ACT 6 ACT 2: Beyond the Night.
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ACT 6 ACT 2: Beyond the Night.

by calumTraveler

Summary

Your name is JOHN SHEPPARD.

You're about to do something either incredibly stupid or incredibly brave...

No. You're pretty sure that you know exactly what kind of boneheaded move this is.

"This Is Stupid!"

Notes

>>NEW READERS! LOOK HERE! OLD READERS, WELCOME BACK! YOU CAN SKIP THIS!!<<

This Part 9 of what's I'm estimating to be a 14 part series. Nearing the end stretch now. Heh. If you're intrigued by this, I'd highly recommend going to start back at the beginning even if you're not much of a fan of Stargate or Homestuck. I've done my best to make sure that this story is approachable from all angles and all points of entry as best as I can.

That said, if you're continuing on without wanting to go into the backlog, I can perfectly understand that, but you *really* should go back atleast one Act to Act 6 Act 1, because this is going to pick up right off of a cliffhanger from that. So then, that said, here's a list of...

THINGS TO KNOW!

Hiveswap/Homestuck: Non SBURB A.U. Everything else- Powers, Time Shenanigans, and Ectobiology- has been put to use. Important details will be re-mentioned as necessary, but to TL;DR the important stuff for Atlantis: Jade Jackson is Jade Harley, Argo Lalonde is Davepetasprite, and John Sheppard is John Egbert. Trolls from Hiveswap are basically any Alternian you might run into at this point. And NO, the Skaianet website lore from January of 2019 is *NOT* canon to this timeline, as it just flat out doesn't mesh with the timeline of this universe/setting no matter what you cherry pick from it. That means no Calamity either, sorry folks.

Stargate-Verse: Generally follows the Series timeline, but things have gone off the rails in places. Current SG-1 team roster is... not at all canon, though. Cameron Mitchel, Jonas Quinn, Jude Harley, and Cassandra Fraiser. ORI are *DEAD. DEAD. DEAD.*

Obduction: Not on the series tag this act but basically there are no Space Pineapples, and their version of Earth is not in play. Meanwhile, elements of the other three Alien Races, the Mofang, Villein, and Arai Beetles, have been included and will likely show up at various points, or atleast be background mentions.

Sword Art Online: Aincrad exists not as a game, but as a physical location in a Parallel
Universe. Alfheim similarly exists as a parallel world, and I'm sure the world of GGO likely exists as well in some places though we haven't yet touched on THAT in story yet! Pertinent details relevant to that side of things have been scarce, and what has been touched on previously will be re-examined in the Act 6 side of things as we go forwards.

Fate Franchise: Basically Artoria Pendragon was SG1!Earth's King Arthur, and was aided by SG1's Merlin/Morgan. She is presently in frozen, suspended animation on Earth. Mordred is still her daughter/son through shenanigans as of yet unexplained, and is presently Ascended. This stuff is gonna replace the ORI arc.

Other Minor Things: If you see an Alternian or Human or even a whole *concept* like Megazords or Mobile suits and it seems to be exported wholesale or expy-ized from another setting, it's 99.9% certainly me making a reference to that setting while not entirely importing it wholesale as a parallel universe. Included among this has been a couple characters lifted from RWBY, as an example, who have had some minor recurring roles. Basically, not things majorly present enough for me to feel like they belong on the fandom tags... Yet.

CHAPTER HEADERS AND TAGS:

SG1: Chapters that would fall under the SG-1 TV series production order.
SGA: Chapters that would fall under the Atlantis TV series production order.
ALT: Chapters that would fall under the "Alternia" series production order, if it were a TV series. Primarily with a Homestuck/Hiveswap focus.
MIR: Mirror-verse Chapters that focus on events in a Parallel World, or a universe accessed through the Quantum Mirror.
INTERMISSION: Any chapter with this basically falls inbetween the cracks of the above.
INTERVIEW: A chapter that has an Interview as its primary focus. (Might not feature much these days. LOL)
MINISODE: A single snipit or scene that, for various reasons, would otherwise be left on the Cutting Room Floor.
Your name is no longer important. You are but a clone- a paradox existing disconnected from your original existence.

It does not matter who you were or what you used to be doing...

That life, twice over, is gone and dead.

And so you exist now in the here and now, orphaned from all context, rocketing at speed towards a fight you are not guaranteed to win.

A rift in space changes the balance of power within the universe, and you... you have to consider your next move carefully.

You've lost all power, and you've lost all credibility.

You're a coin in the air, flipping, twisting, waiting until it lands.

Your name is...

Chapter End Notes

Fun Minigame: See if you can guess what character is the perspective focus for this chapter! The old Goa'uld that used to be in Kinsey? An Asgard? Ba'al clones?? Someone completely unexpected?? Place your bets in the comments down below!

The Siege Part 3 goes live Monday. :33 See you guys then!
Chapter Summary


Chapter Notes

REMINDER: If you're confused and think you've missed Part 2 of "The Siege," it is *the literal last chapter* of Act 6 Act 1. If you missed reading it somehow, it is *there.* AND if you are a reader who is coming into this story fresh and haven't read anything yet, you're going to want to read atleast A6A1, if not anything from before it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

**EARTH DATE: AUGUST 6TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 02/14/0005.**

"DEFENSE!" Your name is Aiden Ford, and your team is surrounded by Wraith.

The firefight that ensues is fast and furious.

Somehow, you wind up disarmed and held to a railing by a Wraith. Tunnel vision sets in and all you can see is the damned mask leering at you before your shirt and vest is ripped open and-

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!! **GOD THAT HURTS!!!**

A second later there's a sudden flash of flame and a jolt of motion and metal cracking against your back and you don't feel any pain at all.

What the hell?

Is... is that the ocean coming up to-?

**SPLASH!**

The Camera pulls back, twists through the maze of the City's Spires, and ducks into a building as Darts rush past.
Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you fire off your P-90 at the last twitching hand of a Wraith soldier with a huff.

"Keiko, Mallek?" You turn to face them. "You okay?"

"Yeah," Keiko says as she and he are getting up from behind a tumbled desk. A Laptop lays shattered on the floor. "We're good."

You go for your radio, "This is Tyzias, we got ambushed by Wraith. What's the situation?"

The camera twists out around the city spires once more, twisting and turning before settling on another exterior facing balcony.

WHA~A~A~A~A~A~A~A~A~ANM!

Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and you swear as you shoot down another Wraith. You take to the Radio, trying to reply, only to find that it got busted in the fight. "My radio's down, Teyla. What about you?"

"Same," she answers. "My radio is damaged as well."

"Shit, and we got separated from the others," You shake your head. "Fuck it, retreat to Tyzias' position."

"Right," she nods.

The camera pulls sideways, and then down a few levels.

Colonel Everett was unable to reply on the radio just that moment, fighting with a Wraith as he was. Shooting the Commander repeatedly in the chest until he ran out of bullets.

And then the Wraith grabbed him and started to feed on him.

Years were rapidly taken away from the Colonel...

Until an injured Marine managed to take a shot.

The Camera yoinks backwards, and upwards past a balcony with rail guns firing at the Wraith Darts, before spiraling around and dashing towards the upper most levels of the central spire.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you gladly radio back, "Tyzias. What's the progress on the Shields and the Chair?"

"Don't know," she answers, "our computers got busted in the fire fight. Last I checked, the shield is going to come online in five minutes or less."
"Atlantis, this is Shepard," a voice interjects between your conversation. "I'm on my final approach. They haven't noticed. Warhead is armed and set to detonate in two minutes."

Shit.

"Wait, what?" Tyzias asks. "Is he flying a Jumper into the Wraith hives on his OWN!?"

"Yes, yes he is," you answer.

The camera yoinks back, up and out of the Atlantis tower, and upwards, and upwards, and upwards yet still, out through the Atmosphere before entering space and then traveling through the shimmer of air of the Cloaked Jumper's back end and then past the nuclear bomb, and through the front hatch, and into the cockpit of the Jumper.

Major John Sheppard sits at the seat, eyes narrowing in determination as the Jumper gets closer and closer to the Hiveship's hangar bay.

And then the radio buzzes with an unfamiliar voice.

"Major Sheppard, De-cloak your jumper immediately."

John frowns. "What? Who the hell is this?"

"Authentication code Alpha Charlie One. De-cloak NOW."

The Camera pulls out of the Jumper, and the view shows the ship shimmer back into existence...

Then, the camera falls- descending towards the surface of the planet again- keeping an eye on the Hiveship, even as Chuck narrates, "Detonation in five, four, three, two..."

And then the bomb detonates and the Hiveship explodes and a brilliant flash of light illuminates the sky above Atlantis.

The camera settles back down into the Atlantis Control Room, as Chuck confirms, "Target has been destroyed."

"He did it," Rose mourns as she enters the room from the Jumper Bay stairs.

"He did," Mikari sighs.

"Miss Aiikho-" Chuck interjects suddenly. "I'm picking up another ship!

"Another Wraith hive?" Mikari asks.

"No," Chuck shakes his head. "I'm reading I.F.F."

And then-

"Atlantis, this is Sheppard."
"John!" Rose squeals before letting out a whoop. "YOU MADE IT!"

"Oh thank god," Mikari sighs in relief.

"How?" Rose asks.

The Camera then leaps back upwards into space - trailing past the flaming debris of the Wraith Hiveship, and zooming in towards the BC-304 DAEDALUS, flaking the remaining Hiveships, and opening fire like the Cavalry it is.

Your name is John Sheppard, and you crack a smile as you stare out the window of the Daedalus' bridge. "Oh, I just stuck out my thumb and caught a ride with some friends."

