

Okurii takes a shot in your distracted daze, nailing a WEAKSPOT in the chest armor you didn't know existed until the whole CHEST PLATE IMPLODED into a crumpled mess, crushing the unfortunate troll's CHEST into a BLOODY, PURPLE PASTE.
They fall to the floor with a whimpering "HONK," and then are silent.

Ah. A clown. Good riddance, you say.

"I didn't know that was even possible," you remark, waiting to see if anyone else comes out the door.

"Trizza did her research," Okurii says, frowning, waiting as well. "The Empress had that so called 'defect' sneaked into Clown Armor for reasons of 'It amused her.' But it's really just some kind of pressure sensitive switch for the super conducting magnets in the armor to invert the whole thing." A pause, then she adds, "Apparently, the Clowns left it in because it ALSO amused THEM."

"Clowns, fucking insane, the lot of them," you say.

Nobody else comes out the door, so you sneak over and snatch up the CLOWN'S PLASMA RIFLE, and peer into the ENGINE ROOM.

"...Where the fuck is everybody?" you ask, frowning. Engine rooms should TOTALLY be more guarded than this, especially on an official EMPIRE CRUISER.

"No clue," Callie says, moving over to a terminal, connecting the TABLET to it, and re-activating the audio feed, just in case.

You hear JOEY, HIVEKEEP, and SOME OTHER TROLL you don't even know the name of talking over open radio now, apparently about FOOD RECIPES, mostly just to annoy DRAGUM AKASHI, you'd be willing to bet.

After all, if the guy's willing to host a PLANET WIDE BROADWAVE, why not take advantage of his hospitality?

"Okay," Okurii says, snapping up the other two guard's GUNS into her sylladex as BACKUP WEAPONS. "How soon can you get the power shut down?"

"Give me a minute," Callie says, typing at the tablet as she does something that makes the engines WHINE suddenly. "Ah! Tricky! He's used a different encryption software that's not the standard Empire grade software. Probably because he doesn't want anyone on the ship turning this thing around and hauling his ass into court martial for insubordination."

"Can you do it, then?" Okurii asks.

"If he'd used Alternian Standard Encryption, it'd have taken me five minutes," Callie flashes a smile. "But he went with Cla'dian Standard instead, smart... if not for the fact that Princess Millia gave me a copy of it to improve upon as part of our alliance. I'm already in."

And with that, she presses a key, and EVERYTHING except the SHIELDS and the LIFE SUPPORT SHUTS DOWN- that's including the ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY.

Although, considering the way the RADIO BROADWAVE is still going on, you guess LONGRANGE is still up and active.

"WHAT THE BLOODY HELL!?" you hear the TACTICIAN yelling. "WHAT DID YOU DO!?"

"What did who do?" you hear Joey ask.
"WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY SHIP!?"

"Uh... what exactly happened to your ship??" Joey asks again.

"I DON'T KNOW! THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING YOU!!!"

Wow... Just. WOW. You have to wonder how many mistakes this guy's making just because he's in A MOIRAIL-LOSS INDUCED STATE OF MIND? That's just REALLY, REALLY bad tactics and KIND OF SAD, honestly.

You NEVER yell something like that to an entire planet.

Just...

Man. You feel bad for him.

...Not bad enough to swipe the tablet, and open a line into the BROADWAVE, though.

"Hey, Tactician," you smugly rub in the SALT before anyone can stop you. "KNOCK KNOCK."

Okurii swipes the tablet away and ends the outgoing broadcast- glaring at you. "Oh, that was REAL mature, Dammek!"

Of course, you don't have to say anything.

Dragum Akashi's nearly UNINTELLIGIBLE ROAR OF your TITLE is all the answer you need.

"TEEEEEEEEEETRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRKHHHHH!!!"

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you're FROWNING as you hear that simple interjection.

"Was it me," you say after making sure your MICROPHONE is muted first, "or did we literally just hear Dammek impossibly troll this guy despite the fact that he should be off world?"

"We did indeed literally just hear Dammek impossibly troll this guy despite the fact that he should be off world," Salazl says, frowning. "How the fuck did he get onboard that guy's ship??"

"Well," Mierfa says, glancing down at the STARGATE. "I've got an idea, but you're probably not gonna like it."

You and Salazl look at it, then both stare UPWARDS at the GLOWING DOT on the projection screen indicating a SHIP IN ORBIT as you suddenly realize WHY the Stargate suddenly stopped working.

PCHOO! PCHOO!!
Your name is Okurii-Pchoo! -Leijon, and you're starting to think that Dammek is having a little-Pchoo pchoo pchoo!- too much fun with this plasma cannon.

"Aaaahhaahahahaahahahahahahaha!" He roars in laughter, firing plasma blast after plasma blast at the poor, unfortunate soldiers who were caught off guard by suddenly losing the ship's artificial gravity.

Dammek, of course, seems to be having more fun with it this time than he did the last time a ship lost gravity.

A little bit too much - pchoo! - fun, if you do say so yourself.

The smell of burnt flesh fills the air and Dammek just swims through a sea of corpses with a grin on his face. Yeah... You are so getting him a moirail as soon as you possibly can. Dude's starting to become just a tad bit unhinged here. Soon, with Dammek's stolen plasma cannon pushing the charge, you've made your way to the bridge, with a trail of corpses behind you. The door's locked from the inside, but you've made it to the bridge.

Pchoo! Whump.

Dammek shoots the door.

Pchoo! Pchoo! Pchoo! Pchoo!

Wha-whu-thwu-wumph!

Then he shoots it a bunch more times, the metal of it starts heading up noticeably.

And then Dammek tells you to cover your eyes. Unhinged as he is, you respect that he's warned you in advanced that he's doing something stupid. That 'something stupid' just so happens to be him manhandling the trigger area, ripping out something vaguely safety important, and then holding the trigger down as the plasma cannon fires out a near constant stream of energy at the door.

It takes exactly three point fourteen seconds to melt a hole in the door. It also takes exactly that long for the plasma cannon to overheat and stop firing. Instead, the trigger seems to be stuck jammed, and the whole thing seems to be whining dangerously.

Dammek hurls the overheated weapon through the door and then ducks for cover as bullets fly out.

There's a pause, then you hear the tactician's voice yelling out: "Tetrarch! How did you get onboard my ship!?

A second later Dammek grins, and he yells back, "Well, wouldn't you just love to know that? But first could you let me cover my ears?! You're kind of loud!" He says that one emphasised part to you.

You do such, and it's only then that you realize that that whining sound the plasma cannon is making is... just getting louder and louder and oh no.
"FINE!" The Tactician yells. "NOW TELL ME HOW YOU DID IT! WHAT'S YOUR PLAN!"


**WHABOOM!**

The whole ship SHAKES DRAMATICALLY even without the ARTIFICIAL GRAVITY holding everything in place. A FLASH OF BRIGHT FLAMES rush out through the melted open door, and you LOOK AWAY, shielding yourself from the exploding cannon as best as you can. SMOKE and THE ACRID SMELL of burnt flesh wafts out from the BRIDGE, and you dare to look inside.

It's... it's not a pleasant sight. Nothing but a single CHARRED CORPSE in sight, hands fused to a METAL GLOB that was probably a gun originally. Also...

"DAMMEK YOU FUCKING IDIOT!" you yell at him. "YOU BLEW UP THE BRIDGE!!"

Every single fucking CONTROL CONSOLE is MOLTEN METAL and SLAGGED BEYOND USE.

"Yup!" He laughs. "Exactly as planned!"

"NO! NOT EXACTLY AS PLANNED!" You yell at him. "HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO LAND THIS THING NOW!?"

"Uh..." Dammek stops laughing. "...I didn't think this through, did I?"

"No, you idiot. You Didn't," you say, glaring at him. "Is it any fucking wonder that Xefros wants to strangle you half the time anymore!? When you're not moping around, complaining you're not getting your moment of glory, you're going around doing shit TRYING TO HAVE THAT MOMENT and screwing over everyone else's plans!!" You point at the floating corpse that almost certainly was Dragum Akashi, "THAT IS YOU IN SO MANY WAYS I CAN'T EVEN COUNT THEM ALL!"

"Well that's not..." Dammek trails off as he looks at the corpse, staring as you continue.

"MOIRAILLESS! UNHINGED! WILLING TO RISK EVERYONE'S LIVES ON SOME HAIR TRIGGER PLAN THAT ONLY EXISTS INSIDE YOUR HEAD!" you pound the point down. "YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE! YOU JUST WANT TO DO WHAT YOU THINK IS BEST FOR YOU! WELL GUESS WHAT, DAMMEK! YOU'RE NOT EVEN DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU, BECAUSE IF YOU WERE- WE WOULDN'T BE IN THIS MESS!!"

"Well we didn't HAVE to Gate onto this ship!" Dammek yells back at you. "We could have waited off world for all of this to blow over!"

"BUT IT WASN'T GOING TO!" you yell. "BECAUSE OF YOU ANSWERING A FUCKING VIDEO CALL, THIS GUY CAME TO KILL US IN THE FIRST PLACE!! HE WAS GOING TO *SLAG ALTERNIA* JUST BECAUSE OF YOU TELLING HIM WHAT WE DID TO HIS MOIRAIL! YOU DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN THEN, AND YOU DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN NOW, DID YOU!?" You take a large breath- nearly choking on the horrid smell of a burnt body- and then
grab Dammek by the shoulders, showing him the Bridge once more. "WELL LOOK WHAT GOT SLAGGED BECAUSE OF YOU ACTING WITHOUT HAVING A PROPER PLAN!! ANY HOPE WE HAD OF LANDING THIS FUCKING SHIP! IS! FUCKING! GONE!" He tries to look away, so you grab his head and force him to look. "YOU WANTED A LEGACY!? THIS IS YOUR LEGACY, DAMMEK!! AND IT. IS. NOTHING!"

Dammek stares at the molten bridge, taking a moment to absorb it all, then- if the artificial gravity were active, you're quite sure he would have fallen to his knees. Instead, he settles for tucking his legs up against his chest. "You're right... that guy is me. He didn't even notice the cannon was charging up. How blind have I even been...?"

"...That's you when you're off the rails, and that's EXACTLY how you'll end up without someone to keep you in check," you tell him, huffing as you calm down a little bit. "I say this as your Auspitice. YOU. NEED. A. MOIRAIL.. I can't do my job keeping you and Xefros from killing each other when you're BOTH unstable. Xefros is getting better because he's got Joey now to help him get past this shit. YOU? You've gone from apathetic at best to A BLIND CHESS PLAYER at worst! If we get out of this alive, Dammek, Xefros isn't the one you're going to have to worry about killing you. YOU are your own worst enemy at this point, Dammek. IT. IS. YOU."

Dammek is silent in the entire time it takes you two to get back to the Engine Room. He's silent in the entire time it takes you to explain to Callie and Xefros that the bridge is MOLTEN SLAG. And he remains perfectly fucking silent as you take the radio and broadcast to Alternia.

"Now listen up everyone and pay fucking attention, because I'm only going to say this once." you take a moment to breathe in deep. "Dragum Akashi is DEAD, and this is a perfect fucking example of why having a Moirail is so fucking important. Because he came here trying to get revenge for his dead Moirail. He was so blinded by revenge that he didn't notice a fucking overloading PLASMA CANNON about to explode in his face. The person who THREW that plasma canon is also Moirailless, and didn't EVEN CONSIDER the fact that throwing an overloading plasma weapon into a room full of computers required to FLY A SHIP might be a bad idea." You take a moment to get another breath. "So to all of you out there with a Moirail, hug them tight tonight. Alternia isn't going to turn into molten slag in the foreseeable future because of someone with a grudge seeking revenge." You pause again, looking at your teammates. "Dragum Akasi wasn't here on the Empire's orders. But the fact that he GOT HERE, and was so close to turning our home planet into GLASS? That says something about the state of the Empire. They don't care about Alternia right now. Some rogue agent of theirs wants to blow up the planet? Nobody from the Empire was going to stop him, otherwise he would never have gotten here in the first place."

You pause, heavily considering your next words.

"Right now, Alternia has two Stargates. Me and my team were off world when Dragum showed up and he made the fucking mistake to bring another one with him," you continue. "That's how we got onto his ship. We Gated on board and if Dragum Akashi had thought ONE SECOND about that possibility, he would have had guards around the Gate. They called him the Tactician, and yet he made such a BLUNDER that--" you cut yourself off there. "That he fucking let four kids get onto his ship and take out the engines, and then blow up his BRIDGE? The Empire has bigger fish to fry than Alternia throwing itself into open Rebellion. The Mofang are knocking at the front door with fucking star destroying bombs. We could abandon Alternia entirely, evacuate everyone off to another planet, and I bet you nobody in the empire would give a flying FUCK about it until it came time for Recruitment day and found nobody was here."

And there's a thought, you smile.
"And there's a fucking thought, isn't it?" You say, "Recruitment Day? Recruitment to WHAT? A War against an enemy that would blow up entire solar systems using their own STARS with NO REGARD for even their own lives. It's suicide fighting against them with the tactics the Empire's been putting forth because neither side care about any of the people they're throwing against the enemy. The Empire only sees us as cannon fodder. The Mofang see us as enemies to be wiped off the board."

You look to Callie, who nods, then to Xefros, who also nods.

"And your Heiress? Trizza Tethis? She doesn't care about Alternia. She FLED through the Stargate like a coward the moment she had an opportunity. Do you want to know where she's been? Hunting pieces to some ancient mythical artifact that we're not even sure can be put back together in the way she wants it to be put back together. " You narrow your eyes, and say, "The only thing she cares about is killing the Empress. After that, she'll just be another Tyrant just like the Empress we have. A Tyrian blooded royal bitch who just sees the people she works with as expendable GRUNTS. CANNON FODDER. WHEAT TO BE GROUND INTO MEAL!"

You glare at the screen in front of you- imagining Heiress and Empress to be on the other side of it.

"Well no more," You say. "NO MORE, I SAY." You take in a deep breath, and then declare, "TODAY? Today Alternia nearly got blown up because a commander took control over his ship and sent it on a mission of revenge. He was going to blow up the ENTIRE PLANET- the HOME WORLD of we Trolls- simply because he COULD. He didn't care about the Empire. He didn't care about the enemies at the door. And nobody stopped him because nobody CARES about little old Alternia unless it's to EXPLOIT US. Until today, we were trapped with only a home made Stargate as a minor pressure valve." You laugh. "UNTIL TODAY. Until today that is. Because we have a PROPER, Alternian made, Empire Grade Stargate. The minute we land it on Alternia, we are going to OPEN THE DOOR to the wider Galaxy."

You point your finger dramatically at those imagined images of the Heiress and Empress.

"TODAY- WE DECLARE ALTERNIA'S INDEPENDENCE!" you roar, "TODAY, WE REACH OUT TO THE STARS NOT AS EXPLORERS, NOT AS CONQUERORS, BUT AS LIBERATORS! WE WILL CREATE OUR OWN GATE NETWORK THAT THE EMPIRE CAN'T BREACH! WE WILL FREE PLANET AFTER PLANET FROM THE EMPIRE'S GRASP AND WE WILL FORM NOT AN EMPIRE OR KINGDOM FOR ANY ONE PERSON TO RULE, BUT AN ALLIANCE OF WORLDS FIGHTING BACK AGAINST THE ENEMIES THREATENING US!"

You shatter the image of Trizza in your mind, and replace it with a mental image of the SORIAN EMPEROR.

"TODAY! WE TELL EMPRESS MEENAH THAT WE WILL NOT BOW!" you continue. "TODAY! WE WILL TELL THE SORIAN EMPIRE THAT WE WILL NOT LET THEM EXTINGUISH OUR STARS!"

You point upwards at the ceiling, and though you know nobody but your team can see it, you feel that EVERYONE ON ALTERNIA can hear the motion deep within their souls.

"TODAY WE LOOK TO THE UNIVERSE AT LARGE AND WE TELL THEM ONE THING!" You feel your HEART BEAT with A DETERMINED WILL TO SURVIVE. "OUR
COMBINED WILLS ARE THE DRILLS THAT WILL PIERCE THROUGH THE CAGE KEEPING US FROM THE HEAVENS!! SO I ASK OF OUR JAILERS, AND I ASK EVERY INHABITED WORLD ONE VERY SIMPLE QUESTION!

You lower your voice to a near growl.

"Just who the hell do you think we are?"

The perspective shifts for a moment, as we try to become SOMEONE ELSE.