"Colonel Steven Caldwell, Commander of the Daedalus," the commander of the ship says with a grin as he takes his seat. "We are ready and able to lend assistance. We were monitoring your transmissions the moment we came out of hyperspace, but we couldn't beam him in until he decloaked his jumper."

"Didn't take much convincing," you say.

"You're lucky this is still the Alpha Timeline John!" Rose exclaims over the radio. "If Jade doesn't kill you, I will!!"

"Duely noted," you say.

"All forward railguns, stand by, launch all fighters," Caldwell orders. "Ruby Lancer, Ruby Booster, you are Go For Launch."

And then two familiar voices echo out an "Yes Sir!" over the radio, and you watch as two tiny ships colored red launch out of a 302 bay.

"What the hell are those?" you ask.

"A new tech development the Cla'dians have been working on," Caldwell answers. "They're miniature Megaships that form into a miniature Megazord. As of yet unnamed, but I hear Tegiri Kalbur put forward the prototype name of 'Mobile Suits.'"

And you watch as the two odd ships race through the field of Wraith Darts along with their 302 sized breatheren, obliterating the Darts with ease, and thus clearing the path for the Daedalus to make its way closer and closer towards the planet below.

The Hiveships and the Cruisers move to intercept.

"Sir," a pilot whose namebadge reads KLEINMAN speaks up. "We have incoming enemy fighters bearing three-two-zero."

"Well, let's give them a show then, shall we?" Caldwell inquires, a savage grin forming on his face.
Admittedly, you're a little weirded out.

The spear-headed ship ignited twin plasma blades out from its sides, and then spun rapidly as it rocket-boosted through a wave of Wraith Darts. That'd be the 'Ruby Lancer' you guess.

The one that looked like a pair of legs folded up and turned sideways- the 'Ruby Booster' probably-projected a massive force field in front of itself, one that spread high enough and far enough in all directions to allow a full squadron of F-302s to formation around it and fire off through the field against Wraith Darts and Cruisers alike.

The Daedalus meanwhile fired off burst after burst of supporting and cover fire.

You're still John Sheppard, and you can't help but stare at the sheer confusion the Wraith have had brought upon their fleet.

"Novak, have you been able to get a lock on the core of the first Hiveship?" Caldwell inquires.

Over the ship radio, a woman replies, "No, sir, it seems the Wraith Hives run a form of teleportation jamming specifically tailored to the Asgard beam tech."

You hear an Asgard remark, also over the radio, "This is quite the conundrum I must puzzle over later."

"Fine, then," Caldwell says. "Forget the beaming bomb run, switch tactics and warm up our next surprise."

"Powering up Frontal Hyper Laser canons," The Asgard says.

"Hyper' Laser canons?" You ask, glancing at Caldwell.

He smirks. "You'll see."

You look out the window, as Kleinman reports, "Front Laser Array powered up and ready to fire."

"Kleinman, make that first Hiveship go away," Caldwell orders.

**PCHZYOOOOOOOOOOOM!**

And then a beam of purple energy- flickering red and blue on the edges- lances out and smashes into the nose of the Second Wraith hiveship.

It spears through the whole thing in a single burst, and then-

A rapid fire line of explosions runs through the Hiveship from nose to rear, followed by a single
massive explosion that takes it out completely.

"Target Destroyed," Kleinman reports.

"Take us around and take aim at the second Hiveship," Caldwell orders. "Rubys, form up at your discretion and take out the rest.

"'Hyper' as in 'Hyperbeam'?" You ask, turning around to ask Caldwell.

He just smirks, and says, "Time Travel, Major. Time Travel."

"Let me guess, part of the loop where me and Jade save SG-1 and SG-10?" You ask.

Caldwell's answer is a coy, silent smile as he then gives the order to target the remaining Hiveship, and 'make it go away even harder than the last one.'

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you manage to get a laptop online and connected and checking the shield subroutines...

"Shit, it got interrupted..." you swear, and hurry hurry hurry on bringing it back online at the place where it got stopped.

There's a growl from down the hallway- a Wraith growl.

"Shiiit," Mallek hisses in return, reloading his P-90. "How much ammo we got left?"

"Not nearly enough," Keiko answers, readying her gun.

And then you hear the sound of brutal violence of a sword and gun-fight based kind.

Then, you also hear a magic spell, so you look up.

There's a huge flash of light from outside the ZPM lab's broken down door, and then you see a Wraith go flying by on the shockwave of a massive fireball.

That's when Silica walks into view, accompanied by Teyla and-- "Daraya!" You grin.

"Sup?" your Matesprit grins.

"Shit! RIGHT!" You quickly get back to typing.

You are now Keiko Ayano, given Tyzias' pre-occupied state.

"Silica! Where the hell have you been??" You pout.

"Went Wraith Hunting, got separated from my team, ran into Daraya and Teyla," your twin answers. "Taged along to come over here."
"We could use all the help we can get," Mallek says. "We're running low on ammo."

"Same here," Daraya says, checking her reserves. "Teyla?"

"I am similarly running low," Teyla answers.

"I saw a couple of big booms from the sky, though, so I think plan Jumper is going well?" Daraya smiles.

"The chair wasn't working," you tell her. "We got ambushed right after we were told that, though, so I have no idea what happened if the Jumpers aren't in the air. Maybe the Daedalus arrived?"

"That'd be great timing if that's the case," Silica says.

"Hopefully that is the case," Teyla says. "Reinforcements would be gladly welcome."

PCHZYOOOOOOOOOM!

**BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!**

**KAAAAA-BOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!**

The third Wraith Hiveship went bye-bye.

"Alright, let's clean up the stragglers and-" Caldwell's orders are cut off as the remaining carriers and cruisers break for hyperspace.

"They're running," Caldwell says.

"Well, after what we just did to their Hiveships..." You're still John Sheppard, and you smile. "I would too."

"The Darts are breaking formation as well," Kleinman reports. "They're... Oh god, they're heading for the City. Ballistic Trajectory."

"Atlantis, Daedalus," Caldwell radios, "The Darts are breaking on course for Atlantis on a Ballistic Trajectory. Raise your shields now."

"What's ballistic?" Mikari asks.

"Their impact velocities will be in excess of ten thousand kilometers an hour," Kleinman answers.

"No part of the City can survive that," you realize. "Atlantis, you need to raise the shields, NOW!"

"Tyzias! We need those shields!" Mikari radios on, probably, multiple frequencies at once.

"She's working on it!" Keiko answers in Tyzia's stead.

"Can we move to intercept?" You ask.
"We're already moving, but we can't make it fast enough," Kleinman says. "Even the Lancer and Booster combined couldn't reach fast enough."

"Forty-five seconds!" Chuck's voice radios.

"C'monC'monC'mon!" Tyzias mutters as she rapidly keeps pressing the enter key on the keyboard to try and make program run faster.

You're still Keiko, and you turn to Silica- "Could we phase the city like we did with Aincrad??"

"Thirty Seconds!"

"There's not enough time for the full chant!" Silica shakes her head.

Well, then.

You turn to Mallek and say, "If we don't make it-" before grabbing him and kissing him.

"Twenty Seconds!"

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you stand on the balcony, watching as the rain storm of fireballs rains down from the heavens, waiting for either the end or...

KREEEEEEEEEEEE!!!

A wall of pearl-colored energy rises up around the city- doming over head and forming into place just moments before a barrage of explosions rocks across the City's shield.

You exhale in relief.

"Tyzias, you can take the day off," Mikari radios a minute later.

"She's, uh, already napping, ma'am," your name is Daraya Jonjet, and you sigh in relief as you gently stroke at Tyzias' hair as you settle her head down in your lap. "We could use a pick up from Rose. If she's available?"

"I'll send her right over," Mikari says.

You look over at Keiko and Mallek, still smooching, unaware that the danger's passed, and then over at Silica- grinning like a loon- and Teyla, who just looks as tired as everyone else.

Then, a POP-WOOSH, and Rose appears to start teleporting people to safety.

PVVVVMMMMMM-SHING!!
Your name is Jade Jackson, and you smile as John teleports in from the Daedalus along with a group of Marines.

"Secure Stargate Ops, and start spreading out through the city from there," John orders the Marines, then calls out- "I'm home!"

"About time!" You skip down the stairs from the control room, and run up to hug him. "God, damn it, John. I was so worried when Roxy came and told me what you'd done! And when I heard that first explosion... I thought you--"

"I know," he hugs you tightly in return. "I know. I thought the same thing just a minute ago when the Darts hit the city and we couldn't raise you guys on the Radio..."

For a moment you just stand there, hugging in front of the Stargate. Heads nestled in each others shoulders.

"You're lucky Argo told me to go easy on you," you say, before nudging loose of the hug just enough so you can kiss him on the lips for a few good seconds. When you break it, he just grins, tiredly.

"Well, I've still got an angry Rose to deal with," he says.

"Well, duh, of course, that's how Argo talked me down to going easy," you answer.

"We really gotta stop all this life-or-death situation stuff," he says.

"Yeah," you nod.

"So, where are we?" He asks, deliberately changing the subject as you break the hug in favor of holding hands as you walk away from the Gate.

"Most of the lifesigns sensors are still down, and we know there's Wraith in the city still. A handfull at the least."

"Work work work," John gripes.

"Before you get to it though, Colonel Everett insisted on speaking with you," you tell him.

"What?" John asks. "Now?"

"Yeah, now," you nod. "He's in the infirmary."

With a concerned look on his face, John nods. And you both head to the Infirmary.

It's a quiet walk, and neither of you really say anything, but... your hands hold tight the whole way down.