However, this someone else is just TOO POWERFUL to be become, and so we are forced to observe as this short, almost PUPPET LIKE man in an ALL WHITE SPACE SUIT stands on the exterior of the bridge of one of ALTERNIA'S FLAGSHIPS. The ship's name, it's location, it's mission, and the reason this man is even present standing on the exterior of the ship are unknown. Even the man's face is UNKNOWN, as it is hidden away by the massive, SOLID WHITE SPHERICAL HELMET that he wears, almost like a CUEBALL, of sorts.

All that we do know is that, embroidered over the heart of the man's space suit is A SINGLE WORD and an accompanying STARGATE GLYPH- "SCRATCH."

And though we know nothing about this man, his motives, or even that he could be somehow AWARE of the changing circumstances elsewhere in the galaxy... somehow, he stirs for a moment-helmeted head tilting to the side slightly in confusion, then understanding.

"So," His voice echos out from an inbuilt radio into the space around him, filtered by a thin layer of static. "It seems another Hero of Blood has entered the play somewhere. Interesting, but unimportant."

And that is all he says on the matter, for even this strange man, Scratch, in all of his VAST UNDERSTANDING of the Multiverse is unaware of precisely who, where, and why this event is of notice to his senses.

All of that is obscured by a strange sort of VOID SPOT within his understanding.

One that stubbornly... adamantly... refuses to be filled.

And so our perspective jumps back to a person that we CAN be, and that person is....

You are now XEFROS TRITOH, and you are feeling PUMPED THE FUCK UP!

Callie is too, as she's having you HELP HER reroute ship controls from the bridge to the engine room, and build up a RUDIMENTARY MOCK UP of ship controls that will allow you and Okurii to FLY THIS THING down to the planet below.

And you DO.

Hyped up on the SPEECH Okurii just gave, Callie restores power to the engines and you and Okurii
FLY THIS BAD BOY OF A SHIP down to the planet below, parking it above a certain MAJOR CITY that Dammek directs you to.

"Teal Command lives here," is all Dammek says regarding why this particular city.

Soon, you RING DOWN from the ship, and meet a group of people you've only ever heard Dammek talk about before, and front and center is a CERTAIN TEAL BLOODED GIRL, smirking.

"Well," TEAL COMMAND says, sounding impressed, "if I were a lesser troll, I'd shoot whoever gave that planet wide broadwave... but even if I were a lesser troll, I'd skip doing that because that recruitment numbers just skyrocketed."

"How many?" Dammek asks, curious.

"A good three fourths of the planet's population," Teal Command answers. "The remaining fourth is under age and know it, or don't have easy access to the internet." She pauses, then says, "But, naturally, none of them want to work for me. Oh no, they keep asking who the troll who gave that speech is, they want her at the head of it all."

"That'd be me," Okurii says, stepping forwards.

"Congratulations," Teal Command says, "you just got universally voted up to become the new President General of the Rebellion."

"I... what?" Okurii blinked. "Seriously?"

"We're goin' intergalactic," Teal Command says. "Of course I'm serious."

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and all you can say to this stunning turn of events is...

"That's one hell of a field promotion."

Chapter End Notes

Okurii is almost certainly a descendant of the SIGNLESS and the DISCIPLE, whose genetics ended up hidden in the mix somewhere in the course of time.

As the Signless was a SEER OF BLOOD, Okurii has likely inherited the ASPECT OF BLOOD. Okurii also likely inherited her CLASS from the Disciple. And although I won't confirm that 100% yet, it's entirely likely her Classpect is MAGE OF BLOOD.

Good job enthralling all of Alternia with that speech there, Okurii. Good job indeed.
ALT:02x06: Let's do the Time Warp Again

Chapter Summary

Orange Crystal Secured.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you're honestly starting to MISS the "ALL YOUR BASE" as a HOME for just you and your small group of friends.

As of now, your small ragtag group of rebels have officially been recognized by the rest of the REBELLION as a whole- helped, in no small part, thanks to Okurii suddenly being promoted to the top ranking tier of it all. (They're still SORTING OUT her official TITLE, but for now, you'll just call her BIG BOSS whenever you need to refer to her title. It seems to be catching on among your close friends, though.) Unfortunately, that means that ALL MAJOR OPERATIONS are being moved down here, as well. Fortunately for everyone, there's LOTS OF ROOM in the old SETTLEMENT that you helped evacuate its population to Diaspora, so REBELS FROM ALL CORNERS of Alternia are coming in and settling down there.

SCIENTISTS, WEAPONS DESIGNERS, MILITARY STRATEGISTS- the list goes on and on and on.

This is starting to look more and more like the BASE that Earth's Stargate is in by the day- people walking in and out and all around and generally making themselves AT HOME, despite the fact that this isn't really THEIR HOME in the first place.

Well, that's the situation until the NEW STARGATE can be securely installed down in the OLD MOTHER GRUB DEN, and hooked up to a NEW POWER SOURCE- namely, the engine block RIPPED OUT OF THE ABYSS BRINGER.

For now, the Rebellion is fielding teams to go through to other planets and begin LIBERATING them from the Alternian Empire's control. Easy enough on the planets like Cla'dia with minimal Fleet Presences, but it's a bit trickier for planets with larger ones.

That's not your problem, and it's not your TEAM'S PROBLEM, though.

Up on the bridge, Callie has called a meeting between the lot of you who made this place home. Okurii is here ostensibly for MANAGEMENT REASONS, but you can tell Callie did call her in mostly to give her a break from everything.

"With our increased team roster," Callie says, "I've managed to scout out every planet remaining on our list of planets. None found any cages or crystals, but team... uh..." She checks her notes, "RS-4, came back with this." She brings up a holographic image of a CARVING IN A WALL.

It's the EARTH POINT OF ORIGIN- like the one you got on your NEW SHIRT- along with a couple NUMERICAL SEQUENCES that you vaguely recognize.
"It took me a few minutes to figure out what the sequence was, but then I realized it was two Solar Flare Database registries," Callie says, bringing up the LIST OF SOLAR FLARES that had been sent to her from the future. "The tablet's flare database matches the first number sequence to a Solar Flare happening on Haven in one week's time, and is predicted to loop back in time to around the very end of the Summoner's Revolt- around the time we figure the Empress took the crystals and hid them on the various planets. The second entry is a second solar flare near around that time too, also on Haven, which should send any travelers we send to the past back to the present day at a rate of..." She checks her notes one more time. "About an equal rate of forwards progression on both sides, it looks like, give or take a few days."

"So you're proposing we send a team back in time," Okurii says, "they fetch the crystal in question off the planet where we found this etching, leave said etching behind for us to find, and then come back to the future with one of the two remaining missing crystals."

"A two man team at minimum," Callie says. "But I wouldn't send any more than four people. We don't want to risk major ripples in the time line in case something goes wrong."

"I guess I need to go," you say, reaching up to touch the two crystals on your necklace. "I'll be able to disarm the cage, after all."

"I'll go too," Xefros says.

"That's our two minimum," Okurii says. "Any other volunteers?"

"Meh," Dammek shrugs.

"I'll go," Mierfa volunteers.

"Nah, I'm good," Salazl says.

"I'll-" Callie begins, only to hear someone calling her name. "I... I suppose I'm going to be busy for the next few minutes so, be right back." She then went off to go talk with that person.

"Assuming Callie doesn't join in," Okurii says, "Joey, Xefros, Mierfa, you've got 'permission' and clearance to go on this mission. Not that you need it, I'm assuming?"

"Well, I'd certainly be going anyways," you answer. "We need that crystal. I think if I can get it, I can triangulate down where the other one is using all of them."

"Here's hoping it's somewhere cleverly hidden away by us through time travel," Salazl says. "I'd hate for it to be in someone else's hands like the Mofang."

"..." You fix the yellow blood with a firm gaze, and say, "Salazl. I know you're trying to help but that is a very frightening possibility and you've basically just tempted fate for that to happen! You KNOW one of the planets we searched for the Crystal got occupied by the Mofang!"

"Okay, let's say the Empress has it then?" he offers.

"That's even worse!!" You tell him.

"Okay, what's somewhere inbetween? Say some traveling Theater Troupe has it and think it's just
some prop in a show?" Salazl offers another possibility and you honestly just-- "OH! What if a bunch of planet hopping, space faring, ORPHANED TROLLS have it and the Theater Troupe is chasing after them trying to get it so THEY can use it as a prop in their show?"

Everyone else just about GROANS upon hearing that. Dammek even goes the extra mile to deliberately remove his glasses, carefully put them down on the projection console, and then slams BOTH of his hands straight down over his eyes.

"Salazl," Okurii says, smiling a weary smile, "just stop while you're head. All four of those are really annoying possibilities and I really do NOT want to end up having to go through any of them."

"Well, fine," Salazl grumpily remarks, crossing his arms over his chest. "When you come crying to me over the Theater Troupe causing trouble, all I'm going to say is 'we needed to plan for this!' And you'll all just- Er... Nevermind." He shakes his head and stalks off, heading after Callie.

Okurii looks to you, and says, "Get prepared for a month's excursion into the past, and take a copy of the future solar flares list that could return you back home, just in case. There's no telling if things could go wrong, after all."

"Sure thing," you nod.

One week later, you, Mierfa, Xefros, and Callie are stepping through the gate onto Haven's forested surface.

Unsurprisingly, Latula is there waiting for you at the DHD, with a LARGE BAG at her side.

"You're here earlier than usual, Callie. And geared up a bit much as well. I suppose you're going on another trip through time?" She asks, though the grin on her face says she knows for sure and isn’t really guessing.

"Yup," Callie smiles, going over to talk with her friend. "We're going to collect one of the crystals from the past."

"Ah, I see," Latula smiles knowingly. "Here," she offers the large bag. "You may need these."

"What are they?" Mierfa asks.

"Stun bombs," Latula answers. "There's a particularly nasty plant here on haven whose spores serve as a sort of... halucenogenic paralytic. Harvesting them is a chore and a half, and so I prepare them in bulk. Sometimes I find myself having made too many in excess that I just never can find a use for before the seals expire. I usually just throw them away and let them expire on their own away from harm, but I get the feeling you might find these ones a better purpose in life than decaying in a field."

"Is this a hint that we're going to run into trouble?" Xefros asks, narrowing his eyes suspiciously.

"No, no, just a good coincidence, that's all," Latula laughs. "I was honestly just about to dial Alternia and ask if any of you wanted them for your Rebellion."

You shrug. "We'll take 'em if you're offering."
"And if you do so happen to need them in the past, well," she smiles. "I'm happy to have provided."

"Thanks, Latula," Callie says.

Right on schedule, the SUN TURNS RED, Alternia is Dialed, and yet, a WILD, UNSTEADY TRIP through the gate later, you wind up back on HAVEN.

Once again, Latula is there- looking younger, but definitely older than Callie had described her appearance from the past, as she has a BROKEN HORN now- but she's not waiting for you- instead, she's working on CUTTING DOWN WILD PLANTS in an attempt to MAKE THE PATH from the gate that's there in the future.

"What?" She says, surprised. "Callie! Is that you?! You came back already?"

"'Already?'" Callie frowns. "Do you mean I've already come back once since I left the first time?"

"Yes, actually," Latula nods. "Wait... is this what you meant? That the you that showed up wasn't your first return back?"

"Well, this is our first time back here," you say. "In the past, I mean."

"Ah... so this is your first time back... heh," Latula chuckles. "Time travel can be a headache."

"Did we say why we came back?" Callie asks, frowning.

"No, you didn't," Latula shakes her head. "Precisely forn this exact reason, I'd imagine."

"Well," Mierfa says, frowning, "ain't that just a lovely surprise."

"Watch as it turns out we're the ones that gave the temporally current heiress the idea to use the bracelet in the first place," Xefros jokingly remarks.

"...Yeah, that's not a pleasant idea," you say. "I don't really like the idea that we're the ones behind this bracelet getting broken up in the first place."

Although, while you're on the subject and you've TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT, the chances are pretty high that the only reason you GOT the address to Alternia was through TIME TRAVEL, probably exploiting the STARGATES like this.

You wonder just who exactly was the instigator of THAT particular loop? Yourself? Jude? General Hammond? PA? Certainly not Roxy!

Oh well, it probably doesn't matter. Those MACHINATIONS are already cogs spinning in place gearing up for things without your input. Money is earning interest, somewhere, you suspect.

As a matter of course, going to the planet via Gate Address was easy as pie.
Finding the CRYSTAL, cutting it free, and then DISASSEMBLING THE CAGE was only some what more difficult only due to the fact that you had to HIDE, WAIT, AND WATCH as the CONDESCE did the deed in the first place. You had to wait a few hours for the CHEVRON SHAPED SHIP to leave from orbit, and in that time, you managed to carve in the DATE TIME CORRDINATES and the EARTH POINT OF ORIGIN GLYPH into a wall that was part of your HIDING PLACE.

But once that was done, and the CRYSTAL- ORANGE- was secured, and you were back on HAVEN, the hardest part to work around was the UNFORTUNATE TIMING of your return with that of your FUTURE SELVES.

And MOTHER OF ALL FUTURE KNOWLEDGE PARADOXES AHAY, somehow FUTURE JOEY had gotten her hands on the ENITRE FREAKING BRACELET and ALL OF ITS KEYSTONES.

"How!?!" You asked of your future self.

To which she just glances aside nervously at a tree, and says, "SHENANIGANS."

Shenanigans.

OF ALL THE INFURIATING THINGS TO SAY, FUTURE YOU---!!! Stupid stable time loops.

Naturally, that's when FUTURE CALLIE requests the bag full of STUN BOMBS that current Callie had been carrying with her all this time, and thus, that HOT POTATO of a TIME ARTIFACT got sent forwards to do whatever its TIME LOOP required of it.

The two Xefros'es- Xefosi?- just stood there in the middle of it all looking confused and bemused respectively to their chronological progression.

Neither say anything to each other, but Future Xefros gives Present Xefros a THUMBS UP, to which Present Xefros freaks out a little over.

Future Mierfa takes Present Mierfa off to the side and offers her some advice that leaves your GIRLFRIEND blue in the face with an embarassed blush.

You're just... not going to ask. Not at all.

"That's probably for the best," Future You says, as if reading your mind, and then makes the call to RETURN TO ALTERNIA. Her team does so, and honestly you feel RELIEVED when they're all gone.

Now, all you have to do is wait to return to your PROPER TIME FRAME- the present-future, and not those guy's FUTURE-FUTURE.

URGH. Time Travel gives you such a headache.

You end up only having to wait on Haven for a grand total of THREE DAYS before you return
back to the PRESENT-FUTURE of Alternia, expecting a WARM WELCOME. Naturally, in roughly the same three days of local time, EVERYTHING HAS GONE TO SHIT.

"What the hell is going on?" Mierfa asks as she grabs a panicking Salazl as he runs over to you the moment you exit the Gate.

"Mofang! The Mofang are done waiting!" he tells you all. "They just blew up another solar system with its own star! They're insisting that if Alternia doesn't hand over Karfin Outpost by the end of the week, they're going to blow up ITS star next!!"

"Readings," Callie orders, "show me any readings we've got of it!"

And thus, the wheels continue to spin without your input.

You feel a little out of place, so you, Mierfa, and Xefros return to your room so you can MEDITATE on the location of the BLUE CRYSTAL.

It's the only one left, after all.

It doesn't take much time to settle into a TRANCE, surrounding yourself with the ARAI BEETLES, and thus, you take your FOUR CRYSTAL ADVANTAGE, and begin SEARCHING THE GALAXY.

You immediately hone in on a cluster of THREE FOURTHS OF THE ARTIFACT- two crystals and the BASE- residing on TRIZZA'S WRIST. Currently she's SEWING UP HOLES in her clothes, and looks SOMewhat MORE SANE than the last time you saw her.

Well, it's another data point. Using her as another PIN- something which definitely gets her attention, as her head suddenly jerks upwards to attention- you cast out a WIDER NET and search and search until you find the FORMER RESTING PLACE of the Blue Crystal.

Naturally, of all the places it could have been, it left it's IMPRINT on that one planet that the Mofang had put an outpost on.

NATURALLY, that crystal has since been moved... and your view SHOOTS across the galaxy like a SWIRLING GATE WORMHOLE, and then you settle on where it is PRESENTLY.

"...Damn it, Salazl," you swear out loud.