You pass by a couple of Strider time-clones standing guard around the Infirmary hallways- you know you don't have to worry about this place. Entering the Infirmary, you see Tyzias out cold on a bed, with Daraya sitting next to her, holding hands just the same. You pass by Mckay and Argo-sharing a conversation about cartoons that has Liz engaged enough to not be crying.
And then you come to Everett.

He's been fed on by the Wraith. He's so old, and his hands are shaking against his chest...

Jade lets go of your hand and gives you a quick peck on the cheek before decapitaloguing a P-90 and rejoining the Strider Guard.

"M...Major," Everett grunts out.

"Colonel," you greet.

"Re...Report," he orders.

"We've neutralized the hive ships, activated the shields and we've mustered as many people as we can, making sure there's no Wraith hiding in the shadows."

"G...Good work, Major," Everett says.

"Thank you, Sir," you nod.

"They're... shipping me out with the next batch of wounded," Everett says. "I was hoping... to finish out conversation."

"Yes, Sir," you say.

"I owe you an ap...apology," he says.

"No, you don't," you shake your head.

"Or...Ordered to or not," Everett says, "I think I have a ph... pretty good idea I would have done the same thing as you did when you found Colonel Sumner. That's what I wanted to tell you."

"Sir, that's--" you try to say, but he interrupts you, looking like he's trying not to cry.

"I'm trying to say-" he tells you. "I wish you had been there for me. Just then."

You open your mouth to say more, but Everett gives you a glare.

"I said what I ha... had to say. Get back to work, Major."

You give him a salute. "Yes, Sir."

An hour later, and you catch up with Zelenka on the way back to the Gateroom, and he gives you the updated missing/dead count.

"The preliminary count is forty casualties. Maybe more," Zelenka tells you. "I'm still trying to recalibrate the lifesigns readings with actual people."

"And we've gotten all the wraith?" you ask, rounding the corner of the Gateroom wall, and heading
for the stairs.

Mikari joins you as she ends a conversation with two soldiers, saying nothing just yet.

"Yes, the last one was trapped in the deeper parts of the city. He died trying to damage the city with one of their grenades," Zelenka tells you.

"Three men were injured," Mikari says. "On the bright side, there wasn't any flooding."

"Have we been able to find Ford or any of the other missing yet?" You ask as you arrive in the Control Room.

"No," Zelenka says. "We've searched everywhere in the city. It's most likely the missing were abducted by Wraith Darts."

"Okay, but what about outside the city?" you ask.

"Pardon?" Zelenka asks.

"Expand the sensors and check the ocean," you say.

"...Even if they were in the ocean, there's a slim chance they're still alive at this point," Zelenka gets a horrified look in his eyes. "But slim is still enough to check," he changes a few settings and... "Oh my god."

There's a dot in the ocean.

Mikari goes onto the radio, "Colonel Caldwell, we have one life sign in the ocean outside the city shield, most probably injured. Can you beam him to the ship and then down to our infirmary?"

"Roger that, Atlantis."

There's a moment's pause, and then the dot vanishes from the sensors.

"Atlantis?" A panicked voice starts in response, "This is Doctor Novak. You're going to need some guards in the infirmary before we beam your man down."

"We already do," Beckett answers. "Beam away."

There's a pause, and then a new dot appears on the screen in the infirmary.

"Good Lord!" Beckett exclaims. "Let's get this thing off of him!"

Mikari looks to you and nods.

You both take off for the infirmary as fast as you can go.

"So, how is he?"

Your name is Carson Beckett, and you and Doctor Fraiser share concerned looks before you turn to
Major Sheppard.

"We gave him a mild sedative to help him rest, but..." You trail off.

"He should be dead," Fraiser says.

"Well, he's a tough kid," Sheppard says.

"That's not our point, Major," you say. "He was laying face down in the freezing water for over an Hour. I don't care how tough he is."

"So, what are you saying?" Miss Aiikho asks.

"We still have no idea how it works, but during the Wraith feeding process, it seems like the victim is injected with a special enzyme," Fraiser takes over from there. "It seems to strengthen the human body in ways similar to a Goa'uld Symbiote, making sure the heart and other critical systems continue to function during the feeding process."

"The process is so traumatic that without the Enzyme, we'd die far sooner than they'd like," you add.

"So they make us stronger so they can take their time," Sheppard gripes. "Wonderful."

"It's likely it's not just a sadistic thing," Fraiser says. "I'd be willing to lay even odds there's actually a biological benefit to the Wraith that take a slower time feeding versus those whose 'meals' die before its time."

"I'd like miss Maryam to come back and give him a checkup once she's done with the wounded on the Alpha Site," you say. "As far as I can tell, in most cases the Enzyme is released slowly throughout the feeding process. However, it seems the wraith feeding on him died suddenly, and that Lieutenant Ford's system was flooded with the Enzyme."

"And that's how he was able to survive in the water for so long," Miss Aiikho nods.

"Exactly," you say. "But now the problem is the exact opposite. I think the enzyme is breaking down, and once it's gone from his system, he might die from the shock. It's entirely probably his body has become dependent on the enzyme to even function at this point."

"Treatments?" Miss Aiikho asks.

"Time Tried and True is to wean him off it slowly," Fraiser says. "Slowly lower his body chemistry back to normal... however..."

"While we could harvest it from the Wraith we'd killed," you say, "we're both worried that even small doses of the Enzyme might continue to worsen the problem rather than fix it."

"So we get Kanaya to use Shaper and flush his body of the enzyme while also keeping him alive," Sheppard summarizes.

"Aye," you nod.

Their radios buzz then.
"This is Mikari," Miss Aiikho says.

"Miss Aiikho, Major Sheppard, you're going to want to get up to the control room," Zelenka requests.

Miss Aiikho replies, "We're on our way," before looking to you both, and saying, "Harvest the Enzyme. We'll get Kanaya back here asap."

And with that, they leave.

"[The deep space sensors are back online,]" your name is Raddek Zelenka, and you start with the good news as Miss Aiikho and Major Sheppard return to the control room.

"[And?]" Miss Aiikho asks.

You tell them: "[We've picked up twelve more Hiveships traveling in hyperspace. Current course and speed will bring them here in thirty six hours.]

Major Sheppard swears in an interesting mix of Alternian and English upon hearing the news.

You're very much inclined to agree.

"Hey! Hey! MIKAAAAARIII!"

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you stop in the middle of writing the after-action report of the last day so far to look up at the door to your office.

Standing there on the other side are Rhubee Xaolon and Kohiru Karren- two trolls who'd served as your bodyguards during part of your stint as Diplomat on Earth following Disclosure.

Rhubee has her face utterly pressed up against the door's glass, grinning like a loon.

Karren gives you a helpless shrug of 'what can you do?'

They're both wearing nearly identical flight suits to the ones you've seen the Daedalus crew walking around with- complete with the DAEDALUS marked badges, even- with the only major deviations being that the main fabric colors are their respective blood hues rather than the standard dull greens and blues.

You unlock the door remotely and it opens, letting them in.

"Karren, Rhubee! What are you two doing here?" You ask as Rhubee zips into the room and pulls you into a hug.

"We're the new test pilots for the Mini-zords," Karren says.

"MOBILE SUITS!!!!!" Rhubee exclaims loudly. "THAT'S TOTALLY WHAT THEY ARE!"
"Wow, okay, Rhubee- volume, down to five, please?" You say.

"Sorryyy..." She whines, still hugging you.

"The name still hasn't been decided yet on the zords," Karren continues to explain. "But that's really what they are, basically. Smaller, fighter sized ships that combine into a much smaller-than-usual robot."

Right, of course they'd be down here in the city, then.

"It's not time for the briefing yet, is it?" You ask.

"No, we came early," Karren says.

"We wanted to catch up!" Rhubee grins.

"It's only been a few weeks since I left for Atlantis," you say.

"Exaaaactly! But it feels like Mooooonths!" Rhubee continues to hug you...

This is kind of getting awkward.

"Maybe we should get moving to the conference room?" you offer.

That’s when there’s another knock at your office door, and you turn and look and-

Oh. God. It’s Ford. And his left eye is just... pitch black.

Rhubee quickly lets go of you as you motion for him to enter the room.


“Why wouldn’t he?” Ford asks. “I’m fine.”

“I’m just surprised, after the tumble you took,” you say.

“Like I said,” Ford says, “I’m fine. I’d like to request return to active duty, Ma’am.”

Karren gives you a look- and you’re inclined to agree. Something is wrong.

“Well, Lieutenant, if Kanaya’s taken a look at you with Shaper-” You start.

“Who?” Ford asks.

“Uh... Kanaya Maryam?” You frown. “You’ve met her before. Many times before. She was on the trip to Athos just after everyone arrived in Atlantis?”

“...The name doesn’t ring a bell, Ma’am,” Ford says. “I remember the trip, but I don’t remember anyone by that name on it.”

...
Something is wrong.

“Lieutenant,” you start. “I really think you’re not as well as you could be if you can’t remember someone you should know.”

“I’m telling you, I’m fine, Doctor Weir,” Ford insists. “Just clear me for duty again.”

And that settles it.

“I’m sorry, Lieutenant, but you’re not fine.” You say. “I’m not Doctor Weir.”

“Wh...” Ford smiles and nearly laughs. “What is this? Play a prank on Ford day? I’m telling you, I’m fine.”

“THERE YOU ARE!” And then Doctor Fraiser storms into your office. “Lieutenant! You need to be in bed!”

“No, I don’t, Nurse!” Ford insists, “I’m. FINE. I keep telling Doctor Weir that I’m good for duty! I feel fine! There’s nothing wrong!”

“Nurse my ass,” Doctor Fraiser puts weight on her walking cane, as she levels her firmest gaze at the man. “You’re not released, and you’re definitely not okay if the name slip I just heard is any indication.”

“He doesn’t even remember Kanaya,” you tell her. “And that’s the second time he’s called me Doctor Weir.”

“I’M. FINE.” Ford stomps his foot. The room trembles slightly. “Just clear me for duty already!!”

Rhubee and Karren decaptchaloge their weapons. Ford doesn’t even seem to recognize that they’re there.

“Not with that temper, mister,” Fraiser reaches a hand out to touch him- and Ford MOVES. He ducks under her grip and he grabs at her neck with clear intent to strangle.

And then Rhubee intercepts with a burst of rose petals, throwing herself into Ford’s grip. He seems utterly confused for a moment, grasping onto someone that’s there, but he just...

He doesn’t see her somehow.

He lets go of Rhubee’s neck (she stumbles back, reaching up to check her own neck) and seems completely confused for several seconds, in which time Fraiser slips behind him and--

WHUMP!

She lightly smacks the foot of her cane against Ford’s shoulder, and with a brief flash of what you can only describe as CONCENTRATED DOOM transferring from her hand through the cane into Ford, he collapses to the floor.

“What was that?” Karren asks, a bit shaken up by the scene that just transpired.
“That was me having to use whatever new powers that energy wave unlocked in me on the Lieutenant to keep him from snapping someone’s neck,” Fraiser answers. “Are you alright, miss Xaolon?”

“Yeah,” Rhubee nods, lowering her hands. “I think I’m fine. Physically. But I... There was something in my head when he touched me, it felt like.”

“Either way,” you sigh, and grab your radio. “Security team to the Administration office.”

"Twelve Hiveships?" Caldwell stares at the screen once the briefing begins.

"The cruisers that got away called for reinforcements, probably," Your name is John Sheppard, and you grimace.

"So, given that we know from the Genii that there's atleast Sixty Hiveships in this sector of the Galaxy alone, we have no idea how many more could be on the way," Carter starts. "We have the shield running, but that only buys us time."

"I like time," Rhubee voices. "Time means we can think."

"The first siege of Atlantis lasted for years, though," you say. "We can't be expected to just sit tight and wait for the Wraith to go away."

"Could we submerge the city again?" Caldwell asks.

"We have no idea how the Ancients even did that at this point," Carter says.

"And what part of 'we can't just sit tight and wait for them to go away' did you not hear just now?" You ask, glancing at the Colonel. "Even if we take the fight to them and Hyperbeam the whole fleet, more Wraith are just going to keep coming. Sure, we take the fight to them, but we only have one ship that can do that safely. And we can't just keep blasting them one after the other until they go away because there could be thousands of Wraith Hives across the galaxy, and we don't even know how they make them to begin with. Eventually they'll get a lucky shot in, or they'll stop culling their own people for showing powers or transformations, and then we'll be on the defensive again."

"So what are you proposing then?" Caldwell asks, crossing his arms.

Alright. Time to give this idea you've been mulling around some weight.

"What I'm proposing is we lure them into a false sense of security," you declare. "We make them think we're weaker than we are, and that we're scared. We give the Wraith a reason to never come back here to look for a way to Earth."

"And what's that?" Mikari asks.

"We make Atlantis disappear," you say.

"Wait," Zelenka sits up to attention. "I think I know what you're getting at."
"Exactly," you say. "Do you think it's possible we could-?"

"Yes, absolutely," Zelenka nods. "The City was already using spare parts to replace one of the old shield transformers, so the systems are definitely compatible and upscale-able."

"Sorry, what exactly am I missing here?" Silica asks.

"I'm a little lost too," Mikari says.

"The Puddle Jumpers have a cloaking device that makes them invisible to the Wraith," you remind the room. "We plug it into Atlantis' shields and turn the city invisible."

"Will that even work without more extensive reprogramming?" Mikari asks. "I'd really rather not we spend three more days of hard physical labor and intensive coding sessions to make this work."

"We already disassembled a Jumper for earlier repairs," Zelenka says. "One of the first things we removed was the cloaking generator. And as for replacement, it's basically just the same type of generator as the shield, just operating on a different frequency of wavelengths. If it ever came down to it, we could even jury rig the shield to serve as a form of city wide Replicator Disruptor, as an example."

"Then why didn't the Ancients plug a cloak into the City to begin with?" Caldwell asks.

"Because we could only have one or the other at the same time," Carter says. "We've experimented with adding shields to Jumpers, but it's at the sacrifice of the cloaking device."

"So if it fails we'd be without a shield and the Wraith could attack us," Mikari shakes her head. "Too risky."

"Not if we give them a good reason to believe it," you say. "We take the Daedalus in, attack them, then pretend we suddenly can't use our big main weapon anymore. Pretend to take a few hits, jump to hyperspace, and then we have Barzum use her clown powers on their psychic network to make them think we're about to destroy the city. They back off, and we blow up a bomb over the city shields."

"The radiation would confuse the Wraith scanners long enough to let us engage the cloak and safely disappear," Zelenka says.

"The radiation would also kill us if we turned the shields off too soon," Carter says. "Not to mention the fallout that'd happen across the planet. The Mainland would probably become uninhabitable, and the sea life would almost certainly become mutated to some degree."

"Doesn't matter," you say. "Once the Wraith think we're gone and dead, we figure out how to pick up the city and take it to another planet they're not aware of. We have six ZPMs! We could pull off the greatest vanishing act in the history of the universe with just a little smoke and mirrors."

"Zelenka, get to work on that," Mikari orders. "Colonel Caldwell- take the Daedalus and harass the Wraith at their next drop out point. But don't take it easy on them even if we want some of them to survive. Take out as many as you can."

"Roger that, Ma'am," he nods.
“And John? This is your idea,” Mikari looks you in the eyes. “I hope you know what you’re doing.”

You sure hope you know what you’re doing too.

But, you settle for, “Of course I do, Mikari. I’m a prankster at heart, and this has the greatest payoff on the Prankster’s Gambit.” You smile. “The Wraith won’t see what’s coming until it’s too late.”

Your name is Kanaya Maryam, and you sigh in disbelief as you finish your examination of Lieutenant Ford.

“I can’t do anything,” you tell them very reluctantly.

“How can you not do anything?” Doctor Fraiser asks, incredulous. “I’ve seen that crystal clone a body from scratch. How can you not clear the enzyme from his system?”

“Yes, and the problem isn’t to do with the Enzyme, not directly, at any rate,” you shake your head. “I think it’s a power, like everyone else has started to manifest since the energy wave. I flushed his system of the enzyme and his body instantly recreated it, at a stronger dosage than he had when I first flushed it.”

“That’s impossible,” Beckett says. “You’re suggesting that he reset his biology to the point that he first got flooded with the Enzyme?”

“That’s as good of a guess as mine was,” you say, crossing your arms.

“And what was your guess?” Fraiser asks.

“That he was linking his existence in this world up with hims of alternate worlds,” you answer. “It would explain the memory differences he’d displayed among other... issues.”

“Such as?” Beckett asks.

“I literally can’t sense his brain within his body,” you answer. “Shaper literally reads it as an impossible void within his skull. It’s like he’s blackboxed his brain off from Shaper’s reach.”

“ Bloody brilliant,” Beckett laments. “So what do we even do!?”

“I have no idea,” you say. “Whatever Fraiser did to knock him out seems to be keeping him out, and I’m pretty sure that’s something we’ll have to keep reapplying, because I cannot see traditional sedatives keeping him stable at this point.”


DIASPORA DATE: 02/15/0005.

Your name is John Sheppard, and you smile grimly as twelve Wraith hiveships drop out of Hyperspace in V formation.
“They lined up just so nicely for us, didn’t they?” Caldwell remarks. “Open fire, take out the right side from rear to front, Kleinman.”

“Roger that, Sir,” and then a piercing beam of Purple lances out from the front bow of the Daedalus and skirts over the tops of the right side of the V formation- one, two, three, four, five- and then six, as it also clips the top of the ship at the head of the formation.

They, unlike the ones that didn’t get hit, just seem to stop all forwards inertia, and instead split into two evenly cut pieces, drifting to the sides before they all explode with two explosions each.

The remaining five hiveships break formation and begin turning around to aim themselves at you, opening fire.

Their attacks splash against the Daedalus’ shields, doing no damage at all.

The ship doesn’t even rock from the impact.

Heh. You can’t help but smirk. ZPM powered Asgard Shields are an amazing thing.

“Fire off another beam, pick off a target at random.” Caldwell orders.

“One o'clock,” you suggest. “Near center.”

The beam fires off and smashes into that Hiveship- blowing it up with ease.

“Fire a split beam, take out two ships this time, then switch to rocket ordinance for a few minutes, fake a hit, and get us to Hyperspace,” Caldwell orders.

And then another Purple beam fires off- splitting as it does so into red and blue and taking out two more Hiveships.

After that, it’s the rockets and railguns firing off for about a minute. The Daedalus then fakes taking a hit and immediately takes off at speed back for Atlantis.

Space warps, and WOOSH. You’re back to hyperspace.

“Atlantis, this is Sheppard,” you radio. “We’ve taken out nine of the twelve Hiveships. That should give them something to think about.”

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and you feel the anger of the Wraith, as well as the panic.

“They are angry, and afraid,” you tell Mikari. “They project it out into the void to warn the others, and inadvertently are keying me in as well. I can sense their anger at the mass destruction of their ships- they wish to silence Atlantis for this act. But they are scared, scared that the weapon malfunctioning and ceasing to fire was just a ruse. They are reconsidering and they are...” you shake your head. “They are debating in circles as to what to do next. But it feels as if they are still committed to attacking- even if they are not sure how to go about it.”
“John was right,” Mikari smirks, “they do have quite a lot to think about.”