You're going to have to complain to Salazl the next time you speak to him, because the fucking CERULEAN BLUE CRYSTAL is in the hands of the FUCKING MOFANG EMPEROR, and as far as YOUR LIMITED SCRYING SENSES CAN TELL... he's forcibly using it on HIS OWN PEOPLE to keep them from COMPLAINING about the soon to be TOTAL DESTRUCTION of the Karfin Outpost.

Well, that's one way to quell dissent, you suppose.

Why they'd be MAD about Karfin's destruction, though, you JUST CAN'T TELL, because the moment you FIND HIM with the Crystal, the Emperor's SPECTRAL VISAGE in your mind's eye turns to look-- no, not at YOU, but at TRIZZA, who's somehow HITCHED A RIDE along with your little VISION QUEST here.
"Well well, if it isn't the little Heiress to beat," The Emperor's words COME THROUGH CLEAR AND WELL, as they're his THOUGHTS TRANSLATED DIRECTLY, and not him actually speaking. ["I'll get those crystals of yours soon enough, BRAT!!!"]

A moment later, you're thrown out of the trance and your EYES SNAP OPEN.

"Well?" Xefros and Mierfa ask, leaning in expectantly.

"We've got a problem," you gulp.

And it's a very- VERY- BIG PROBLEM at that.

Okurii is not going to be happy about this.

Chapter End Notes

Never a dull moment around here, is it?

Also, you might be thinking, "Hey! This is a bit TOO SOON for Karfin outpost, right?? Isn't this still MONTHS OFF from when that Ring beam hit Apophis' ships??"

The answer to that.... well... I'll just say-

== TO BE CONTINUED ==
NOVEMBER 22ND, 1996.

Your name is KA'TURNAL- that is to say that's your fake name. Your real one is NIRRTI, and you feel like you're FINALLY GETTING A CHANCE TO PUT YOUR SKILLS TO GOOD USE!!

This boy- "CHARLIE" as he's calling himself- is truly a UNIQUE SPECIMEN. A Genetically modified human who shows no signs of YOUR TECHNOLOGY'S TELLTALE SIGNS of usage.

Someone MADE THIS BOY and didn't use any of your KNOW TECHNIQUES!

These REETOU are SOMETHING ELSE entirely, and if they weren't split into a civil war at present, you might feel RATHER INTIMIDATED as a (Former) GOA'ULD SYSTEM LORD. As it stands, though, a house divided will fall easily enough.

Still, it seems even these ALIENS cannot stop a problem even YOU have had problems with: ACCELERATED AGING.

"Unfortunately," you report to HAMMOND and the TOK'RA that came through upon hearing of this situation, "there's nothing I can do for him without access to the technology that made him. If he were born from Lady Nirrti's technology, I might be able to devise a therapy treatment that could prolong his life, but as it stands, once his organs start failing, only a Symbiote could save his life. But, I'm not sure of his chances even with that."

"I see," The TOK'RA- you believe the host's name is JACOB CARTER, and the Tok'ra is SELMAK- murmurs, frowning at you. "If the boy agrees to it, we may have someone available to blend with him."

"If he agrees to it," Hammond nods. "Worst case scenario and the Blending doesn't work?"

"Worst case?" you shrug. "Worst case, the boy and the symbiote die together. A shame, if that happens. I really hope it doesn't. Nirrti and I prefer never to work with Accelerated Aging unless the situation is truly dire enough to warrant it. Personally, I detest such a waste of a life."
"That's an interesting point of view. One that we happen to agree with on some level," the Tok'ra muses, sounding... amused? You hope that your KA'TURNAL disguise is fooling them, you really, really do. You DID change hosts before that nasty business with Apophis on Hanka, but even so, there's no telling what the Tok'ra know. "But if this information the boy's given us turns out to be correct, I suspect that it truly will be worth it, long term, especially if we can save his life."

You honestly can't believe you're honestly saying this, but...

"Even so," You say. "I just don't want to see this boy die. He's..." Very fascinating from the perspective of a geneticist. "He's unique. I hope a Blending works to save his life."

"Agreed," Hammond says, nodding. "Jacob, good luck out there."

There's a pause, and then the host of the Tok'ra says, "Thanks, George. I get the feeling we're going to need it."

---

Hours pass- nothing of import happens except for you nearly getting YOUR GUTS SPILLED TO THE FLOOR by an INVISIBLE ALIEN MENACE. Your only saving grace was it being BLOWN TO PIECES by a TRANSPHASE ERADICATION ROD.

You make a MENTAL NOTE to never come onto this base with a CLOAKING DEVICE.


You can't believe the Tok'ra would just so... FREELY GIVE a device like that to the Humans. Once again, you get the feeling that you've made THE RIGHT CALL in going to them for shelter.

If you'd ever tried sneaking onto this base after today...


That could have ended messily. Very messily.

The mess of A BLASTED REETOU lays at your feet and you can't help but just...

Stare.

That could have been you, in some other, more unfortunate universe.

Yeah.

Cloaking Devices around the SGC- thoroughly marked as a BAD IDEA.

Transphase Eradication Rods?? Seriously???

Yeah.

No.
Bad idea.

Still, your INNER SCIENTIST finds the GOOEY REMAINS very FASCINATING. Bug like creatures? Check. Innate cloaking abilities? Check. OH WHAT YOU’D GIVE just to have access to a proper CLONING SUITE right about now.

Oh well, things... things don't always go according to plan how you want them to.

Once the BASE IS SECURELY SWEPT CLEAN for Reetou, and a new PALM SCANNER is added to control the Iris, do you feel secure enough to risk REACHING OUT to call JAYNI.

You pretend to sit down and do a MEDITATION POSE, like the Jaffa TEAL’C tends to do. You don't really need to do anything like that, but you do it on occasion anyways to help clear your thoughts after a day like today... But, even then, the legitimate times you do this help to serve as legitimate COVER to mask your COMMUNICATION CALLS.

And so you reach out, and reach out... and reach out... But you get the ALIEN TECHNOLOGY equivalent of the mundane earth telephone BUSY SIGNAL. Jayni refuses to answer, and continues to do so for A FULL HOUR.

Either she's OUT ON THE TOWN, doing who knows what, or she's PURPOSEFULLY IGNORING YOUR CALLS.

How dare that little upstart of a First Prime! You know you've basically told her she can work on her own time under the KA'TURNAL PROTOCOL, but still... You'd expect her to PICK UP THE DAMNED ALIEN TELEPHONE when you call.

URGH. Spending time among the humans has seriously begun warping your perspective a little. Since when did you start thinking of the SUB-DERMAL LONG-RANGE COMMUNICATOR as an "ALIEN TELEPHONE"??

More importantly, why the hell are you so ANNOYED by her not answering your call??

No... it's not annoyance, you realize a moment later.

It's CONCERN.

Jayni is doing something that you aren't sure WHAT she's truly up to... and that's... CONCERNING. Not FRIGHTENING, but definitely CONCERNING.

What is she up to?

You are now JAYNI- former FIRST PRIME to LADY NIRRTI. Yeah, that's right. YOU SAID FORMER.

You haven't heard much from the old woman, but what little you've been able to gleam by HACKING THE SGC DATABASES reveals that she's pretty much LOST HERSELF in the role of KA'TURNAL.
And while she plays PRETEND, the seat and status of SYSTEM LORD have suddenly become... VALUABLE again. What with APOPHIS DEAD and in SOKAR'S HANDS, and AMAUNET on the ETERNAL RUN from Heru'ur...

Well, a few falsely signed written communications from you pretending to be Lady Nirrti has basically cleared all of THAT NASTY BUSINESS right up and absolved the position of any wrong doing in the eyes of the rest of the System Lords.

Because OF COURSE Apophis would steal Nirrti's technology. Because OF COURSE he'd force her to go on the run lest the blame fall on her shoulders for HIS own actions.

You've already faked up a story of having to JUMP HOSTS into your FIRST PRIME's body after suffering a NEARLY FATAL WOUND. You've already MANIPULATED YOUR OWN BODY just a tiny bit to allow you to do the fancy EYE FLASH and VOICE MODULATION tricks. You've already removed that TACKY GOLD TATTOO marking your forehead saying you're Nirrti's FIRST PRIME too.

Soon, you think as you place your hand on A CLONING TANK... Soon you won't be JAYNI any longer. You'll be LADY NIRRTI, THE SYSTEM LORD, and nobody will be the wiser.

"Now," you muse aloud, testing your VOICE MODULATION, setting a course on your CLOAKED CARGO SHIP to a CERTAIN SPECIFIC WORLD, "let's see if I can game the system using that little trick that banished Khepri here in the first place."

And thus, you JUMP TO HYPERSPACE, leaving Planet Earth, and the LAB ON IT behind, completely unaware of the fact that a CALL HAS COME IN for you.

But why would you care about that?

You'd just IGNORE IT ANYWAYS, even if you were aware of it... which you aren't. Because that's not on the agenda for today or for tomorrow or on any day in the near future.

And speaking OF the future...

Your name is GENERAL HAMMOND, and as you're walking through the CONTROL ROOM on your way back to your office, you observe Carter working on a HOT FIX to the new Iris Palm Scanner.

Apparently a wire shorted, locking the IRIS SHUT, you're told when you ask. And thus, it requires a FIX before the Tok'ra can head back home and hopefully save a young boy's life from PREMATURE ORGAN FAILURE.

It's always something like that, you think as you head for the stairs-

SPARK! THUD! "OWW! Why you little...!"

You turn and look, and see Carter nursing a FRESH WOUND to her right hand by wrapping it up in the edge of her shirt.
"Everything okay?" You ask, feeling faint.

"Yeah," Carter gripes. "Just a small electric shock, made my hand bash against the edge of the desk and cut it open. I'm going to go see Janet." She turns to Siler, "Could you finish up for me?"

"Sure," the man nods, and takes Carter's position.

You head up to your office in a DAZE, and sit down at your desk, a little dumbfounded, just like that day in the Burger King. You open a drawer in your desk with a key, and check that the IMPORTANT MESSAGE is still there.

Soon.

So Very Soon.

Chapter End Notes

Next up on SG-1's side is "1969."

Meanwhile, Nirriti is starting to lose herself into the role of NURSE KA'TURNAL, and Jayni... well... she's got some AMBITIOUS PLANS.

Jacob and Selmak are VERY AMUSED; they don't know who "Ka'turnal" is, but they're definitely entertained by this GAME she's playing.
Chapter Summary

More Time Travel?
MOAR TIME TRAVEL!!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

NOVEMBER 25TH, 1996.

Your name is SAMANTHA CARTER, and you're finding it a little hard to work on this LAST MINUTE CALCULATION with a SCRAPED UP HAND.

"Carter!" O'neill yells from the gate room. "Any second now!??"

"Just a minute, sir," you call out, frowning as you type in a new piece of code to TRY and get the danged Stargate to connect to this planet. It was working just fine earlier, but then the IRIS PALM SCANNER acted up again and you're SURE that has something to do with it.

"Captain Carter?" General Hammond asks, stepping up along side you.

"Huh? Yes?" You pause in the code writing, and look up at him.

"Orders for when you get on the other side," He holds up a SEALED LETTER, and then slides it into your VEST POCKET. "Don't open them until you arrive."

"Um..." You blink- and even Jolinar feels confused by this. "Why?"

"Just... trust me on this, Captain," Hammond says, frowning, uncomfortably. "I can't say anything more on this side of the Gate." He glances over at the STAIRS to the Conference room.

You frown, look over, and see JUDE HARLEY, kneeling and observing, a FROWN ON HIS FACE as well.

You wonder what the hell this could be about? Probably something to do with the NID and JAKE HARLEY'S MURDER, you suppose.

"Alright," you nod. "I'll open it on the other side."

"CAR-TER!" O'neill calls out again, and you bite back a response to finish typing in the code.

And then, a moment later, the STARGATE begins SPINNING TO LIFE yet again.

"Good luck," General Hammond says, and then turns to face the gate.

With a nod and a "Thank you," although you're not quite sure why you'd need a GOOD LUCK for
a simple SURVEY MISSION, you head down to the GATE ROOM.

[That was odd.] Jolinar chimes in.

'Agreed,' you think in response. 'It's probably something he's not sure can be said in public, or on base. The "Ears have walls" sort of thing.'

[I suppose so.] Jolinar says, and then falls silent as the STARGATE chunks along to the FOURTH CHEVRON.

"What was the problem?" Skaara asks.

"Palm Scanner acting up again, I think," you explain, as CHEVRON FIVE locks.

"I swear, security updates are the worst," O'neill complains. "Especially last minute fixes like that. They're always causing problems. This is why I never update my computer right away. I always let it simmer for a day or two so they can iron out the patches FOR the patches."

Chevron SIX locks.

"Have you not, on several occasions, 'let them simmer' for several weeks instead, Colonel O'neill?" Teal'c inquires.

"Hey, watch it!" O'neill warns as CHEVRON SEVEN locks, and the WAA WAA KAWOOOSH signals it opening. "I only ever let it go that long when we're busy saving the world and can't get on to update it."

Skaara laughs. "Well, I suppose that's perfectly understandable," he says as you four step up onto the ramp and head towards the Eventhorizon. "We can get rather wrapped up in-"

**SCHLOORP!**

There's something different this time.

Usually it's over in an instant and you're on the other side but this time it feels...

**SLUGGISH.**

You and your teem seem frozen from your perspective for that moment- you see the four of you just standing on the other side of the gate and then WHOOOSH! You feel everything PULLED through the matter stream into the SPIRALING WORMHOLE- this isn't possible, you shouldn't be AWARE of this- straight upwards into space, and then towards the SUN.

You see a SOLAR FLARE emerge from the sun- a small one but LARGE ENOUGH to just barely INTERSECT the wormhole's matter stream and send your perspective SLING-SHOTTING around the star and then STRAIGHT BACK TOWARDS EARTH.

The next thing you know, you're stepping out into thin air and TUMBLING onto solid concrete.

"OW!" Skaara yells as he lands next to you- letting out a string of Abydosian that generally translates as "What in the three moons was that!?"
You LOOK BACK at the GATE, except...

THERE IS NO GATE.

There is only the RAPIDLY EVAPORATING event horizon of a NAKED WORMHOLE with no STARGATE to frame it.

"Okay..." O'neill groans, "was it just me or did we just get hipchecked by a freaking SOLAR FLARE!?"

"I believe I saw the same thing," Teal'c remarks, getting up to his feet very quickly. "...Where is the Stargate?"

"Wasn't there," You say. "Just the wormhole evaporating behind us."

That's when SILO DOORS OPEN and men in uniform come running in, pointing guns at you, yelling out, "DON'T MOVE!"

A moment later, you LOOK UP and see the BUTT ASS END OF A FREAKING MISSILE staring right back down at you.

'Where the hell did we wind up?' you ask in your head.

[I have no idea.] Jolinar answers.

Your name is COLONEL JACK O'NEILL.

"The name's Captain James T. Kirk."

You're the COMMANDING OFFICER of SG-1.

"Starship... Enterprise."

And you're QUITE SURE that Hammond is either PRANKING YOU...

"We're explorers on a... Five. Year. Mission."

...Or something went HORRIBLY WRONG with the Stargate during that last, VERY WILD, wormhole.

"To seek out new life, and new civilizations."

You'd never admit it to Carter, or anyone else for that matter, but you're a BIT OF AN ASTRONOMER.

"To boldly go, where no man, woman, or child, has gone before."

Solar Flares? Yeah. You're pretty sure that'll mess with a GATE WORMHOLE.
"Well, I'll say one thing, Soviet," the man sitting across from you says, "you've certainly got a flamboyant way with words."

"Thank you," you say.

"But I think you're lying," he leans forwards, glaring at you. "That was all very, much too rehearsed. Scripted almost. Hell, I'd say it's more fitting from one of those trashy scifi novels Skaia Publishing puts out."

Skaia Publishing? ...OH. Yeah, right, one of HARLEY'S VENTURES- the people that ended up becoming SKAIANET, a game company in the modern day, if you're remembering right.

You can work with that.

"Okay, fine, you got me." You say. "My name's not Kirk."

"Thank you," the man clicks his pen. You glance at his name tag. JAMISON. Hmm...

"It's Parker," you say. "Peter Parker."

"...Marvel? Seriously? Try again, smart ass."

You put your hands up in a "Had to try!" kind of way, and then say. "Fine, fine. I'll tell it to you straight." You take a breath, then say, "My name is Dave Strider, and me and my team are Time Travelers from the far off distant year of 2009. We've come back in time to ward off the apocalypse- of a meteoric nature."

"...Fine. Mister "Strider," though I doubt that's even your real name." JAMISON sighs, exasperated. "Who sends these meteors?"