“I will let you know if they manage to break the cycle,” you tell her.

“Thank you,” she nods. “Until then, start seeding the idea that we might destroy the City into their network. That way, when we have Barzum deliver the final message, they might just believe it.”

“Of course,” you nod.

And then the radio buzzes, and Mikari answers, “Aiikho.”

“Ma’am, the Daedalus is requesting permission to land on the east pier to help sell the deception,” Chuck reports.

“Permission granted, I’ll meet them there,” she says, getting up to leave. “I’ll be back in a bit.”

“I will wait here,” you say.

The curse Janet Fraiser had put on Aiden Ford broke faster than it should have.

He lay in bed, feigning sleep, even as people milled about just barely outside of reach. Plick plack went their boots against the ground.

Idly, he cracked open his right eye barely, and peered at the handcuffs holding him to the infirmary bed railing.

The bed railing that was attached to a crash cart that had been stored inside the isolation chamber.

Ford could smell the blood of a Wraith in here. Fresh and recent except it wasn’t here. Not this version of this cell, and not that recent either. It shouldn’t be but it was.

Ford easily yanked his arm free of the handcuffs, and the chain snapped like it was tissue paper.

“Woah now!” A guard raised his hands as Ford got up from his bed and approached the door. “Easy, Ford!”

Ford stared at the man for a moment, and reached out for the cell door.

The force shield flared.

“Come on, man, just, go back to bed, would you?”

Ford stared forwards for a moment... and then he blinked his eyes and the man was gone and the cell door was open.

He stepped through the opening.

Another blink, and he was back in the same reality he always was.
“CURITY BREACH! I REPE-AAAACHK!” The guard could only choke as Ford’s hands found their way around his neck.

“Where is the Enzyme?” Ford asks. “I know Doctor Beckett harvested it.”

“We- We never harvested any enzy-enzyme!” The guard choked out.

“Don’t lie to me,” Ford growls, tightening his grip. “WHERE IS THE ENZYME?!”

Mikari joins you and Caldwell at the base of the Daedalus' loading ramp just as her radio buzzes.

“Miss Aiikho... We have a problem!”

Your name is John Sheppard, and you grimace. "Let me guess," you sigh. "Ford?"

"Yes, what is it?" Mikari asks.

"Lieutenant Ford escaped the isolation cell," it's confirmed. "He just... flickered through the shield wall somehow. Nearly choked me to death before he just... god, I don't even know. There was this flash in his eyes and it felt like he was in my head."

"Damn it." You did not need this NOW.

"I'll prepare the City for the Smoke and Mirrors," Mikari says, looking you in the eyes. "Go Get Ford and secure him as best as you can."

"On it," you decapltchologue a novelty, oversized Wraith Stunner that Jade had given you earlier for the sake of it, and easily heft it as you head off into the city. "This Is Major Sheppard to Security, tell me where Ford's position is now."

"He was just spotted in the armory, Sir," you get in reply from a completely different person.

The Wraith Hiveships emerged from Hyperspace, and immediately began orbital bombardment against Atlantis' shields.

Your name is Raddek Zelenka, and you glance up as Miss Aiikho returns from meeting the Daedalus.

"[The Shield is holding under the bombardment, but it's under incredible strain.]" You tell her.

"[How long will it hold?]" she asks.

"[If it were one ZPM, under this kind of strain we'd be talking days. For Three ZPMs... As it is... A week? Maybe Two? If the shield fails without us being able to replace the second batch, that's about it. Possibly double that length of time if we could.]" You answer.

"[Good thing we won't need even days.]" she says. "[How long until we're ready for the cloak?]"
"[Any time,]" you answer. "[It was surprisingly Plug and Play with all the new transformers installed and Miss Entykk's earlier coding work.]

She considers that, then nods. "[We'll hold out for five minutes, then.]" She then turns to her office and calls for Teyla. "[Teyla! Begin pressing down on the idea we're going to self destruct. Ramp it up over the next five minutes!]

"Then she goes for her radio, "[Doctor Heightmeyer, tell Miss Soleli that we're aiming for the message delivery in five minutes."

"Well," you remark to yourself, "Today is going to be very interesting."

"Wait, what?" You are Rodney Mckay, and you ask in surprise as you sit up to attention in your bed, "They're going to do What!?!"

" Blow up a bomb over the city and then shift us into a cloak under the smoke cover and radiation scrambling sensors," Daraya repeats the plan.

"That's insane!" You state. "Whose idea was that?!"

"John and Zelenka came up with it, it sounds like," Daraya answers with a shrug.

"That's a John plan, alright," Argo muses, peering into the cradel next to their bed and their sleeping kid within. "Can't say I wouldn't do the same, really."

"Well," Tyzias gripes from her own bed nearby. "All I gotta say is I'm glad I'm not working on it."

"Yeah," Daraya shakes her head. "it's... Well. It's an insane idea."

"I'll say," Silica remarks as she, Keiko, and Mallek return with trays full of food from the cafeteria. "But it's no more insane than phasing an entire castle out of reality for just long enough to safely pass through a shield. Or letting a girl with a uber-beam sword loose on her father during a challenge for the throne."

"There's a story behind that one," you observe.

"Not a happy one," Keiko answers with a shake of her head, handing you a tray of food. "We'll tell you some other time."

"Thanks..." You leer at the contents carefully. "There's no Earth lemon on this fried chicken, is there?"

"No," Keiko answers. "I made sure to get the Alternian variant like you asked."

"Thanks," and thus you start digging in, even as other food trays get handed out.

For a few moments, there's eating, and nothing but the sound of bombardment against the shields.

"It sounds a lot like fireworks, you know?" Tyzias remarks.

"Ah, yeah, it does," Keiko agrees.
"So, how long until detonation, again?" Argo asks.

"Three minutes," Daraya says. "So, not too much longer."

"We should, ah," you start, after swallowing a bit of chicken. "Not look at any windows directly. And probably should close the blinds."

"I'll get on that," Daraya says, heading off to get on that.

"Probably closer to two minutes now," Tyzias mutters.

"Hopefully the Wraith'll buy it," Mallek says. "Otherwise this is going to be one short trip."

"I should go find Barzum before they set it off," Tyzias says. "Anyone know where she's at?"

"Right here, actually," and then Barzum gets walked over along with Daraya, who then carries on to close some more window blinds.

"Hey!" Tyzias smiles. "Nevermind on finding you then. You found me."

"Yeah," Barzum nods. "Doctor Fraiser wanted me here in the infirmary incase things went bad."

"How bad are we talking about here?" You ask.

"Like, needing to be Zat'd bad?" Barzum shrugs.

Tyzias sighs. "Damn it, you sneak one Zat along when you're not allowed to and suddenly everyone expects you to be on the stunner brigade."

"Well, you are quite the looker, Tyz!" Daraya quips from across the room- closing a set of blinds over another window.

"Not what I meant and you know it, Dar!" Tyzias quips back.

"Ah, young love," Argo grins.

"Heh," Silica smirks. "Yep."

All eyes move over towards Keiko and Mallek- who frown at the gazes.

"Why are you guys looking at us for?" Keiko asks.

"Because Daraya's on the other side of the room from me," Tyzias points out.

"...Okay, fair enough," Keiko answers.

Aiden Ford sneaked through the hallways of Atlantis, acutely aware of multiple phantasms of the same man hunting him across the City as he made his way through from the armory to the nearest teleporter.

John Sheppards of many alternate worlds chasing their own Fords could be seen through our Aiden
Ford's blackened eye. All of them fell under similar patterns of hide and seek.

Only one of them had a comically oversized Wraith Stunner.

"FORD!" Sheppard yells as the man approaches the teleporter. "STOP!"

Aiden Ford turns around, glaring at Sheppard.

"You can't stop me. Not here. Not anywhere." He smirks. "Every world, you shoot me with that stunner- no matter how big it is- and I tank it like a pro."

"So you've got some Mystic Eyes of Multi-world Perception, huh?" Sheppard frowns. "What about the worlds where I do something different, like shoot you with a gun or a Zat, or hit you with a comically oversized hammer?"

"You never do that," Ford laughs. "You try to take me alive every time. Too sentimental."

"Well. Okay. I guess that means that every world out there, I'm just a big ol' softie that wants you to get better," Sheppard says, slowly lowering the stunner down and letting it twist in his hand so that its spiky rear end pointed towards the floor.

"You're not able to save me, Major," Ford throws his hands out wide, stepping back towards the teleporter- doors opening at his motion. "None of me want to be fixed OR saved- let alone THIS! ME!" He thumps a hand over his heart for emphasis. "I'm just fine- better than fine! I don't even need to hunt for the enzyme unlike those other mes! I can just take it from them!"

"Then why Run, Ford?" Sheppard asks. "There's no reason to do this...!"

"Because you guys don't see the bigger picture," Ford says, tapping up at the left side of his skull. "I. Can. I can see it all. Right as it's unfolding right infront of us this very second. Thousands of worlds. Hundreds of years of drift between them all at once. So. Many. Worlds. Where no matter what happens, it's always you and me right here at this teleporter. It always happens and it won't stop from happening. Ever!"

"Then, tell me, Aiden," Sheppard narrows his eyes. "Did any mes ever do---"

And then he rears back and hurls the Wraith Stunner at Ford- spiky end first.

The man blips into static instinctively, and the stunner passes through him harmlessly before coming to a halt in the wall behind him.

"That?" Sheppard finishes as Ford returns to solid form.

"A Few times, yeah." Ford then asks, "What did you think that was supposed to accomplish, Major Sheppard?"

"Well, for starters I was thinking it'd keep you from using the Elevator," John Sheppard smirks, and Aiden Ford turns around upon hearing those words to see the comically oversized Wraith stunner embedded spike first into the teleporter's control panel.

"Well... That's a first," Ford blinks.
And then John Sheppard tackles him.

"Colonel Caldwell, are you ready to go?" Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you ask with the slightest bit of trepidation.

"The warhead is armed and ready to be deployed on your mark," Caldwell answers.

"Good," Mikari changes frequencies. "Barzum, relay the message."

Your name is Barzum Soleli, and you close your eyes. Your Moirail holds your hands tight and no more than three different Doctors stand by at the ready.

You gather up all the fear you can muster, and tap into your caste born abilities.

The CHUCKLEVOODOO.

You cast your Psychic Gaze up at the three Wraith Hiveships above you, and you project an image up at them.

You project the fears of everyone within the city of dying a fire-based, horrible, burning death that instantly vaporizes them. You draw upon O'neill and Carter and Jackson's memories of watching Khepri's HATAK exploding over Abydos.

You gather forth the images from Carter and Jolinar's minds of the Naquadah Bomb Test that resulted in a massive naquadria enhanced explosion that kept a stargate running for far, far too long.

You draw forth from Mallek's memories the recorded images of Naquadria explosions terraforming whole surfaces of planets.

You pull from every earthling's mind the memories of Nuclear Warheads exploding.

You pull from your Moirail's mind the memory of Joey Claire spearing out beam after beam of Hyperbeam attacks, destroying ship after ship- and specifically the explosions there of. And you draw out memories of a sun utterly exploding and consuming an entire solar system.

You drag forth from John, Jade, Argo's memories the horror of the Abydos Pyramid exploding around them.

You rip forth from Doctor Jackson's memories, the explosion of Anubis' mothership over Abydos.

From Colonel Caldwell's memories- you pry forth the surprising image of a Ha'tak exploding within orbit of a Black Hole.

You rip and you tear and you conjure every single image of death and explosion and terror that you can find within the City of Atlantis, and you MOLD it all into the image of the City itself vaporizing.

And then you shove it directly into the Wraith's Psychic Network with all the subtlety of an entire planet's dying screams.
Unsurprisingly, the Wraith stop firing upon the City's shields. What's more surprising is the utter repulsion their own minds shriek in return.

You don't even need to tell Mikari Aiikho that the message has been delivered.

She gives the order, and you grin as you push those words straight into the Wraith's minds.

"Detonate Warhead!"

The Wraith, reeling from the massive Psychic cry bursting forth from Atlantis, could only wince in pain as the images suddenly were cut short with the massive flare of burning, explosive fire directly ontop of the City of Atlantis.

Where so much terror had been welling forth just moments ago- now there was but silence.

A Deathly, terrifying silence that fell as they watched a gigantic cloud consume their hopes and dreams for a new, rich, feeding ground.

John reels as he catches a momentary intrusion into his mind- a remnant of Abydos' explosion that distracts him seconds before the explosion's light floods the hallway, and Ford kicks himself free and takes off at a run down the Hallway.

John gets up and takes to chase after him, but Ford flickers into static and then vanishes entirely.

"Damn it!"

Your name is Raddek Zelenka, and you wait for the timer inside your head to reach zero before you open your laptop and power it back on, safe from the EMP burst of the nuclear warhead that just went off.

"[Raddek? How long?]" Miss Aiikho asks.

"[If we switch to cloak before the blast radius diminishes, we'll be incinerated. Five seconds, minimum,]" you report, watching as the heat sensors for the city rapidly drop in temperature.

In your mind, you hear the wooshing of fire above and around, and despite the bright light flaring through the windows from outside, you can only imagine how dark the clouds above your heads must be in that moment.

Aaaannnd...

"Clear!" You tap the requisite keys and switch the shield to the cloak.

"[That was five seconds?]" Miss Aiikho states, less than inquires, you suspect.

"[Yes, we're cloaked,]" you confirm, and. "Ah. There they are, searching like mosquitoes for a
meal.

"[What?]

"[They're scanning for us,]

You clarify.

Everyone remains deathly silent as the light from outside dims considerably— the explosion itself having long past and now nothing but smoke obscures the light from the sun.

The Wraith continue to hover above the planet. Scanning. Searching...

"Come on, come on, take the bait..." you whisper. "Take the bait you greedy little blood suckers..."

"...[Is it working?]" Miss Aiikho asks.

"[I think so. They don't seem to have detected us,]

you answer.

And then the bloody Stargate starts to dial out.

"Oh what damnable thing are we dealing with NOW!?" you exclaim.

"[Can you stop it?]

Aiikho asks, and you head for the DHD...

"[No! A Jumper is in control!]

you report before the KAWOOOSH!

And then the damned thing lowers from the ceiling.

Who is that-? No. Better question-

"[Can the Wraith detect that!?!]

Aiikho asks.

"[I have no idea!]

you answer.

"FORD!" Sheppard runs into the Gate Room, glaring at the Jumper... but it's too late— it heads through the Gate and it shuts down.

"[Where'd he go!?!]

Sheppard calls up to the control room.

"It won't matter if the Wraith detected the gate activity through the explosion!" Aiikho turns towards you- "[Could they--?!]

"[Checking!]

You hurriedly return to the scanners.

"Please don't let us have been seen, please don't let us have been seen!" You pray as you check, and... ...

...And...

...And the Wraith are pulling back.

"This is Daedalus," Caldwell radios. "Our sensors indicate the Wraith fleet is breaking orbit."
"[I can confirm. They're breaking for Hyperspace,]" you sigh in relief, then smile at Miss Aiikho. "[I'll keep the cloak running for some time just to be sure. But it seems the Wraith fell for the prank we just pulled on them.]

"[Prank... right,]" Miss Aiikho then turns and heads down to the Gate where Sheppard remains standing.

You hear them converse about the Gate Address being in the log... except Sheppard assumes Ford would ditch the jumper and dial out at the first opportunity.

Ford...

Ford was in the Jumper for sure then?

"What a mess," you mutter.

...Well, at least you're going to live to another day to clean it up.

...You could go for a nap right about now, but honestly, after a mere tickle of miss Soleli's psychic attack whispering in the back of your mind, you're not quite sure you'll be sleeping soundly tonight anyways.

...God, if that's just what YOU got from proximity to the attack's launch, imagine the full brunt of it against the Wraith?

You don't pity them one bit.

Chapter End Notes

WHOO! The Siege is Complete!

POWERS:
Janet has avoided Doom for so many people, and has had it avoided towards herself by someone else's sacrifice, but not without cost. Janet Fraiser thus gets some Doom powers.

Reader Question: What Aspect do you think Ford's powers are manifesting under? I'll make it a little bit easy for you. It is *NOT* Time.

And for all its godly powers, even Shaper has its limits.

MECHS:
Yeah, Rhubee and Karren are piloting a Gundam. I recently got into Model Kits last year in preparation for the Astro and Delta Megazord Super Miniplas which release in Japan this month. :33 There's this one pair of twin kits that have this interesting torso and leg swapping/combining ability. I've set the Red One to Pegasus. The Blue One might show up as extra armaments for the Astro Megazord at some point.

CLOUN:
Barzum's masterful use of the chucklevoodos is terrifying, even to me. It really puts into
perspective all the shit that went down on Alternia, doesn't it? I'd almost feel sorry for those Wraith that survived...

Almost.

META:
We went from 113 words to.... 9531. Yikes. That's a lot of words. 0_0;

FUTURE UPDATES:
Tomorrow: A Character piece for Mikari Aiikho.
The Rest of the Week: Some Intermissions to cool down after this huge burst of action.
It's finally time to get into this mess! :D
ARTWORK: Let’s Rock It!

Chapter Summary

A Bonus Tegiri Artwork. Mikari Artwork goes up at the usual time as promised.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
SO. I auditioned for a fan run voice acting gig for a Hiveswap Friendsim Dub. I got Tegiri!

So I drew a Tegiri to celebrate. Figured it can also fit into SG:Alternia here as well... Given, well, Tegiri's needed to be drawn for a while :P

Anyways, Mikari Artwork piece will be up at the usual time. This is just a bonus.
ARTWORK: Mikari Aiikho

Chapter Summary

MIKARI AIIKHO, once known as Hivekeep.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
So. She looks like Ryuuko from Kill La Kill. >_<; The funny story behind that is trying to replicate the hair style for the original Beekeeper in part, and merging it with the hairstyle of another character I'd developed for an original work... That alone wasn't bad. But reducing the Beekeeper's four horns down to two... Yeah. That was an unfortunate coincidence.

Design choices: Beyond wearing her Lime sign now, you'll notice she still sticks to Gold/Mustard colored items. A hard habit to break, after disguising herself for as long as Mikari did.

There's not much else to remark on. She's kinda average all things considered. Unremarkable. And for someone who wound up in Diplomatic circles, and wears the Sign of the Theatrical... That's kind of grounding, I think?
"Well, it looks like the shields absorbed most if not all of the fallout from the explosion," your name is Rodney Mckay, and you have no idea how that is even possible. But, whatever. "And what didn't seems to be drifting downwind from the mainland and us. We should be safe from radiation poisoning for a few months, at least."

"Long enough to figure out how to take the city up and out to another planet?" Mikari Aiikho asks.

"Yeah, should be," you nod.

"Good, leave that to Zelenka, Keiko, and Tyzias to figure out," she says.

"Uh- why?" You ask, frowning.

"Because you're senior staff, and General O'neill has requested all Senior staff return to Earth for debriefing?" she reminds you. "Also, I figure there will be a bit of securing new staff members for our respective departments."