"A far off alien planet called Derse," you bullshit stuff from a FUTURE SKAIANET NOVEL that won't even come out for what you hope is another TEN YEARS. "They get really mad at these people from a planet called Prospit and they take these meteors from the furthest ring of their solar system and just... hurl them at Prospit. But Prospit has these defense shields which redirects the meteors to a random, hapless planet."

"..." Jamison stares at you. "Who's the Derse people's leader?"

...Well, crap, you can't remember that from the novel so you MAKE SOMETHING UP.


"Why does Prospit redirect the meteors to Earth?" he presses on.

Well, at least you remember that part.

"So they can safely give birth to a new universe," you say.

"A new universe?" Jamison doesn't believe you.

"It happens to be contained inside a giant frog, believe it or not," you honestly tell him.
"...Bullshit," he glares at you.

"No, Bullfrog, if I recall my species right," you say.

Of course, that EARNs YOU AN ANNOYED GLARE.

"Cut the crap, Strider, or Parker, or whatever the hell name you really go by," Jamison growls, clearly itching to PUNCH YOU.

"Okay, okay, fine," you say, raising your hands. "I'll tell you my real name."

"FINALLY." Jamison growls.

"It's Freeman," you say. "Gordon Freeman, PHD. I work for a secret military research facility called Black Mesa." Thank YOU Jude Harley and your insistence on staying up to date on the latest VIDEO GAMES. "You probably haven't heard of it. It's way above your clearance level. Also, probably not even established yet. But everything I just told you? The Meteors? Derse? Prospit? It's all going to happen."

"...Really now," Jamison gives you A FLAT, DISBELIEVING LOOK. "So if I called up and asked, I wouldn't hear anything about Black Mesa because... it doesn't exist yet?"

"Yupp," you say, popping the P for emphasis. "There was an accident at the lab. The time portal didn't send us back far enough. I heard the words 'Resonance Cascade' being thrown about? Basically me and my team got put in the past, but not far enough, if we landed up here in your neck of the woods."

"Really," Jamison says. "You expect me to believe that a LAB ACCIDENT sent you back to 1969 and that you meant to go back further?"

"Well, yeah," you nod.

"...That's the most insane story I've ever heard, Soviet."

And so a minute later, you're LOCKED UP AGAIN with the rest of SG-1.

"So," Skaara begins, "did you find out anything from General Jamison out there?"


"Well, that explains the outdated decor," Carter muses, looking at the PRINTED FABRIC of a nearby chair.

"Also, I totally told him the truth that we're from Black Mesa in the year 2009 to stop the meteor apocalypse," you add- yelling that last part towards the door for anyone to hear. "So go ahead and tell them the truth if they ask you. You've got permission."

"...Was that not the name of the facility in the virtual simulation Jude Harley was playing the other day?" Teal'c asks.

"No, of course not!" You say, loudly, for the benefit of the people outside. "It's the totally real name of the facility we've been working at for the last few years!"
"OH SHUT UP, SOVIET!" someone yells from outside.

"How Rude!" you mutter, glaring at the door. Then, you turn back to your team, and add, "Also, they think we're Russian Spies for some reason."

"I don't know what Jamison's smoking, but do any of us look Russian?" Carter asks, frowning as she crosses her arms.

"No, we do not," Teal'c says.

"He's probably just paranoid," you remark. "...So, regarding that lab accident," you begin. "Any thoughts?"

"We were decoding files from Joey's transmission," Carter says, "apparently Callie somehow discovered a time travel function of the Gate, but we hadn't decrypted the specific files on 'the how' before we left. So, it's possible we accidentally stumbled on it just like she did."

"Solar Flare?" Skaara asks.

"Probably," you say.

"I'd give it even odds," Carter nods.

"Wonderful," You say. Then, raising your voice, add, "DAMNED SOLAR FLARES CAUSING RESONANCE CASCADES!"

Skaara gives you an odd look. "Resonance Cascade? What was that, anyways?"

"Dunno," you say, lowering your voice to a whisper. "But those scientists from Black Mesa were pretty startled by it, so..." You shrug.

Probably some made up VIDEO GAME TERM, but damn if it doesn't SOUND COOL.

As you and SG-1 are loaded up onto a TRUCK and ferried out of what you've come to realize is CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN, you think back on Jude's RECENTLY BOUGHT GAME. If you just had a Crowbar or something... maybe you could break out of these restrains...

Eh, you'd settle for a ZAT GUN and some keys, though.

"So what's the point of this game exactly?" you'd asked Jude, peering over his shoulder as he used one of the base's HIGH END COMPUTERS to run the game.

"Not sure exactly," Jude had answered, having his character push CART WITH A GLOWING CRYSTAL into a SCIENCE BEAM. "I know there are aliens, and portals, and it's in a Military base like the SGC, so I got it 'cause of that alone, really."

And then the shouting and the yelling had started and poor "Gordon Freeman" ended up getting bounced around a couple of different places. Some of those aliens looked pretty cool, if you were
being honest. Wouldn't want to run into ANY of them on an alien planet, but... video game characters? Yeah, those are some nifty designs.

After that, you'd heard the words 'Resonance Cascade.' You'd tuned out most of the SCIENCY STUFF, and you're kind of regretting that now, but those two words stuck out to you.

RESONANCE CASCADE.

"Carter," you mutter as you watch the MOUNTAIN dissapear into the distance behind you. "If we get out of this, we totally need to make sure we have some kind of protocol for Resonance Cascades."

"I'll think of something," Carter chuckles dryly.

That's when the car stops.

"Oh what now?" Skaara asks, leaning his head back against the wall of the truck's back.

Your ears perk up as SCREAMING AND SUDDEN YELLING breaks out, each one silenced by a PCH ZYUU!

"Zats?" You ask. "I'll take Zats."

And then everything goes silent...

A moment later, a YOUNG LIEUTENANT steps into view, holding a ZAT GUN.

"Which one of you is Captain Carter?" he asks.

"That'd be me," Carter says.

"I found this note in your vest," he says, holding up a letter. "Most of it is in MY handwriting."

"Say what now?" You ask.

"That's the letter General Hammond gave me before we went through the gate," Carter stares at it.

"General?" the Lieutenant asks. "I'm a General in the future?"

"You are George Hammond?" Teal'c asks.

"I am," the man nods. "This note told me to trust you. To let you escape, and to give you a certain part of it only."

"What about the rest?" you ask.

"The rest of it is to me, and a note I'm supposed to give to someone wearing a certain shirt at some point in time," YOUNG HAMMOND answers. "Honestly, I'm finding this all so hard to believe, but... you're Colonel O'neill, Teal'c, Captain Carter, and Skaara? 'SG-1'?"

You nod, "That's us."
Hammond pockets the Zat gun, and then climbs up into the back of the truck, and starts unlocking your HANDCUFFS. "I am going to get court martialed for this."

"Not unless we make it look good, Sir," You say as you finally get your hands free and massage at your wrists,

"...Fair enough," Hammond says. "The rest of your gear is in the truck in the middle."

"Thank you, Sir," Carter says, massaging her own freed wrists.

"Don't thank me yet," Hammond says. "I've got years to go before I decide if I even want to write this note out to myself to begin with."

"You've got to see it through first," Skaara says, once his own wrists are freed.

"I'm putting a lot of faith and trust into my own handwriting," Hammond says as he finishes unlocking Teal'c's handcuffs. Teal'c nods in thanks, but says nothing as you five climb out of the truck. "You're damn right I need to see it through first."

You head to the middle truck and RETRIEVE EVERYTHING that would INCRIMINATE your FUTURE STATUS. Zats, mainly, and the your GUNS. Can't leave 30 year advancements around to get PICKED APART and put to more murderous uses sooner than intended.

"Here," Hammond hands you his wallet. "Take what you need from this, and from the others. Buy some disguises when you hit town."

You take out what amounts to at least EIGHTY DOLLARS, and give him back the empty wallet.

"I'll pay you back for this," you tell him, "with interest!"

"I'll hold you to it," Hammond says, and then he hands you over the Zat Gun he'd used to take out everyone else, and one part of the note he'd promised to give you.

And so, with a bitter smile, you say, "Thanks, George. Sorry for this."

And PCH ZYUU, down he goes.

Walking through the forest, somewhat alongside the road, heading into town...

It's a lot longer of a distance on foot than by car.

"Solar Flares!" Carter gasps as she reads the part of the note of keen interest. "These are dates and times for two solar flares withi the next few weeks that I'll bet can send us back to the future!"

"Good for us," Skaara says, "but how do we get back without a Stargate?"

"That..." Carter frowns. "That IS a problem."

"Not really," you say. "Langford probably knows. Harley might know. We ask one of them."
"And contaminate the timeline further?" Carter asks. "I doubt they knew anything about any of this!"

"So we don't tell them anything about why we're really after the Gate," you offer. "We... pretend we're just interested in it historically? Damn it, if Daniel were here he'd know what to say."

"There's another problem in how do we GET to either of them?" Skaara asks. "We don't know where Harley is, or where the Langfords are."

"Gaaah," you run your hands through your hair. "Damn it, that's right."

"Catherine Langford might be our best bet," Carter says. "I think her family has an estate near Washington."

"Chances are the Gate's near there too," Skaara says. "I think I read something in Daniel's old notes about how the Air Force started running their own gate experiments in the 1970s to the 1990s, before they handed it over to-" he stops. "Wait. The 1970s? This is 1969, right?"

"D'oh," you close your eyes. "Of course it'd be that."

"I do not understand," Teal'c says. "What is the issue?"

"The problem is that we kickstart the Gate program by finding the Stargate and using it," you say. "We're the reason the Gate even gets opened under Harley and Langford. It's definitely in a storage warehouse, if that's the case, and we're going to have to break in and use it somehow."

"It's a stable time loop, Sir," Carter says, "we can't change the timeline here because we already changed it! Our future exists simply because we went back in time and MADE it happen to begin with!"

"So Hammond's always going to write his letter to himself?" You ask, and Carter nods. "...We're going to have to talk to Langford no matter what, aren't we?" You get another nod.

"The question then, is how the hell do we get there in time?" Skaara asks.

At that moment, Teal'c steps out into the middle of the road, and you yell at him to stop...

But it's a LARGE VAN that stops instead.

"Woah," the couple inside stare.

"Far out, man," the driver mutters.

"Well. Okay." You say. "That... that works."

---

Your new companions are called MICHAEL and JENIFER- no last names given- and it was thanks to them that you were able to buy the TOTALLY SEVENTIES disguises from a clothing store without raising suspicion.

They're heading up to NEW YORK- miraculously by way of WASHINGTON D.C.- for WOODSTOCK.
And, with one quick CHECK OF THE PHONEBOOKS, you've found out that, yes, Catherine Langford is also out that way as well.

They're HIPPIES, as best as you can tell, so they don't ask many questions about your team's STRANGE WAY OF DRESSING...

Except, until, they do one night, after they catch you talking with your team in hushed wispers over the camp fire about how to go about talking to Catherine about this.

"So... are you guys aliens?" MICHAEL asks.

Teal'c takes out a Zat, and shoots the fire with it, causing a WONDERFUL REACTION you had no idea was even possible. ...The fire flares up, and stays flared up for a solid minute before returning to normal.

So, you just flat out admit that you're from the future who got stuck here by accident.

They believe you.

And so, ice broken, secret for a secret, then they talk about their own indecision about whether to run away to CANADA, or join the ARMY.

You'd go to voice your opinion, but Skaara asks them some poignant questions, weighing the Pros and Cons of it. Then, he brings his own experiences with choices- namely, what to do about JADE.

"Sometimes, I'm still not sure that I made the right choice with her," Skaara concludes, "but it's the choice I made and I have to see it through."

You decide to interject a question of your own, "If you did run, what would you do? Start a farm or something?"

"...That's not a bad idea, actually," JENIFER says. "Stay or Run... I kind of like the idea of starting a farm."

"A farm... I like the sound of that too," Michael says, taking his girlfriend/wife/fiance's hand and squeezing tight.

Carter gives you a look that is either "You just changed History" or "You just made History happen AGAIN."

You give her a look back that you hope says "So?"

She gives you a look that CLEARLY says "If you're going to change it, at least make it so we can find out the results afterwards." And then she hands you a notebook and a pen.

"Hey, listen," you say, grabbing a piece of paper from the book and writing a PHONE NUMBER on it. "Whatever you decide, after me and my Team make it back to the future... and if you ever need help?" You hand them the number. "As long as it's after 1996, give me a call, okay? I'll try my best to help out."

Michael and Jenifer look at it, then nod in agreement.
Your name is JOLINAR, and you're honestly struggling not to laugh as the COLONEL attempts to replicate a German accent.

"I could do a better German accent than that," Skaara remarks in said better, near perfect German accent. "Try again, O'neill."

"Yeah," O'neill frowns, "why aren't we having Skaara do this again?"

"Because for starters," Carter says, "Catherine won't believe Skaara's German. She's been to Egypt, remember?"

"Why do we have to go with a German accent anyways?" O'neill asks, frowning. "Can't we just go with Egyptian?"

"Because Egypt didn't WANT anything to do with the Gate, and still doesn't to the present day. They pretty much let the Langfords have it without any fuss," Carter says. "Russia is out of the question unless we want General Jamison tracking us down, and of the few countries that haven't made any inquiries about the Stargate by modern times, you said you wanted to do German because of some TV show."

"It's not just any TV show, Carter, it's Hogan's Heroes!" O'neill protests. "I'd be a fool if I can't make a reference to it!"

"Unless you want to switch to Italian," Carter continues, "we're doing German."

"...Fine, fine..." O'neill shakes his head. "Okay, Skaara, let's try this again."

"Repeat after me," Skaara says, continuing the German accent. "Hello, my name is..."

"Hello. My name is Georg Shultz," O'neill introduces himself in a mostly convincing accent over the phone. "My associate and I are Archaeologists interested in meeting with you to discuss the artifact found in Giza in nineteen eighty-" Carter corrects him by hissing out "twenty" - "Twenty, sorry. Ninteen Twenty Eight? The Stairway to Heaven?" There's a pause. "Yes, nothing fancy, just a face to face meeting. My associate and I are interested in comparing the symbology on the artifact to some tablets we discovered in a sea temple ruin recently."

Complete bullshit, as far as you're aware. There are no "Sea Temple Ruins" of any kind, and O'neill is ripping off some book.

"Ah, yes, thank you miss Langford. Would Twelve in the afternoon work well?" O'neill pauses, "Ah, yes, One works just as well for us. Thank you. Will be seeing you then!"

And then he hangs up the phone a moment later, sighing, and returning to his normal voice.

"Carter," he says, "remind me never to volunteer to do something like this again?"

"Of course, Sir," Carter says, then, thinking to you, adds, 'I am totally going to let him do something like this again.'

'It's the most amusing thing to do, after all,' you agree.
The meeting with CATHERINE LANGFORD goes off without a hitch. O’neill convinces Langford with a FAKE SKETCH of some AMPHIBIOUS LOOKING RUINS and a RANDOM GATE ADDRESS for one of the older TOK’RA BASES you provided—reasonably, of course, missing the POINT OF ORIGIN glyph.

And thus, the woman gives you the LOCATION OF THE WAREHOUSE in D.C. that the Gate is being held in—ostensibly expecting you two to make OFFICIAL INQUIRIES into it and PETITIONING for clearance to look at it in person.

SG-1 has no intention to do anything of the sort.

By the time the SECOND SOLAR FLARE date rolls around—the first one having been missed by way of you all not even knowing where the Gate even was at that point—your two PRESENT DAY COMPANIONS have already gone their separate ways, and now the four members of SG-1 stand outside the gates to the WAREHOUSE.

[A little lax in security, isn’t it?] you mull over.

‘There’s nothing here but the Stargate, and a lot of old jeeps and trucks left in storage,’ Carter tells you. ‘Other stuff from some other missions, too, probably. Who knows what’s important and what’s not besides the Gate.’

[And here we are about to make it relevant,] you chuckle in amusement.

"Alright," O’neill says. "Looks like the guards are on a forty minute rotation. Let’s get in there and get out A.S.A.P."

SG-1 sneaks up to the ENTRY GATE, and then Skaara and O’neill shoot the guards with their ZATS.

PCH ZYU! PCH ZYU!

They’ll be out and undiscovered until the guard rotation comes in to relieve them of duty.

O’neill takes the keys from one of the guards, and you all head into the warehouse.