"...Riiight," you nod. "And there's also mention of time loops? I hear?"

"There's that too," Aiikho says, shaking her head. "Though, honestly, I have no idea if I'm going to remain on or not as leader of the Expedition. I might get replaced."

"Well, ah, if it's any consolation, Miss Aiikho? You did a wonderful job navigating the complexities of everything that went down this last week," you tell her.

"Please, call me Mikari," she smiles.

"Alright," you acknowledge.

The Daedalus takes off from Atlantis later that day, and you meander the halls- familiarizing yourself with the layout of the ship. Chances are, Daedalus is going to be making Pegasus its home away from home most of the time, so, you should memorize it as best as you can..
You end up finishing up your tour in the Daedalus' cafeteria/mess hall.

Carson Beckett is conversing with Major Strider and Doctor Jackson at one table, and Argo, John, and Jade are over at another, cooing over the baby in the baby carrier taking up one of the seats.

You still can't get over that they named her after Elizabeth.

"Doctor Mckay," Doctor Fraiser greets, entering the room after you and immediately beelining to get in line for food.

"Doctor Fraiser," you greet in turn, following her into line, (The line is really just you two). "How are you fairing today?"

"Hoping we don't run into any trouble while we're traveling," she answers, then gives her order to the chef.

You end up giving your own order next once the chef turns to you.

Then, you're given numbers and told to sit down, so you head to an empty table.

"Yeah, the lack of trouble is really what I'm excited for the most, but... Ah," you lean in to whisper, conspiratorially, as you both sit down. "What can you tell me about the time loops?"

"That it'd be a spoiler if I said anything," She gives you a firm gaze that tells you you're not getting anything out of her. "And also, that it'd be a complete waste of time. From what I last heard, General O'neill plans on promoting Major Sheppard and sending you all on your merry way back into the past almost immediately. Anything you need to know will likely be said then. But, you know him and doing the opposite of what common sense says. He might just put it off until the last minute, for all I know."

"...Okay, fair enough," you answer. "Speculating more on the future than the past, though-"

"Let's not, Doctor Mckay," Fraiser side eyes you. "I leave that more to my Daughter than anyone else. She's better at it."

"No, no, what I mean is-" you sigh. "Okay, look. I've got two things to talk about. One is the Fissure, and how it's affected Milky Way."

"Ah, the rift giving people mysterious powers," Fraiser surmises.

"Yes, that," you grunt.

"All I'm going to say is... Earth is really going to be a different place," she says. "Disclosure alone has caused so many changes... Now this? I know Teal'c and the Jaffa have been having trouble with some disorganization among their ranks with all of this. Some Jaffa have started talking about they themselves becoming gods for dethroning the false gods of the Goa'uld System Lords."

... 

"Seriously?" you ask.
"Yes, seriously," she nods. "There's also been rumors about some of the human worlds with power-graced leaders banning together into something called the Lucean Alliance. Lusian? Lukean? Something along those lines. I'm not even entirely sure what's happening there beyond what Cassandra mentioned at dinner the night before I left for Atlantis."

"Well, hopefully it won't be anything too bad," you say. "What about the Trust?"

"General O'neill was moving to arrest some of the last of their leadership when we left," she answers. "I think that means they've been cleaned up as smoothly as possible."

"Well, hopefully that means Bates' family is alright," you say, mostly to yourself.

"So, what about the other thing you wanted to talk about?" Fraiser asks.

"...Do you think I could okay bringing my cat back with me to Atlantis this time?" You ask.

Fraiser blinks- then laughs. And before you can get a verbal response, your food arrives.

Chapter End Notes

And some detail wrap up on everything else. A breath o fresh air, as it were. I don't got too much more to say about this chapter, short as it is. Tomorrow and Friday should have a bit more substance to them.
INTERMISSION: Debriefing.

Chapter Summary

Setting old gears away, and setting new ones in motion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 02/22/0005.

"Everyone, thanks for taking the time to come speak with us right away so soon after arriving," General O'neill begins, "I know you're tired, but we've got to get some stuff out of the way. So. Take a seat!"

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you take a steeling breath as you, Mckay, Sheppard, and Beckett take your seats. Even Emmett Bregman has a seat, and part of that is due to his camera crew tagging along to record this meeting.

O'neill begins by motioning to a man to his left, "First off, This is General Hank Landry, representing Homeworld Command under Hammond's request."

"Evening, folks," the man greets. "Don't mind me, I'm just here to Observe."

"And I'm sure you all know Richard Woolsey, I.O.A.," O'neill motions to the man to Landry's left, and then to Caldwell beyond. "And Colonel Caldwell."

"Miss Aiikho," Woolsey gives you a nod.

"Mister Woolsey," you say with a return nod.

"So!" O'neill claps his hands. "Let's get to the long and short of it, shall we? Now that Atlantis has a full roster of working ZPMs and can support a much larger, fluffier gathering of wild eyed science-y folk and military minds... the International Committee has approved a VERY. Huge. And Significant. Increase in personnel and resources for the Atlantis mission. And funding. A whole lotta funding."

"Easily a Million Dollar investment to begin with, with room to grow larger," Landry says.

"That's a lot of money for not a lot of use in another Galaxy," Mckay remarks. Caldwell and Woolsey eye him. "What? I'm just saying money doesn't do us much good in Pegasus. Exchange rates and all that... Sorry. I'm getting off track, aren't I?"

"Very," Caldwell says.
"Given the investment that the International Oversight Committee has approved," Woolsey speaks up, "we've similarly approved General O'neill's recommendation for the Replacement of Doctor Weir."

"Congratulations, Mikari," O'neill says, "you've got your new assignment."

You exhale a little in relief, mostly in acceptance. "Thank you, sir."

"Furthermore," O'neill continues, "Sheppard. General Leijon sends her regards for not being here in person to deliver this message, but your promotion has gone through, and you'll be returning to Atlantis in your same position as Lead Military Officer at rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Congratulations on the slightly heftier paycheck. Use it well to support that new kid of yours."

"Thank you, Sir," John nods.

"Wait," Caldwell interjects. "The same position? The one he was holding that was basically two offices put together after Colonel Sumner's death?"

"That's the very one, Steven," O'neill says.

"The I.O.A. is hesitant to meddle with a good thing running," Woolsey says. "We figure that Bates maintaining his position of Head of Security will be good enough for Earth representation, should he accept the job. And if not, we have suggestions from both Tok'ra and Jaffa allies for replacements."

"And should he decline, we also have suggestions of our own replacements for the position," Landry adds.

"Check out Major Lorne's profile when you get back from your trip, Colonel Sheppard," O'neill says. "I think you'll want him on the expedition even if Bates stays on."

"I'll give him a honest review, Sir," John nods, though, hesitantly.

"Wait, so you're saying that we're not installing a new Earth-born head of Military command in Atlantis, and leaving day to day military operations in the hands of an Alternian chosen boy?" Caldwell asks, sounding incredulous.

"Hey, I resemble that remark," John quips.

"Not the time for jokes, John," you glance at him, then to Caldwell. "You have a problem with this decision, I take it, Colonel?"

"I'm just going to remind everyone of the reports from Doctor Kavanagh of multiple occasions where the Major and senior Staff didn't exactly see eye to eye, including an incident with an Alien nanovirus in which Major Sheppard directly disobeyed orders to-" Caldwell stops as Mckay laughs.

"Is something Funny, Doctor?"

"Just that you're relying on something Kavanagh said," Mckay answers, leveling the Colonel an amused smirk.

"We, uh," Bregman speaks up then. "We recorded a few incidents in which Doctor Kavanagh was extremely beligerent and divisive. Doctor Weir once even threatened to throw him through a Stargate into the void of space if he didn't stop putting his ego over saving lives."
"Would you like Kavanagh removed from the Atlantis staff?" Landry asks.

"In an ideal world? Yes," Mckay states. "Emphatically. Nobody likes him on our staff. From the first few days there, he started arguments with everyone and acted like he's god's given gift to mankind...." he trails off, "But he did come up with the solution to vent the air out of a stuck Jumper for propulsion that saved our lives. And he's not been so... super intolerable much, the last few weeks. Honestly, since we sent our messages back home? He's been actually downright pleasant to work with- which is a disturbing enough image on its own. I don't know what spider bit him on the butt, but it's gotten him acting nicer. For the most part."

"Fair enough," Landry muses.

"And anyways, back to the question at hand, Kavanagh was completely out of the loop with the nanovirus incident," Mckay continues. "What did he say the solution to our problem was, exactly?"

"Detonating a Naquadah Generator in orbit over the planet's surface to create an EMP that destroyed the nanovirus particles," Caldwell says.

"What?" O'Neill asks. "Did you even WATCH his complaint video, Steve?"

"...I'm sorry?" Caldwell asks. "I did. He said that was what happened."

"No," O'Neill squints at the Colonel slightly. "He didn't even mention the incident in his report at all. And believe me, I watched it."

"...You watched his hour long rant?" Bregman asks.

"I was bored and needed a good laugh," O'Neill answers.

"Oh, did you watch mine?" Mckay asks, perking up to attention.

"Carter did," O'Neill answers. "She especially found your monologue about Cats to be extremely humorous."

"...Right, anyways," Mckay shakes his head. "Point is, Doctor Jackson gave the orders under my direct request for Major Sheppard to bring in a localized EMP Generator to the quarantined zone. We were able to disable the nanovirus then and there without risk of it spreading."

"...I suppose I must have confused Kavanagh's report with someone's idle fanfiction then..." Caldwell frowns. "My mistake."

He sits back oddly coldly within his chair, defeated at that point.