JEEPS and TRUCKS all line up either side of the warehouse, centered around a LARGE PILE OF BOXES and CRATES, at the top of which is a LARGE, FLAT, SQUARE BOX.

Teal’c and O’neill climb up onto the boxes and UNLATCH the one at the top—both sides fall down forming NATURAL RAMPS to reveal the STARGATE WITHIN.

Interestingly, you notice that the FRONT of the box has been REPLACED from what was originally there—impossible to see from the outside, but the different type of WOOD SUPPORTS on the inside of it make it obvious that something happened necessitating a replacement.

You wonder why that would be?

It doesn’t matter, because soon Carter is hooking up WIRES from all the car engines together, and then up to the STARGATE.

Carter, O’neill, and Skaara all take up certain trucks, turn over their engines (WHY would anyone just leave the keys in the ignitions? And WHY would they leave fuel in the tanks? Idiots. That’s a
fire hazard waiting to happen.) giving power straight to the Stargate.

With enough power to it, Teal'c begins spinning the inner track and MANUALLY DIALING the same planet that you'd given Catherine the Gate Address for- because WHY NOT? It's not like it's going to MATTER MUCH, long term, but if you MISS THE SOLAR FLARE, at least you'll wind up on an UNINHABITED PLANET.

You've gotten to the sixth chevron when you hear a COMMOTION OUTSIDE.

"HURRY IT UP!" O'neill yells, and everyone wisely moves over to the GATE just as the LOCAL GUARDS burst into the place and watch as the seventh chevron LOCKS, and the signature WAAA WAAA KAWOOOOSH happens.

The guards are all stunned into doing nothing as SG-1 jump through the wormhole once again.

And you know it's worked just so WONDERFULLY because you get treated to the sight of yet another CONFUSINGLY IMPOSSIBLE WORMHOLE TRIP.

---

NOVEMBER 29TH, 1996.

Your name is COLONEL HARRY MAYBOURNE, and you've FINALLY TRACKED DOWN the rest of that RENEGADE TEAM who stole the Stargate from Jake Harley's basement.

For whatever BIZARRE REASON, the idiots decided to HOLE UP inside an old, abandoned MILITARY WAREHOUSE in D.C.; you're not going to complain about the RANDOM TIP OFF that you received to get you here, because it's paid off and the idiots are HERE, but you can't help but wonder WHY the hell these ROGUE AGENTS chose this particular warehouse to set up shop in.

The only tie you could figure out was that, at one point, the GIZA STARGATE had been held here in this warehouse, but that's probably just a coincidence.

"On my signal," you order your TRUSTED STRIKE TEAM of NID AGENTS, and then... "GO!" You BURST into the warehouse and you all point your guns at the ROGUE AGENTS who were sitting at a FOLD UP TABLE playing CARDS infront of the CROCKER HOUSE STARGATE.

"DON'T MOVE EVERYONE FREEZE!" You order.

The ROGUE IDIOTS, of course, all look at you like the DEVIL COME TO CLAIM HIS POUND OF FLESH.

They clearly want to go for their guns, but also don't WANT TO GET SHOT in the process, so you'll mark this up as a wi-

THWUMP.

Everyone's eyes shoot over to the CROCKER HOUSE STARGATE, which has suddenly had a chevron light up out of nowhere.
That's not supposed to happen.

*THWUMP-THWUMP-THWUMP-THWUMP-THWUMP-KA-TWUMP!* The Gate lights up in rapid sequence, and the ROGUE IDIOTS go for their GUNS.

**WAAA WAAA!**

Of course-

**KAWOOOOOOSH!**

-You and your team DON'T HAVE TO DO A THING, because the idiots set up their table and guns RIGHT INFRONT OF THE FUCKING STARGATE and it's UNSTABLE VORTEX.

They're all swallowed up in a heartbeat, and as the vortex collapses back down into itself, you can't help but wonder WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED? Was the SGC gate suffering a MALFUNCTION again? Did someone's incoming wormhole get JUMPED to the next nearest Gate like what happened with SG-1’s visit to Antarc-

**SCHLORP!**

And then out of the Stargate emerge the members of SG-1, dressed up like they came straight from the NINETEEN SIXTIES.

"...Colonel," you say, staring at Colonel O'neill with no less than 60% CONFUSION, and 40% ACCEPTANCE- both directed at the situation.

"Colonel," O'neill replies, eyeing you and your STRIKE TEAM warily, also speaking with the same amount of CONFUSION and ACCEPTANCE. "What... exactly are you doing here?"

"I could ask you the same question," you answer, holstering your gun, and signaling to your team to lower their weapons.

"Oh, just coming back from a bad trip to 1969. You?" O'neill answers, casually.

"Well, I did come to arrest the rest of the thieves who stole the Crocker gate-" On that note, the Gate SHUTS DOWN, and SG-1 turn to look back at it in SURPRISE. "-but they ended up setting up a card game infront of the Stargate and like Idiots didn't run when it gave the little warning buzzer that it was about to open."

O'neill looks down at the FLOOR, and grimaces. "WELL," he says. "That was stupid of them."

"Incredibly," you agree.

O'neill turns to look around the WAREHOUSE. "Carter... why the hell did we come back out HERE?"

" Probably for the same reason we emerged without a Gate in Cheyenne Mountain," Carter guesses. "I guess... the wormholes dump us out from our departure point instead of the Gate itself, if there isn't a Gate in the same area?"

"...Huh," O'neill says. "Good to know."
"Do I even want to know?" You ask them.

"Probably not, Colonel Maybourne," the JAFFA says.

...And damn it, he's right on that regard.

"You're right," you say, "I don't." You shake your head. "Should I call General Hammond and let him know I ran into you guys?"

"...Yeah," O'neill nods. "That'd probably be a great idea."

And so you go make one HELL of an awkward call.

Your name is GENERAL HAMMOND, and you're FELLING MIGHTILY RELIEVED as SG-1 completes their MISSION DEBRIEFING.

"So... yeah, that's about our side of things, Sir," O'neill says. "How was your week? Year? ...Er... Last few Decades?"

"Well," you begin. "After I woke up, I went on to follow a checklist of items and events that I'd written of my own past, except it was written in such a way that I had no idea I was doing any of the items on it until after I'd done it. They were very strange instructions, including giving a Gate Address to a young girl in a Burger King during the time you all were on Abydos in 1994."

And that's where Jude Harley speaks up for the first time, "I was the one who wrote that particular note to Joey. We... pretty much sent her to Alternia."

"...Well, it was a stable time loop," O'neill says, frowning. "Can't imagine there was much either of you could do about it. At least we know she's alive and you weren't sending her to her death, though."

"True," you say, "however... neither Jude or I were entirely sure if we could pull the trigger on that particular part of the loop until after we heard back from Joey." You pause, then add, "I included a personal note in our message back to her apologizing for my part in sending her there in the first place."

"Doh!" Jude plants a hand against his face. "I... I forgot to tell her that. Damn it."

"I'm sure you'll get the chance to tell her face to face eventually," Skaara says.

"I'm going to have to give her so much candy to pay her back for it," Jude says.

"Ah." You're suddenly reminded of something. "Speaking of Payback." You look to Colonel O'neill who looks SUDDENLY VERY AFRAID. "Jack, you owe me Five-hundred Thirty-nine dollars, and fifty cents, including interest."

"That's a lot less than I thought it'd be, actually," O'neill admits, sighing in relief.
"Next time, make sure to give a specific rate of interest when dealing with time travel loans," you advise him.

"I'll make sure to do that, sir." O'neill shakes his head.

"What about the Stargate Joey went through, sir?" Carter asks.

"The NID's scientists want their chance at cracking it and seeing about making their own Stargate," you inform her. "Surprisingly, Colonel Maybourne told them to shove it, and returned it to us, seeing as it was stolen under the pretense of Murder to begin with." You shake your head. "I have no idea what goes through his head, but in this case, we've got that Gate secured and in storage along side the Antarctic Gate. If we ever need to use it, it'll be there."

"Good," Jude says. "But personally? I hope that thing never gets used again."

Your name is GEORGE HAMMOND, and you AGREE with that statement rather fully.

Chapter End Notes

Thoughts on this chapter: O'NEILL IS A RIOT TO WRITE! Harry Maybourne isn't THAT bad of a guy... he just happens to work for a department that's EASILY CORRUPTIBLE. ALSO, Stargate Solar Flare Time Travel Mechanics MAKE NO SENSE AT ALL and I've had to create my own internal logic for all the discrepancies.

Next up on SG1's side... eh... MIGHT be the Season2/Season3 bridge two parter? But I'm not sure if the plot changes enough for me to want to adapt it or not. But that won't be for a while. Prepare for a couple new ALTERNIA CHAPTERS next!

ALSO ALSO. If you haven't heard in HIVESWAP NEWS, if you're eager for HYPE, checkout "http://hs.hiveswap.com/trollcall/" for a ONCE A WEEK (On Wednesdays) REVEAL OF TWO TROLLS from Hiveswap Act 2! Once they fill out the roster, word is we're gonna get ACT 2 properly revealed!

Here's hoping the trolls from the CONCEPT ART that I'm calling "TEAL COMMANDER" and "HIVEKEEP" get their proper names revealed during this! :D That said, expect BOTH of the Trolls that got released today to make some CAMEOS in the next Alternia chapter.

Happy 11/11, Homestuck fans!
ALT:02X07: Resonance (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

Part 1 of 2. The battle over KARFIN OUTPOST begins.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your name is OKURI LEIJON, and you've been summoned to TWO IMPORTANT MEETINGS from your teammates, so you just decided to hold them all together at the same time.

There's at least a FEW RELATIVELY UNFAMILIAR FACES at the table, though. Namely, the TROLLS you only really know the NAMES OF and not much else. Of import, though, is the TEAL BLOOD conversing with Callie over some data on a piece of paper while you all wait for DAMMEK to return from CLA'DIA with news on the MEGASHIP.

Said Teal Blood is a TIRED LOOKING GIRL sipping at her COFFEE MUG- within which you're told COFFEE IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND, but you don't know what's in there. Her clothes are DISHEVELED, her WHITE RIMMED GLASSES are smudged with INK STAINS, and the PATCH over her right breast containing her SYMBOL is only BARELY hanging onto the black hoodie with some ROUGH SEWING WORK. (It honestly looks like it was cut off of a completely different piece of clothing and sewn on as the easiest way to get that symbol on the jacket.) You also cant tell if her horns are NATURALLY SQUARED at the top, or if she'd FILED THEM DOWN.

Her name, as far as you've been told, is TYZIAS ENTYKK, and she looks like she hasn't gotten a wink of sleep in OVER A SWEEP. You honestly wonder how some trolls do it. You heard of some SOME TROLLS who manage atleast 600 HOURS without sleep, but...

It just seems excessive to you.

"INCOMING WORMHOLE!" Your new GATE TECHNICIAN yells out- buzzing excitedly like a BEE as the Stargate chunks away seven chevrons.

You only know that this kid, named ZEBEDEE TONGVA, wanted to be a BEEKEEPER, similar to HIVEKEEP, whose name you've STILL yet to learn despite your sudden PROMOTION to such a highly vaulted rank. You suppose if you hang around him enough you'll probably learn more about him, but if you're being honest? He seems just a little too OVER EXCITED just to be hanging around with people on a REGULAR BASIS.

His hair and horns are as spiky and excited as his personality, which you suppose is fitting. His style of dress, though...

Well, you suppose he's certainly still EAGER about his Beekeeping prospects, because he basically looks like he's wearing a HEAVILY TONED DOWN BEE COSTUME.

WAA WAA! KAWOOSH!
"Annnnd!" Zebede SQUEALS a little. "It's Tetrarch's Passcode! Letting him through!"

A FORCE SHIELD recently put around the gate LOWERS, and then a moment later, DAMMEK and PRINCESS MILLIA step through the gate. Dammek looks around in confusion as he tries to place where you all are.

"Dammek! Princess Milia!" Joey waves down to him, and they come up the stairs, even as SEVERAL CLA'DIANS with MULTIPLE BOXES full of UNKNOWN GOODIES come through the gate after them.

"Princess," you say, smiling to her. "Good to see you again."

"If only under better circumstances," Princess Milia answers, smiling in return. "Cla'dia's revamped fleet is prepared for battle, and the Megaship is finished on schedule."

"That's good to hear," You say, then turn to Callie and Ty... TYZIAS? Tyzias. Yes, that's her name. Good, you remembered it. "Callie, Tyzias. You can begin."

"Okay right!" Callie smiles nervously, but BRIGHTLY. "Thanks to the data the spy network hacked out of the observer ships, and Tyzias's work on un-corrupting it-" Said Tealblood just takes a sip from her not-coffee mug. "-I was able to confirm a few theories about the weapon the Mofang are using to destroy stars."

She taps a button on the PROJECTION CONSOLE, and brings up A 3D RENDERING of the MOFANG WEAPON. It looks like a MULTI-FACED OBJECT, CONSISTING OF PENTAGONS for each face. You're a little INTIMIDATED by the PULSING, GLOWING RED LINES criss-crossing its surface.

"This," Callie says, "is a Mofang Gravitational Trap that I and my team ran into on a Mofang planet a few weeks ago." She looks to Joey.

"More on that later," Joey says, "but it's important for different reasons to this."

"Yes," Callie continues. "I believe this device was either a prototype of, or a more limited version of the actual weapon that the Mofang are using. Which... well..." She taps a button, and the projection EXPANDS into FLOATING CHUNKS, all orbiting each other as they generate some kind of ENERGY FIELD in the center of the object. "The central purpose of both of these devices revolve around drawing in matter and mass into their central core. A gravity well, in the minor/prototype version, and a BLACK HOLE in the full version." Another tap, and the ENERGY FIELD condenses into a SIMULATION of a swirling MASS OF GRAVITATIONAL PULL.

"Did you just say a Black Hole?" Princess Milia asks. "How is that even possible?"

"For long periods of time? It's not sustainable," TYZIAS chimes in. "So the Mofang included something to make it last LONGER." Then, she takes another sip from her not-coffee mug.

"Black Holes, as we're well aware from every Ship Safety Lecture Video the Empire's posted to Grubtube over the last hundred Sweeps," Callie continue, "are basically giant pieces of stellar mass that are so super dense and heavy that gravity is pulled in, causing an event we know as Time Dilation. Essentially, the closer you get to a Black Hole-"

"The Slower Time Gets," Joey finishes. "My babysitter, Roxy, told me and Jude about those once. I
had nightmares for a week straight."

"I'm having nightmares right now," you say. "And the Mofang have Weaponized them?"

"Not just that," Callie says. "It takes time for a Black Hole to consume enough stellar matter from a Sun to cause it to destabilize enough to go Nova. Time we simply weren't seeing from the previous bombings. The reason for that isn't just from the time dilation from the artificial black hole..."

"Hint: It's also why the data feed we hacked from the empire was so grabbed when we got it," Tyzias interjects.

"The Mofang have found a way to amplify the time dilation field around the shell of the bomb itself," Callie explains, bringing up a new image of the OPEN BOMB falling into A STAR. "This allows the Black Hole to stay in existence longer than it otherwise would, give it the time to absorb the stellar matter FROM the star, and by the time the ambient heat melts the frame generating both effects, enough mass has been consumed to the point the star collapses and goes Boom."

And thus, the depiction of the STAR goes nova on the holgraphic projection.

"So," Xefros ventures a guess, "the Mofang are going to do this to their own outpost because the Empire won't give it back."

"I can't imagine any of their people would willingly go along with this barbaric act," Princess Milia says, frowning. "The first three stars were a warning act, destroying systems otherwise unimportant to the Sorian Empire. Then they waited for so long... why did they wait?"

"Your first question is why," Mierfa says. "The people of the Empire wouldn't willingly go along with destroying more stars... unless coerced."

"Which is where the planet we found the original device comes in at," Joey says, reaching up and pulling her NECKLACE out from beneath her shirt. "With four Crystals, I was able to bounce a mental signal off of Trizza Tethis' bracelet and two Crystals, and triangulate where the last remaining crystal is. And was."

"It was on the planet," Salazl speaks up, looking ASHAMED. "Damn it..."

"Worse than that," Joey continues, "the Mofang Emperor HAS the Cerulean Crystal and is Using it on his own people to keep them from complaining about the fact that he plans to blow up Karfin Outpost." She pauses, then adds, "And from what little I was able to gleam from his mind? He plans to be there at Karfin when it goes off."

"That fits with what rumors the Empire's been able to pick up off their transmissions," Salazl frowns. "But why?"

"It doesn't matter why," you say. "Right now all of our objectives are coming together in one place. We need to stop the Mofang from using any more of these bombs. We need to prove we can STOP one if need be. And we need to be able to retrieve that Blue Crystal and keep the Mofang Emperor from using it on his people. If we accomplish both, we'll be able to set back the Soiran Empire's cause by letting their people revolt from the usage on Karfin Outpost. And while the Empire swoops in and deals with THEM--"

"Cla'dia officially launches its own attack on the small Alternian Empire presence in a system
neighboring Cla'dia," Princess Milia interjects. "We, and the people of that system had been negotiating, and we plan to officially announce our independence from the Empire, and our alliance with the newly independent people of Alternia at the same time."

"This is going to cause waves, if this works out right," Dammek says, looking a little GIDDY. "No matter what happens, win or lose, Karfin Outpost is going down in history."

"You're right about that," Xefros says. "No matter what happens... people are going to remember the whole Karfin Mofang Battle."

And so you take a breath, and look to Salazl, "Contact Hivekeep, and Teal Commander. Tell them about the plans."

"Yes, Ma'am," Salazl nods, and turns to go do just that.

You look everyone in the eyes, and say, "Let's go over the game plan."

Your name is TERADN RAMZAY, a CHEF on board one of the ALTERNIAN EMPIRE'S FLAGSHIPS, stationed over KARFIN OUTPOST.

Tensions have been building for months now, but especially over the last week it seems that the SORIAN EMPIRE is planning a MAJOR OFFENSIVE against the outpost.

You can't quite figure out why the Mofang want this one planet back so much, but hell, you're just a CHEF, you likely just don't have the clearance to do anything, so instead you sit at an OBSERVATION WINDOW, and wait for your next shift to begin.

You sip at your COFFEE MUG, and sigh.

Today is probably going to be another boring day, regardless of the INTERGALACTIC TENSIONS that-

FWOOM!

You see a twinkle of light in the distance and BY THE EMPRESS is that a MOFANG SHIP that's just dropped out of HYPERSPACE!!?

FWOOM! FWOOOM! FWOOOM! FWOOOM!

MORE. MORE SHIPS emerge by the DOZENS!!?

All of them MOFANG in design- sleek and FAVORING PENTAGONAL SHAPES wherever possible. ALL OF THEM bearing the crest of the SORIAN EMPIRE.

For a second that felt like it lasted for minutes, you stare in shock. WHY wasn't anyone opening fire on them?

Shock, likely.
The MOFANG OPEN FIRE the moment they were out of hyperspace and you see the Alternian Ships all OPENING FIRE in return.

War has come to KARFIN OUTPOST.

Your name is COMMANDER GEMMON BLAAST, and you're feeling MIGHTY OVERWHELMED by the sudden emergence of MOFANG ships from out of hyperspace- a WHOLE WAR FLEET, that just keeps emerging and emerging, more ships behind more ships serving as a DEFENSIVE SHIELD by way of OFFENSIVELY BLASTING at everything in front of them.

"FIRE THE CANONS! FIRE EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT!" You order. "STALL FOR REINFORCEMENTS!!!"

You're no fool. Comander ARKADI and Tactician AKASHI have both gone off the radar. Without them here you have NO CHANCE on your own to win this. You just have to hold out until they- or SOMEONE ELSE- shows up!

And wonderfully timed, that's when a CLA'DIAN ship emerges from Hyperspace....

Wait...

They're not flying the RIGHT COLORS to be those RUSHED VESSELS Cla'dia promised Alternia would get ages ago.

The hell...?

That's when TWO MORE emerge from Hyperspace, followed by some STRANGE, ALIEN DESIGN you've NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

It's vaguely saucer shaped, except THICKER, much thicker than a Saucer, and its front end is clearly POINTED like a CHEVRON. There are two strange RECTANGULAR PODS on the underside of it, and on the back are TWO RED TAIL FINS mounted at angles. There's a CRIMSON "M" SHAPE on the backside, framed in with SILVER. The rest of its hull is BRIGHT BLUE, and matches NO KNOWN FLEET CONFIGURATION for Cla'dia OR Alternia's fleets.

Then, they all OPEN FIRE on both the MOFANG SHIPS, and YOUR OWN FLEET as well- BUT MOSTLY THE MOFANG.

Your first thought is REAVERS, but these ships are MUCH TOO PRETTY and STANDARD ISSUE to be Reavers. So... since they're mostly focusing on the MOFANG vessels, you'll just chalk up those SHOTS heading your way as BAD TARGETING PROGRAM FAILURES.

This new ship though... it's definitely going after the Mofang. It slips through THE HAIL OF RETURN FIRE with ease- too MUCH ease. It spins, and twirls, and begins making a BEELINE towards one of the MOFANG FLAGSHIPS- wait a second!

You look CLOSER and see that that particular Flagship isn't even FIRING AT YOU, and instead is making a BEELINE for KARFIN OUTPOST!!
That's when things get WEIRD.

One of the Sorian ships moves to intercept the strange vessel, and it JUMPS TO HYPERSPACE for a split second, emerging on the other side of it unharmed. The Mofang ship that tried to get in the way tries to turn around, except that's when this alien ship BEGINS TO TRANSFORM.

What the hell is going on here!?

Without stopping its forward pursuit of the RABBITING SORIAN FLAGSHIP, the thing’s FRONT BOW splits in two, and then BOTH SIDES OF IT fold down and to the rear, as those RECTANGULAR BOXES fold up from the bottom and then begin SLIDING PARTS AROUND.

With a sudden FLIP AROUND via maneuvering thrusters, those red side flaps fold down onto the side and then a SHIELD detaches from what used to be the BELLY of the ship—moving down to what's RAPIDLY BECOMING APPARENT as a LEFT ARM, meanwhile some kind of FANCY SWORD BLADE extends out from the RIGHT HAND.

With a ROAR OF THE ENGINES, the TRANSFORMED SHIP-INTO-ROBOT suddenly brings down its sword on the REAR END of the Sorian flagship—utterly IGNORING THE SHIELDS and DESTROYING THE ENGINES and causing the entire ship to go HURTLING, uncontrolled, straight down for KARFIN'S SURFACE.

"Wha wha wha WHAAAAT THE HELL WAS THAT!?" one of your HELMSMEN yell out in shock and terror as you all the TRANSFORMED SHIP-ROBOT then turns around and begins SLICING AND DICING at the rest of the Sorian ARMADA, which are forced to BREAK FORMATION and begin scattering across the system.

"AFTER THEM!" you order your fleet. "MAKE SURE NONE OF THESE MOFANG BASTARDS ESCAPE OUR WRATH! WHILE THEY'RE SCATTERED, PICK THEM OFF!!" That's when MORE ships emerge from Hyperspace and begin shooting at EVERYONE ELSE. DOZENS appear with each burst of a hyperspace window. But you recognize THESE SHIPS, with their RUDIMENTARY SPIKES attached to the exterior hulls and their TOTAL LACK OF CORE CONTAINMENT...

DAMN IT ALL! JUST DAMN IT ALL!!

"I AM NOT BEING PAID ENOUGH FOR THIS SHIIIIIIIT!!!!!!!" You cry out in terror.

Damned Insane Clown Reavers. YOU DID NOT SIGN UP TO FIGHT REAVERS!!

Your name is MIERFA DURGAS and you're sweating BULLETS as you rapidly fly your HYPERSPACE ENABLED DRAGONFLY through A STORM OF CRISS-CROSSING LASERS.

Behind you in the back seat, CALLIE SQUEALS IN BARELY RESTRAINED TERROR. Any stray shot from ANY of those ships could utterly vaporize you if you got hit.

SO YOU DON'T GET HIT.

Salazl had told you to be a "LEAF ON THE WIND."
You told him to KNOCK THAT SHIT OUT and leave the flying to the PROFESSIONALS.

Not that you're really all that much of a PROFESSIONAL when it comes to flying anything larger than this Dragonfly.

You have your EYES ON THE PRIZE, though.

A certain MOFANG CARGO VESSEL is rabbting STRAIGHT TOWARDS THE SUN, and you can tell that it's got the PAYLOAD of the Device you need to destroy on it. Because WHY THE HELL ELSE would the Mofang bring a CARGO VESSEL into an ACTIVE SPACE BATTLE?? It has its SHIELDS UP, and you'd have no way of penetrating it normally...

Except, once again, for that little HYPERDRIVE on the back of your ship.

"CALLIE!" you order. "ON MY MARK!"

"RIGHT!" Callie goes to press in the right sequence of buttons.

"THREE!" You yell, getting CLOSER, AND CLOSER to the rear end of that CARGO VESSEL. "TWO!"

Any second... Any Second...

"MARK!"

And then your VIEW TWISTS into HYPERSPACE. Three... Two...

"MARK!" you yell, and then FWHUUUUMP!

You're THROUGH THE SHIELDS, and almost about to crash into the ENGINE BLOCK.

"DISENGAGE HYPERDRIVE!" you order, and pull up the moment you FEEL THE VIBRATIONS of the clamps releasing.

Once again, you fly UPWARDS AND UPWARDS and it's HARDER TO FEEL THE GRAVITY PULL when you're in space, you think.

That doesn't make the SHOCK WAVE from an exploding HYPERDRIVE any less terrifying.

The Cargo ship STOPS in its march towards the sun, and is basically going to be a SITTING DUCK. But unlike the ABYSS BRINGER which you first tried this on... the SHIELDS REMAIN UP, and so does the WEAPONRY on the ship's exterior.

You SWERVE AND AVOID the Cargo Ship's DIRECTED ANTI AIRCRAFT LASER CANNONS, and then swoop back around towards the back of the ship- towards the HOLE YOU JUST PUNCHED in it.

You see ATMOSPHERE RUSHING OUT through the back of the ship, and you see MOFANG in SPACESUITS spinning out along WITH THAT JETTISONING ATMOSPHERE. You FLY in straight through that REAR HOLE- ignoring any FUNNY INUENDO as you tuck in the DRAGONFLY'S WINGS as close as you can and begin THE LONG, PERILOUS JOURNEY to
the CARGO HOLD, swooping through HALLWAYS and blasting open ANY DOORS that get in your way.

Faster. FASTER.

You'll get there soon enough, but you just hope you get there IN TIME for Callie to disarm the weapon.

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you HOLD YOUR BREATH as your FORCE SHIELD PROTECTED, SPACE FARING DRAGONFLY is piloted down towards KARFIN OUTPOST after the downed MOFANG SHIP- from which you can just FEEL the pull of the BLUE CRYSTAL.

The Emperor is on that ship.

"Hold on!" Xefros barks back to you from the pilots seat. "ABOUT TO GO INTO RE-ENTRY!"

"RIGHT!" you buckle down in your seat and WATCH as the flames of RE-ENTRY flare around your tiny little dragon shaped ship, dancing across the SPACE GRADE FORCE-SHIELDS like an ORANGE COLORED WATERFALL.

Within seconds, it's over, and Xefros pushes the engines, trying to catch up with the RAPIDLY FALLING Mofang Flagship.

In the distance, you can see OLD MOFANG SETTLEMENTS that have been over-run by Alternian buildings. Whatever the Emperor was after here on this planet was probably over there, somewhere. But, it looks like LOSING HIS ENGINES so suddenly means he's not going there- even by CRASH LANDING.

As you watch, hoping that the crash KNOCKS OUT EVERYONE OBOARD, another SMALL VESSEL suddenly shoots past yours- one that you RECOGNIZE as being a HEAVILY MODIFIED version of that VESPA you sent Trizza chasing through the Stargate after.

Naturally, that's when you feel a bit of RESONANCE between your crystals AND THE ONES ONBOARD THAT SHIP.

Trizza decided to crash the party too, it seems, though HOW THE HELL she got here, you have NO FUCKING CLUE.

Suddenly, it feels as if NOTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN.

Your name is TRIZZA TETHIS, and things are going pretty much according to PLAN.

You GOT A SMALL TRANSPORT BIKE able to be SPACE WORTHY, stole a HYPER DRIVE from a crashed FRIGGATE you found by sheer accident while LOOKING for the BRACELET CRYSTALS, then found the NEAREST, LARGEST, MEANEST GROUP OF REAVERS- Clowns Gone MAD at the Edge of Space- and then TAUNTED THEM INTO
FOLLOWING YOU straight at the MOFANG OPERATION over KARFIN OUTPOST.

YOU NEED THAT CRYSTAL if you're going to have any hope of overpowering that ALIEN GIRL.

And speaking of- as you pass by a CLA’DIAN VESSEL, shaped like a Dragon, you feel a SENSE OF RESONANCE between your BRACELET and the pieces of it ON THAT SHIP.

So, she's here too; you're NOT SURPRISED.

You'll just have to beat her to the punch first, though.

You PUSH THE ENGINES to go FASTER, AND FASTER, and you're gonna GET ONBOARD before the damned Emperor's FLAGSHIP EVEN CRASHES!!!

How?

You SHOOT PAST THE BRIDGE- glancing aside to ensure that the EMPEROR is properly there on the bridge and- Oh! Look! He is!

Perfect. It's TIME TO GO SAY HELLO!

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you CAN'T FUCKING BELIEVE that Trizza would SHOOT OUT in front of a crashing ship's BRIDGE, and then CUT THE ENGINES INTO REVERSE so that she could CRASH STRAIGHT INTO SAID BRIDGE'S FRONT WINDOW!!

Of all the hairbrained, stupid ass shit you could have expected the HEIRESS OF THE EMPIRE to ever pull...

THAT WAS MOST CERTAINLY THE MOST UNEXPECTED.

Mostly because it causes the MOFANG FLAGSHIP to start LISTING TO A SIDE, and start DIGGING UP THE TERRAIN as its PORT SIDE begins to touch the ground.

"XEF!" Joey yells at you over the sound of TREES AND ROCKS BEING GROUND INTO DUST. "GET US IN FRONT OF THE BRIDGE! I HAVE TO GO AFTER HER!"

"GAAAAH!" you groan. "FINE! BUT I AM NOT TRYING TO LAND IN THAT MESS!"

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO!" Joey says, and then DISENGAGES THE FORCE FIELD over her seat. "I'LL JUST JUMP!"

"THIS IS INSANE, YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT!?!" you yell back at her, glancing to look at her.

"SO IS BLOWING UP A SUN WITH AN ARTIFICIAL BLACK HOLE!" Joey yells back, and you can see her GRIN beneath her spacesuit helmet.

"FAIR POINT!" You agree, and then begin the TRICKY PROCESS of trying to fly out in front of A CRASHING SPACESHIP and HOLD A RESPECTABLE DISTANCE so that you don't crash
INTO said Crashing Spaceship!!

Your name is XEFROS TRITOH, and you know that YOUR MOIRAIL IS COUNTING ON YOU to do this right the first time!

So...

YOU'RE GONNA DO THIS RIGHT THE FIRST TIME!!

Chapter End Notes

Next time on Stargate Alteria: "Cascade (Part 2 of 2)"
0u0 You know what's coming next.

SO. Yeah. Reveal times!

The CLA'DIAN ship designs and Princess Milia herself are lifted from the anime "LAST EXILE: Fam the Silver Wing!" I was going to mention it in the first chapter she appeared in, but I forgot. The DRAGONFLY design, however which I REALLY need to get pictures of, is based on a Modified LEGO SET I MOC'd up.

The MEGASHIP that Dammek designed and had built is my FAVORITE of the Power Rangers Megazords: The Astro Megaship/Megazord. Nothing beats that slick, simple transformation. Pictures I linked to here were done by an AWESOME 3d artist on Youtube/Deviantart called daizyujin4. Please check out their work if you're interested!

In Other Not-really-news News, Trizza's a TAD insane. More at 11.
Chapter Summary

[S] CASCADE: (Part 2 of 2) The Team escape the wrath of the Mofang Empire.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

FWOOSH!

The Dragonfly piloted by Mierfa and having Callie as its passenger entered the MASSIVE CARGO BAY for the Mofang Cargo ship. They saw many things in there- including a RING PLATFORM that looked like it was already being used to ferry the CREW off to another ship.

How they got their hands on one, does not matter. For our heroes goal resided infront of them, sitting shiny and crimson red, looking SIMPLE AND HARMLESS and yet DEADLY AND COMPLEX all at the same time.

And so the clock began counting down.

[-13:14]

Sitting in the PILOT'S INTERFACE for the MEGASHIP was one TETRARCH DAMMEK, swinging limbs this way and that to make the MEGASHIP’s transformed frame perform all kinds of INSANE STUNTS.

He swung the Ship's sword this way- a Mofang ship bifurcated neatly in two- kicked off of the remains, spun into a roundhouse kick that landed in the front bow of an ALTERNIAN VESSEL, sending it careening into a REAVER SHIP and causing both to explode dramatically.

[-12:55]

The Mofang had enough, however, and began encircling the strange robotic vessel in an attempt to OBLITERATE IT from all angles.
Dammek just smirked, and ENGAGED THE SPIN- visually transforming the Megaship into a BLUE BLUR of a SPINNING SHAPE that just slammed its sword and shield into each ship as they tried to open fire. His sword was destroying all of them within seconds, and they exploded brilliantly into a RING OF FIRE surrounding the Megaship as it slowed its spin and POSED DRAMATICALLY.

[-12:38]

Our view descends back down onto the planet- KARFIN OUTPOST- and specifically onto the bridge of a MOFANG SHIP still PLOWING ITSELF deep into the planet's surface as it continued
Trizza Tethis stands on top of a CRASHED VESPA, parked crudely in front of the MOFANG EMPEROR- blue crystal embedded firmly on his forehead- with a GNARLY LOOKING TRIDENT in hand ready to IMPALE HIM IN THE CHEST.

[-12:30]

That's when the sound of an ENGINE catches her attention, and she and the Emperor and all of the surviving bridge crew turn around and look out the SHATTERED WINDOW.

Standing there on the back of a MECHANICAL DRAGON, holding PLASMA SWORD in her right hand, stands JOEY CLAIRE, in her space suit, helmet removed allowing her hair to blow DRAMATICALLY IN THE WIND.

[-12:22]

She jumps onto the deck, captchalogue cards flying into the air and orbiting around her.

[-12:17]

The PLASMA SWORD IGNITES- presenting a BRIGHT BLUE BURST OF LIGHT.

[-12:14]

Then the Captchalogue cards begin spewing out COUNTLESS ARAI BEETLES- rapidly filling the room with the BUZZING SOUND OF TERROR.

The Dragonfly zips away as Joey MARCHES FORWARDS, looking like some kind of personification of some ancient and unknown entity.

And then Joey leaps towards TRIZZA, laser sword swinging down.

[-12:05]

Trizza brings up her TRIDENT TO BLOCK- and for a moment they're STALEMATED... Until Trizza notices the fact that the plasma cutter is CUTTING THROUGH HER TRIDENT'S HANDLE.

Trizza flares out a burst of psionics around the room so as to knock Joey away, and succeeded only in that her burst of psionics FINISHES THE JOB and sends the Mofang Ship plunging permanently into the GROUND BELOW, ending its FORWARDS MOVEMENT entirely.

The sudden change in momentum is enough to force EVERYONE to grab the nearest STABLE OBJECT unless they get hurled out the window- which a few unfortunate Mofang are.

As the momentum slides to a stop, the Mofang Emperor glances at a CONTROL CONSOLE showing THE SOLAR DESTROYER, and he leaps towards the console before anyone else can get a grip on just what he's doing.

[-11:42]
Our view rejoins CALLIE and MIERFA on their own Dragonfly as Callie hurriedly works to SABOTAGE THE CONTROL CRYSTALS on the MOFANG SOLAR DESTROYER. However, her work is interrupted mid-way through as WARNING BUZZERS cry out, and the CARGO BAY DOORS BENEATH THEM begin to SLIDE OPEN, jettisoning RAW ATMOSPHERE into the void.

MORE MOFANG WORKERS hurry to the RING PLATFORM and begin RINGING OUT EN-MASS, some in groups of three, some in groups of five. Mierfa looks to Callie, who hurries up trying to reprogram the TIMER CONTROL CRYSTAL only for the ACCESS SHIELD to the crystal tray to SNAP SHUT on her as the SOLAR DESTROYER is moved into position to launch.

Callie reaches out to try to continue, but Mierfa pulls her back, just in time to watch as the SOLAR DESTROYER is positioned infront of a MASS LAUNCHER, and then--

[-11:11]

It's gone. Launched by GRAVITY WAVES straight towards the sun.

Callie and Mierfa stare, watching as even the SHIP'S SHIELDS disengage to allow it to slip through.

With only the glimmer of GREEN LIGHT pulsing occasionally instead of RED along its lines as hope, Mierfa makes the call to RETURN TO THE MEGASHIP.

And so with the shields for the Cargo ship down, she pilots their Dragonfly back out into the SPACE BATTLE, and flies as fast as PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE back to the BATTLING ROBOT MEGASHIP.

[-10:38]

Back down on the Crashed Emperor's Ship, the control console reports A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH.

Not that the Emperor can CELEBRATE. For he has a LARGE TRIDENT sticking out of his chest, and a HEIRESS' ROYAL FOOT keeping it there as she PRYS OFF the Crystal from his forehead.

[-10:27]

She RIPS the crystal free with her right hand, and then SLAMS it down onto the appropriate spot on the BRACELET on her left wrist, ignoring all of the SWARMING ARAI and the ANGRY JOEY getting back to her feet.

[-10:20]

Trizza turns to grin at Joey- a GRIN that indicates she plans on killing the Human Girl- as she reaches out with her NEW FOUND POWERS and tries to sieze control of Joey's mind while simultaneously retrieving her TRIDENT from the Mofang Emperor's chest.

Joey- MUCH MORE IN TUNE with her Crystals and their powers- however, rebukes that FEEBLE attempt at mind control, and turns it right back around on TRIZZA, causing the Heiress to stumble in her attempt at freeing her weapon.
Joey reignites her PLASMA CUTTER, and begins storming towards Trizza with all the CERTAIN DETERMINATION of a personification of DEATH ITSELF.

Trizza tries to retrieve her weapon again, but it's STUCK.

YOINK. YOINK! YOIIIIINK!! It just won't BUDGE!!

All across the MOFANG FLEET, the LOSS OF MIND CONTROL over them all causes everyone to realize JUST WHAT THE FUCK IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN, and CAPTAINS of working ships begin ordering a MASS EVACUATION.

Some aren't so lucky- as they're BLOWN UP mid attempt to jump to HYPERSPACE by Reavers.

Others with DAMAGED SHIPS, set their RING TRANSPORTS to OVERLOAD and pray that when they send their people THROUGH, they'll reach a planet FAR, FAR away from this soon to be ASHEN SOLAR SYSTEM.

Seeing this MASS RETREAT happening, Dammek wills a TRANSFORMATION, shifting the MEGASHIP back into the SHIP MODE, and orders the surviving CLA’DIAN SHIPS to jump away.

They do such- making clean getaways as Dammek fires the Megaship's LASER CANNON'S at anyone attempting to fire at their escapes.

He won't leave just yet though.

JOEY AND XEFROS are on the planet still, and MIERFA AND CALLIE have only JUST returned to dock in the Megaship's meager HANGER BAY.

Trizza finally pulls her trident free from the Mofang Emperor's bleeding out corpse, swinging it up to BLOCK as Joey swings her cutting sword down- SNAP!! The Trident breaks.

Joey swings upwards before Trizza can even get a LOOK OF HORROR on her face- SEVERING THE HEIRESS' LEFT ARM at the wrist, just behind the BRACELET- sending both ARM AND BRACELET spiralling upwards into the air, where they separate and go different directions.

Joey leaps back into the air, and GRABS the bracelet with her LEFT HAND while Trizza's hand
goes SPLAT against a wall.

The Heiress HOWLS in pain, even as the SKIES BEGIN TO TURN RED.

[-9:08]

Our view returns upwards into space to the SOLAR DESTROYER as it HURTLES TOWARDS THE SUN.

[-8:47]

The Red Lines on the device suddenly are taken over by a pure LIME GREEN as Callie's half-finished programing TAKES EFFECT.

She'd only managed to get half of what she wanted done, well, done. Namely, all she'd accomplished was TRIGGERING THE DETONATION EARLY.

The device spread open, and began GENERATING ITS MINIATURE BLACK HOLE.

It was close enough to the sun to begin SIPHONING OFF MATTER, but it wasn't DIRECTLY ONTOP OF THE SUN as it was supposed to be. The TIME DILATION FIELD kicked in, and across the SOLAR SYSTEM, time began to tick slower without anyone noticing.

Seconds quickly began to stretch into minutes into hours into days, and yet for the people caught within the range of this temporal effect, all they saw was a BLACK HOLE forming suddenly and beginning to SIPHON OUT STELLAR MATTER from the Sun.

Ships tried to jump to Hyperspace, only to be HALTED by the sudden GRAVITATIONAL PULL the Black Hole was creating.

[-7:54]

And then something more Callie had managed kicked in- a half-typed string of code interrupted by launch caused some kind of ELECTRICAL SURGE, spewing out MASSIVE LIGHTNING BOLTS of RED ENERGY.

One of which hit an ALTERNIAN SHIP with a Stargate on board.

[-7:42]

The Stargate's CONTROL SYSTEMS were INSTANTLY FRIED as the Gate suddenly began attempting to make CONNECTIONS- in real time, outside of the time dilation bubble, faster than anyone on the ship could do anything about.

To them, the Gate Activated and Closed and Activated and Closed again and again and again and again and there was nothing they could do as BURST OF SLOWED TIME shot out through the wormholes to all the planets this one Stargate could reach.

[-7:30]

And though INHERENTLY TEMPORARY in nature as those Gate connections would time out- a good 70% of the Galaxy would fall under the sway of A MASSIVELY SLOWED TIME RATE
while the remaining 30% continued at its normal rate.

[-7:23]

And all the while, as the SOLAR DESTROYER absorbed MORE AND MORE MASS from the sun of Karfin Outpost, it shot out MORE AND MORE bursts of ELECTRICAL LIGHTNING, smashing into the ships close enough to it and disabling the ones with shields, while UTTERLY DESTROYING the Reaver ships who ran without CORE CONTAINMENT.

[-7:15]

Someone orders the MEGASHIP into Hyperspace, an act doomed to failure as the PULL OF THE BLACK HOLE and the TIME DILATION FIELD slowed everything down to the point that HYPERSPACE TRAVEL was impossible. Dammek yells at them as such, even attempting it to prove the point that it DOESN'T WORK.

And speaking of that Time Dilation field... the effect became SO SLOWED DOWN as Callie's mangled coding interrupted the core program that time essentially slowed to a CRAWL and, from the perspective of real time....

Seemed to stand still.

[-6:53]

Down at the crashed ship, Xefros' Dragonfly flew forwards at just a slightly faster rate than anything else around him for some reason he wasn't quite sure of and didn't have the time to figure out, but...

He had his suspicions that it had something to do with the OTHER objects moving slowly around in front of him.

The ARAI BEETLES were glowing SO BRIGHTLY, and were SWARMING AROUND JOEY in a rate that would probably have been very beautifully stunning AT NORMAL SPEED.

The Crystals from Joey's NECKLACE and the one attached over her heart WERE FLOATING through the air, hurtling in what likely would have been 'rapid seconds' of normal time.

The Bracelet itself had SPLIT OPEN somehow from within Joey's grasp, and was now MOVING of its own accord to POSITION ITSELF around Joey's left wrist.

As the crystals slowly began re-attaching themselves to their proper places, the bracelet finished hovering into place, and then RESEALED ITSELF around her wrist with a CLACK.

For a moment...

[-6:06]

All was silent.

[-6:03]

And then the Bracelet and the Arai Beetles all exploded with RAINBOW HUED LIGHT, and TIME RESUMED ITS FORWARDS MARCH AT FULL SPEED, ever so slightly LOCALLY.
Rapidly alternating strings of light swirled around Joey- trailing behind the Arai Beetles as they swam in RAPID MOTION.

[5:46]

Back up in space- the SOLAR DESTROYER suddenly began to flare up with LIME GREEN BOLTS OF LIGHTNING- striking out and hitting the MEGASHIP, and freeing it from the TEMPORAL DISTURBANCE.

Dammek's eyes were drawn down to the surface of the planet, watching as a GLEAMING, GOLDEN BURST OF LIGHT formed at the CRASH SITE.

And then- there was a flare of a MINT GREEN SUN BURST ICON against his shades--

[5:30]

The Arai suddenly were CAPTCHALOGUED at once, leaving JOEY floating in place where she'd previously stood- seemingly UNTOUCHED save for the BRIGHT GREEN GLOW in her eyes and the GOLDEN ENERGY ARAI WINGS sprouting from her back.

Trizza stared on in shock and confusion and horror as Joey suddenly leaped backwards out the window and landed on the Dragonfly.

"GO!" She yells to Xefros as she puts her helmet back on, and he PUNCHES IT- launching the Dragonfly BACK UP INTO ORBIT.

[5:15]

Time slowed to a halt around them as they FLEW SO VERY FAST, heading straight to that one ALTERNIAN SHIP with the Stargate on it, drawn there by the simple fact that that was where Xefros FELT they needed to go.

[5:00]

They flew in through a hole in the ship- locating the ACTIVE STARGATE, which JOEY CAPTCHALOGUES in a heartbeat, palming the card in hand as they FLY BACK OUT- hurtling towards the sun and the BLACK HOLE consuming it.

They stare at the SOLAR DESTROYER for a moment- caught inbetween ticks of the clock at a distant orbit from the sun, still not quite having touched down.

Joey pulls back with the Captcha card-

[4:45]

And then she FLINGS the STARGATE out of the Card straight at the SOLAR DESTROYER like a FRISBEE.

CLANG! The Gate collides with the OUTER FRAME of the Destroyer and KNOCKS IT FREE of its time dilation- causing the BLACK HOLE to start to FIZZLE OUT as the entirety of the Destroyer and the Stargate SPLASH DOWN into the surface of the sun.
With TIME suddenly starting to SPEED UP, Xefros pilots the Dragonfly back to the MEGASHIP's cargo hold.

They park with ease, and Joey takes off past Mierfa and Callie for the ENGINE ROOM.

She finds a place next to the MASSIVE ENGINE, and begins reaching out with the powers of the BRACELET to POWER THE ENGINE more than it could ever power itself on its own.

Dammek sees the POWER LEVELS RISING RAPIDLY, and channels that into a HYPERSPACE JUMP.

The STARGATE melts within the sun's FIRE, and EXPLODES- taking away the SOLAR DESTROYER with it, and fueling a NEW NUCLEAR REACTION within the star- causing it to start to colapse down into a TINY BALL OF GREEN LIGHT.

And then it EXPLODES- slowly pushing forwards and erasing the TIME DILATION field second by second as it marches forwards AS A MASSIVE BALL OF GREEN FUCKING FIRE, one that consumes EVERY SHIP CAUGHT UP IN ITS PATH with MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS that are TINY compared to the might of a SUPER NOVA.

But the power directed to the hyperdrive engines aren't enough- the Megaship is still caught up in a GRAVITY WELL.

And so Joey uses the power of the YELLOW CRYSTAL to grab the Megaship and THROW IT CLEAR of the gravity well.

And thus did Dammek watch as a HYPERSPACE WINDOW washed over his eyes and glasses.

But it just wasn't enough- some front running wave portion of the SUPER NOVA had caught up to them and was trailing them THROUGH THE HYPERSPACE WINDOW- getting progressively closer and closer and closer.

And so Joey pushed them ahead faster and faster AND FASTER.

Hours later, and yet seconds earlier, Trizza had dragged herself to KARFIN OUTPOST'S STARGATE, and she began DIALING in an attempt to escape, frighteningly AWARE of the WALL OF GREEN DOOM hurtling down towards the planet from above.

Faster- Faster-
Both Heiress and Human thought as they pushed for escape FASTER AND FASTER AND FASTER.

[-3:10]

BUT IT WAS ENOUGH! Joey cracked a Grin as she put on one FINAL BURST OF SPEED, and the Hyperspace bound MEGASHIP ROCKETED AWAY from the Wave of the Super Nova just as its flames BARELY licked the edges of the engine emitters.

[-3:03]

BUT WAS IT ENOUGH? Trizza held her breath as she pressed the SEVENTH GLYPH and ran for the Gate even as the BURNING WALL OF GREEN FUCK OFF FIRE started to CONSUME KARFIN OUTPOST'S ATMOSPHERE.

And seconds later, the entire planet was CONSUMED.

[-2:52]

Seconds after that, the last of the TIME DILATION BUBBLE shattered, and as the rest of the SOLAR SYSTEM was obliterated WITHIN A HEARTBEAT--

[-2:39]

--The GREEN LIGHT FROM THE SUPER NOVA shot across the galaxy in the form of a RADIATING STAR BURST SHAPED ICON as time in the galaxy rapidly began to CATCH UP with the rest of the universe.

And for several moments, all was silent.

[-2:29]

Then, the BURST OF LIGHT glared against SCRATCH'S HELMET.

The SPACE SUIT WEARING PUPPET SIZED MAN clenched his fists as he felt the RADIATING WAVES of a TIME DIFFERENCE occur.

He should not be seeing this light at this moment, he realizes. He shouldn't be seeing it for SEVERAL MORE YEARS.

[-2:17]

Meanwhile, the EMPRESS HERSELF looks up in surprise as a PINPRICK OF GREEN LIGHT adds itself to the MASSIVE WALL OF STARS infront of her.

And she realizes in a heartbeat that the MOFANG HAD DONE IT.

Karfin Outpost is really GONE.

[-2:05]

Our view suddenly SHOOTS OUT OF THE GALAXY, following behind a SUPER CHARGED
MATTER TRANSPORT BEAM from a MOFANG SHIP that's heading out, OUT of its normal transmission range- a supercharged SUPER CHARGED beam that gained EXTRA RANGE thanks to the DETONATION OF A STAR.
The beam GRAZES a certain MILKY WAY GALAXY- dropping off TWO of its three passengers onto TWO GOA'ULD SPACE SHIPS heading for EARTH- and then continues onwards out of that galaxy into ANOTHER ONE, where it finally terminates on a planet overrun by MECHANICAL LOCUST.

[1:54]
There, the poor, unfortunate Mofang assassin that arrived was SWARMED by the creatures, and his sword... oh his transforming WEAPONIZED SWORD was absorbed by the beasts- giving them access to a NEW SHAPE and a NEW FORM and NEW WAYS from which they could REPLICATE.

[1:39]
Our view shoots back to the MILKY WAY, briefly watching as the two Mofang there are DISPATCHED as we know they would be, and then BACK FURTHER to ALTERNIA'S GALAXY- past the ENRAGED SCRATCH- past the EMPRESS who realized she SHOULD HAVE ACTUALLY NEGOTIATED- and then back to ALTERNIA ITSELF.

[1:22]
Down in the ALL YOUR BASE, several MONTHS LATER, OKURII LEIJON is staring up at the night sky as a GREEN FLARE appears among the stars, but is quickly washed out by a sudden burst of RED AND BLUE as-

[1:13]
The MEGASHIP emerges from HYPERSPACE above Alternia's orbit- hull SCORCHED and SMOKING, but very much intact.

On its bridge, Dammek and the rest of the crew cry out in RELIEF.

In the engine room, Xefros, Mierfa, and Callie barge in and all pull a TRIUMPHANT JOEY CLAIRE into a hug as they CELEBRATE SIMPLY SURVIVING.

[1:00]
Joey looks down at her COMPLETED BRACELET and can't help but laugh at her own future self's words:

"'Shenanigans' alright."

All seven crystals gleam in sequence- RED to PURPLE- as the Bracelet ACCEPTS and CONFIRMS the NEW HEIRESS to the Throne.

[0:47]
Deep down in Alternia's Oceans... the ROYAL LUSUS awakens, sensing the REUNION of the Bracelet pieces, and PULSES ITS OWN ACCEPTANCE of the new Heiress.
That PULSE travels across the GALAXY, striking three individuals with the NEWS.

SCRATCH, who shakes his OBSCURED HELMETED HEAD with laughter.

The EMPRESS MEENAH, who clutches at her HEART as she feels a feeling SHE NEVER WANTED TO FEEL AGAIN in a MILLION YEARS...

And the FORMER HEIRESS, TRIZZA, who yells out in frustration as she feels her HARD EARNED POWERS slipping away from her as she collapses against the STARGATE hidden among the mountains of some ALIEN PLANET.

[-0:24]

And thus as the MEGASHIP LANDS on Alternia's desert surface outside of the ALL YOUR BASE, the people of ALTERNIA can FEEL it within their bones. Something that hasn't happened SINCE the time of the SUMMONER is HAPPENING AGAIN.

Someone has the PROPER ABILITY to Challenge the EMPRESS for the throne.

ALTERNIA'S EMPIRE is in it's FINAL DAYS, and the CURTAINS....

[-0:11]

ARE CLOSING.

END OF ACT 2.

Chapter End Notes

At least ONE more chapters will be written for this ACT 2 section of the story- an intermission/set up phase for Alternia's side of things going forwards- and then we'll move on to ACT 3 as a new story file, starting with the next immediate SG-1 chapter.

Notes on this chapter: Time Dilation SUCKS when it gets applied to a galaxy wide scale.

Meenah has NO CLUE who reassembled the bracelet, but she's SURE going to assume it was the MOST RECENT HEIRESS she's aware of- and that's TRIZZA. Whoops! Scratch is assuming it's the BLOOD PLAYER he sensed... And Trizza is just PISSED OFF.
ALT:02X09: Intermission 1: Decompression.

Chapter Summary

The Team returns home and try to relax.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"So let me get this straight." Your name is XEFROS TRITOH. "In the MINUTES it took me and Joey to retrieve the Blue Crystal and Bracelet. The Bomb Dropped Early with unfinished programming, and caused a whole TEMPORAL ANOMALLY that SOMEHOW spread through the Stargates across most of the Galaxy, and it was only BECAUSE Callie had programmed up a second sub network for the Gates that prevented outside dialing... that Alternia and Diaspora- and every other planet we modified the DHDs of with this programming, for that matter. That none of that?? Ended up getting slowed down at all??"

"That's... about the gist of it, yes," Okurii Leijon nods.

"...How long?" Joey Claire asks. "How long were we stuck?"

"Well," Okurii begins, "we're not entirely sure on the exact length of time. We didn't even start keeping track until we realized we couldn't reach certain planets for a solid week straight. But, let me put it this way, in one month, from MY chronological perspective, it will be almost exactly one Alternian Solar Sweep since we crashed the All Your Base to begin with."

"One... solar sweep?" Joey breathes out. "It's been two years since I came to Alternia?"

"Well," Dammek says, "that's... uh... that's a hell of a lot longer than it seemed like to me."

"Same here," You agree. "It had to be like... ten, fifteen minutes tops that we were down on Karfin's surface."

"Eh, it was more like thirty eight minutes to me," Dammek says.

"About twenty for us," Mierfa Durgas says, motioning to her and Callie.

"The hell?" you frown.

"Time is relative when we're dealing with Mofang Tech suffering a critical failure," Okurii supplies. "I think we can all agree that we spent exactly as much time as necessary on this battle and not a second more?"

There are nods all around.

"Soo..." Okurii looked around at everyone, then smiled brightly. "I'm just glad you all made it back in one piece."
There's a general murmur of AGREEMENT from everyone else after that.

Your name is DAMMEK, and you're tired of ANSWERING QUESTIONS about the handling of the MEGASHIP'S SYSTEMS.

You never thought you'd actually PILOT THE DAMNED THING, and while you had SO MUCH UNBELIEVABLE FUN doing it... a lot of that feels just as BURRIED under the pile of questions like "Okay, so it 'handles like a dream,' could you quantify that?"

Stupid Science-y Folk and their stupid questions that never-

You stop your train of thought as well as your forwards locomotion the moment you pass by a certain room and it's open door.

You peer inside, and see THE MUSE... no... Callie. Just Callie. There's no titles here in this situation. She's just sitting there in sleep wear on the edge of her Recupprecoon, head held in her hands, and lime colored tears slipping out from between her fingers.

You stand there, not really sure what to say... or do... or... or...

You're tempted to just turn and leave.

But then you remember her disappearing, and the motive behind that and...

"Hey," you start, voice quiet. But it's enough to make the girl jerk up to attention and look at you in surprise.

"Da...Dammek?" She asks, blinking, voice sounding watery. She sniffs. "Wha... what do you need?"

"I was going to ask you that, actually," you say. "Box of tissues? Food? Something to drink?" You pause, not sure to add what you want to add but... Damn it, you. "Shoulder to rant to?"

"That... that'd be nice, yes," Callie nods, sniffing again. "Tissues, too. Please?"

"Be right back," you say, and go to fetch a box of tissues from a supply crate someone had parked at the end of the hallway. You've torn it open and already prepared a few for immediate handing to Callie by the time you've returned.

She's moved off of the Recuprecoon and onto a sofa, but looks no less miserable. You wonder where her Lusus is?

"So..." You say, hesitantly closing the door behind you. "Everything ok?"

"No," Callie says, and her voice is watery still. You hand her the first tissue and she blows her nose to try to clear it. "I screwed up again."

"What?" You blink beneath your shades. "Like hell you did."
"I failed to disarm it!" she says, slumping her shoulders down in defeat. "I... All I accomplished was making a bigger problem than what we already had. I made the entire GALAXY slow to a crawl, Dammek!!"

"More like 70% of the Galaxy..." You correct, and she shoots you an ANNOYED GLANCE. You hastily add, "But hey, who's counting? Sure, the whole galaxy. Continue?"

"..." She sighs. "I just... I screwed up. We all almost died because of what I did."

"Honestly," you say, "you probably gave us more time than we'd have had otherwise."

"...What?" Callie asks, frowning at you. "But my programming--!"

"Made the Bomb go off early and park itself outside of the sun," you say. "It made time slow to a halt, sure, but it did it in a way that bought us TIME. You didn't launch it, the Mofang Emperor did! You made it go off in just exactly the right way so that it worked out BEST for US!"

"But-" Callie tries to protest so you SHOOSH her by putting a finger over her mouth.

"You did the best you could, Callie!" You tell her. "Short of ripping out wires or crystals at random, what else could you have done?"

"...I..." Callie frowns as she brushes you finger away from her mouth. "I suppose... That's true. And ripping out the crystals could have just caused it to go off right then and there in the ship."

"Don't make things so hard for yourself, okay?" You say. "That's my job on this team. I'm the guy making things hard for everyone else."

"I... I guess it is," she giggles at you, the genuine amusement at your statement washing away some of that self doubt. "Still..."

"Nope. Nothing 'still' about it, Callie," you tell her. "Tetrarch's orders. Stop worrying about it. You did everything you needed to do, and we all got home safe and sound."

"...But I-"

You take off your sunglasses and look her in the eyes. There are minor flecks of GREEN forming in her grey irises "Don't. Make me. Pap you."

"You wouldn't!" She cries out indignantly.

You reach out your right hand, and hover it dangerously over her left cheek. "Just try me," you say. For several moments your eyes are locked.

For those several moments, your brain finally catches up with what the hell you've been doing and the gears start screeching to a halt. Okurii did say you need a Moirail but it seems a little IN BAD TASTE to try and fill that role for someone else when you're the one in need of it that-

Well.
It's cliche as hell to say the least.

You will your hand to move away but it doesn't. It just sticks there floating, hovering, wavering ever so slightly closer and you-

Your head feels kind of fuzzy and oh what the hell are you trying to do comforting her? She needs someone who isn't YOU, specifically, damn it, if you say the wrong thing at the wrong time this whole house of cards come tumbling down and--

And the panic must have been showing on your face or in your eyes or SOMETHING because Callie reaches up and grabs your hand with hers, whispering, ever so quietly, "Oh, Dammek. You don't have to force yourself if you don't really want any of this."

You try to say something, anything, but your whole body just sort of feels like it's locked in place and your head is getting REALLY FUZZY AND AND AND AND-

"Dammek?" Callie frowns at you, but despite how close she is and the fact that she's still holding your hand she sounds like she's miles away. "Dammek??"

Your left arm twitches at your side, uselessly.

AND NOW YOU'RE PANICKING MORE ABOUT THIS THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

Why can't you move/think straight?? You can't--?

THWUMP.

"DAMMEK!!"

---

Your name is CALLIE OHPHEE and of all the things that could possibly happen, DAMMEK has suddenly just COLLAPSED.

"JOEY! XEFROS! SOMEONE! ANYONE!" You call out. "HELP! BRING HELP! DAMMEK'S FAINTED!"

You kneel down and place your hand against Dammek's throat to feel for a pulse and oh.

OH WOW, IS THAT A FAST PULSE!!

"Dammek! C'mon, wake up! DAMMEK!!"

Your name is Callie Ohphee and you're feeling MIGHTY CONCERNED for your friend.

---

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you're sitting infront of your CAMERA AGAIN.

The RECORDING LIGHT is pulsing ORANGE, indicating that it's ready to record, but not yet recording.
You steel yourself, and reach up to press the recording button.

"Hey, Jude, hey Pa. Sorry... sorry I took so long getting back to you. It's... it's been a really... really... long year, I guess." You frown. "Callie's working out the exact math here, but, it's almost been a full two years since I came to Alternia. One Solar Sweep. I... I can't believe it." You shake your head. "It seems like it all went by in a blur so fast that..." You take a steeling breath. "It felt like it was over in minutes." You hold up the bracelet. "We screwed up so bad. Mission... half failed, half succeeded. We've got all the pieces to the Bracelet, but everything else... We didn't stop the Mofang Bomb from going off, and we have no idea HOW the Sorian Empire is going to react going forwards. Time's still a little... slow in the rest of the galaxy at the moment."

You close your eyes, and lean back against the wall.

"Slow. Heh. It's kind of funny thinking about that. Seconds to minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days, days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year..." You open your eyes, looking at the camera. "Jude, whatever you do... please don't go messing around with Black Holes and Time Dilation, okay? It's not fun. It's not fun at all."

You pause, then start it again.

"Hey, Roxy?" you begin, "Can I ask you a science question?" You pause, waiting for a response that isn't there. 'Sure thing, Jojo!' being the most likely one. "So... Okay. I got the bracelet, and I know what the hell happened to me when I did." You point to PURPLE on your wrist. "This one activated and added some of the Arai Polyarch Genetics into my own D.N.A. which, yeah, I get that part. But..."

You SUMMON FORTH your NEWLY MINTED ARAI WINGS of PURE GOLDEN ENERGY.

"These!? How the hell do THESE even carry my own body weight!? They're not even ATTACHED TO MY OWN BACK!" you turn around, and then run a hand inbetween your back and where the wings emerge- clearly, or at least you hope clearly, demonstrating that they aren't even ATTACHED to your body like you'd expect wings normally would. "HOW!?" you turn back around, staring at the camera. "And I get it for the Arai Beetles, and even the Polyarchs! Their bodies are DESIGNED for this shit! The beetles don't even WEIGH that much! And the Fey was bigger than me, certainly, but she was also LIGHTER too!! I just don't GET IT!?" You hang your head in shame. "I haven't lost any weight or Gained any for that matter! So how does it work, Roxy!? I... I just don't get it." You look at the camera as you fold your wings away and smile hopefully to the camera. "Could you, uh... run the math for me and figure out how the hell this even works?"

That's when you hear Callie scream, and you quickly shut off the camera and run off to help.

You find her in her room, with a passed out Dammek on the floor.

"Joey! Please!" Callie looks you in the eyes. "He just fainted! His heart's racing and a I don't know what to do and and and-!"

You kneel down and use the power of THE PURPLE CRYSTAL to look at Dammek's Biology and...
Oh.

Oh geeze. That's not good at all.

The Purple Crystal tells you his heart rate is running way too high and his brain is practically flooded with SOMETHING you can't even spell let alone pronounce and don't know what it even DOES! (That's REAL USEFUL information, Purple Crystal! VERY USEFUL! SO USEFUL, IN FACT, IT WRAPS ALL THE WAY BACK AROUND TO BE USELESS!!!) So you quickly tap into ADMINISTRATION in conjunction with Purple to try and force Dammek's vitals to stabilize. It works for the moment, but you can tell that the moment you STOP, he's just going to revert back into his frenzied state because you're not fixing the ROOT CAUSE of the problem and you can't tell WHAT THE HELL THE ROOT CAUSE EVEN IS.

"Callie!" You look to her, "Go find someone from medical and bring some tranquilizers. I'll keep him stable until you get back!"

And so with a nod, Callie runs off to go do just that.

It's a long, tense, two minutes before she returns with a Nurse, and you're able get Dammek stable without you using your cheaty bracelet powers as a crutch. From there, he's moved to the ship's med bay, and after that point, all that can be done is let the PROFESSIONALS take a look at him.

By the time Xefros joins you two in the med-bay, nothing's changed except Callie's gotten into another one of her worried, 'It's my fault' states. All you and Xef can do is just give her a hug and tell her that everything will be alright and that Dammek will be fine...

But you have no idea if that will be the case or not.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to end this one on a cliff hanger. >_<

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