"Right, anyways," O'Neill claps his hands again. "Emmett? You've got funding to continue recording everything that happens on Atlantis. You've got your job for the foreseeable future locked down. It's a hell of a paycheck for your crew."

"Well, alright then," Bregman nods.
"Okay, wrapping this up first part of things," O'neill concludes. "The Daedalus is under retrofit and inspection for the next two months, to ensure the Wraith didn't manage to get any nasty surprises wedged in anywhere. You've got that long to request supplies and new team members, conduct interviews and such..." He pauses. "Other than that... I can't think of anything else."

"What about the Time Loop?" Mckay asks.

"...Not feeling it today, actually," O'neill says. "Now then. I've got a Simpsons recording to get home to. I'll call you when I think it's time for the whole Time Loop Thing to get resolved. Go home for tonight, rest, relax, and get to work on the new jobs thing when you get a chance to."

And then he gets up from the table. A long pause follows.

"Meeting Dismissed!" he motions with his hands for you to scatter.

...Well, okay, you suppose there's really nothing to do but wait for things to fall into place.

Chapter End Notes

...Yeah, Jack totally just put off the time loop. Just because he's not feeling it happen. He's not a Time Player but you know Jack's just... that kind of guy who rolls with the punches. He's not feeling the punch coming so he's rolling with it.

...I guess.

Anyways. Yeah. The Timeloop kickoff is just... going to happen off screen... eventually. Probably without much fanfare. Probably, more will be made of it not happening than it will of it happening. Just for the pun of it.

Anyways! Woolsey, Caldwell, and Landry! Sup! Things are a little different this timeline, aren't they? Woolsey wasn't around for this meeting the first time, but then again neither was Jack.

Audience Question: Which would you rather watch- Kavanagh's or Mckay's hour long rambles?
"Oh my gosh, she's SO CUTE!"

Your name is Joey Claire, and you're fawning, just a little, over the half-asleep, tiny, little, adorably cute bundled up infant in Argo's arms.

You missed out on this quite a FEW times over the last few years, being stuck on Alternia as you were. But, you're not missing out now. Not really. Not as much as you did back then. You're gonna be the bestest Coolest Great Aunt you can be!!


"I know," Argo smiles back. "Thanks. I just kinda wish she'd waited until we got back to Earth."

"As we all know, the universe is never so kind as to make things go on time," you remark.

"Yeah," They nod. "But still... We're alive. There's that."

"There is that," you agree, sitting down on the chair opposite from Argo's in the Egbert Family Living Room, and twirling your cane up and over one of the armrests.

"So... Cane, huh?" Argo stares at it.

"I just graduated up from crutches," you answer with a non answer. "Promise not to tell John or Jade? They didn't know it was coming when... well. Time Loops."

They nod. "I'll just tell them you dropped by."

"Thanks," you say. "I'd rather they not worry about me and get distracted when it matters most."

"So... you sure you can't stay longer?" Argo asks.

"No," you shake your head. "I've got work to do, unfortunately. There's been a sighting of a woman matching Lynera's description up near Hauntswitch. Not sure if that's just someone with an unfortunate Rift-transformation, or if it's really her, somehow, but that's why me and the team are going to investigate."

"What do you think happened?" Argo asks, frowning. "If it is her, I mean. How does she go from an exploding ship in the void to Earth?"

"No idea," you say. "It's possible, I mean, that 'non-explosion' that made the rift scattered everything caught up in the blast radius to different points in time and space, but..." you frown. "I dunno. It's
messed up, this whole Rift thing. Nothing about it makes any sense."

"Oh, yeah, definitely," Argo nods. "So... if it is Lynera. What does that mean about the Slayer?"

"Who knows," you answer. "It might show up again at the randomest of times. We might never see it again, because, for all we know, it got dumped out into a black hole in a whole parallel universe." You sigh. "Honestly, that's why we ordered construction of a new one."

"You're building a New one?" Argo asks.

"No real rush on it, but we do need its parts for the Ultrazord," you say. "Dammek designed it after a different dinosaur this time. It's gonna have more of a flat mouthed head and be grey than the Slayer's white and purple."

"Cool," Argo smiles.

"But yeah. No idea when that'll get finished," you shake your head.

"So, what's the story with the tiny half ships?" Argo asks.

"Proof of concepts for city scale deployable mechs," you answer. "We've, ah. Had some troubles with some people growing to large sizes. Not large enough to be able to deploy a Megaship to intervene, but... large enough that they've been able to cause some serious trouble."

"Like?" Argo asks.

"Liiiike... Uh..." You scratch at the back of your head. "In the one instance we haven't kept out of the news, we had a bank robber in Idaho get shot at by security. Except that triggered an ability the robber hadn't realized he'd gained. Every deadly impact that hit him, say, a bullet at sufficient velocity, made his body grow rocky, and get bigger."

"Yikes!" Argo hisses.

"And we didn't want to drop the Astro or Delta on him incase he decided to grow to match their sizes, so we deployed Rhubee and Karren to take him down and, well..." You smile. "Fortunately, the guy had an upper scale in terms of how big he could grow, and they took him down and arrested him."

"God, that's terrifying," Argo says.

"Yeah. Anyways, after that, we managed to take down the ones that we did, somehow, keep out of the news. But..." you trail off.

"It's only the start, isn't it?" Argo frowns.

"Probably," you nod.

You both sigh.

"So!" You say, "Changing subjects."

"Mmmh," they nod, looking for a change of such subjects.
"Did you hear about the thing down in New Mexico yet?" You ask.

"...Eh?" Argo blinks. "What thing?"

"The, right, um..." you snap your fingers. "So, there was this scream. This really, really loud scream down in New Mexico a few hours after the rift got torn open. Like, animal like. Heard damn near across the entire desert. Nobody thought anything of it when it didn't happen again, but it started up again a few days ago, and it's been happening a bit more frequently. Apparently, the last time it happened, someone literally vanished into thin air!"

"And nobody's investigating?" Argo asks.

"Well, see, there's this Jurisdiction issue going on," you sigh. "Apparently some Archaeological team down there's got something really interesting going on, and the local State Government is backing them up, and saying stuff like-' you switch to a stuffy sort of professorly political guy voice. "The SGC and Airforce has too much of a strangle hold on everything else going on in the galaxy! This is our problem here on Our Planet in Our State and we'll deal with it Our Way!'" you sigh, returning to a normal voice. "So as much as the SGC and Alternia want to investigate it, the State's fighting back pretty heavily. No idea what's going on that they're so tight lipped about, down there, but... Well." You shrug.

"And this 'Homeworld Security' thing Hammond's running can't do anything either?" Argo asks.

"Nope!" you say. "Apparently because their jurisdiction is 'intergalactic' in scope, they're totally unable to intervene because whatever's happening, they're VERY certain it's local to Earth and the New Mexico Desert and not related to the Rift or the transformations or..." You shake your head. "It's a mess. But if it keeps up after we deal with this Lynera thing, I'm swinging down there to take a look at things- unofficially, mind you."

"Unofficially matters more over officially? That seems a bit backwards," Argo muses.

"Well, some guy named Doctor Watson said the only way anybody from the SGC or Alternia or whatever would be getting involved with the events going on down there, it'd be only if they're not acting as part of the military or any of those organizations, and are only there because they personally want to be there." You muse. "Some of his specific words were, 'If you're answering the Call, then there's really nothing we can do to stop you. But otherwise, please leave this to us.'"

"That's weird. I wonder what that means?" Argo asks, tilting their head.

"I think he means, like... the curiosity of what's going down there is begging on a personal level, rather than a professional one."

"...Well, honestly," Argo says. "The only place I feel 'called' back to is Atlantis." They glance down to the infant in their arms. "Home for us. Huh, Lizzy?"

You smile at that. "Weirdly, a couple people I've talked to about it don't seem all that interested in it either," you say. "Even if there's a mild curiosity, most people I've talked to have been all-"

"Wait," Argo snaps to attention, suddenly, eyes locking onto you. "Did you say New Mexico?"

"Uh... Yeah," you nod. "Why?"
"Just..." Argo frowns. "Something from the old timeline. I remember..." Their eyes flash both with their standard neon glow as well as some Goa'uld flare. "2005. New Mexico. There was a cavern down there, that... for some reason there was a huge burst of alien creatures who could teleport, swarming out of it. They had wings, and they had claws and..." A shudder runs through Argo's wings, flaring them out. "They had this god-awful cry. Like...

"Do you remember it?" You ask.

"Yeah," Argo nods.

"Can I listen to your memories of it?" You ask, reaching out with Administrator as soon as you get a nod of confirmation.

And so you listen. You hear a sort of, growling, gravelly sort of chittering. Along with chirps, and claws clacking against the ground...

And then a memory plays itself. An online video, a camera's recording of a slow pan back from a volcano as rain falls and smoke and steam bellows from the caldera- illuminating a group of creatures entering the Caldera.... One stands atop the rim, and then...

It Screams.

You stare at Argo, and ask. "What happened?"

"A madman calling himself... Escher, I think it was. He claimed he had mind control over the creatures," Argo explains. "He started attacking every world in the galaxy... But about a year later, Jayni managed to stop him by taking whatever mind control thing he was using. She called it a Tablet, but I don't know if she was mocking him or not."

"...That's..." you feel a stirring through your heart. "Okay. So that's four years from now. Maybe three. I guess I can head that off before we run into trouble."

"Hopefully it won't be a problem, what with all the other changes to this timeline from that one," Argo says, glancing down at the baby again. "It's really all so different..."

"But better safe than sorry," you say.

Argo glances back at you, and smiles. "Yeah. I guess so."

Chapter End Notes

Well. That's some foreshadowing and laying down of some future arcs for the ALT side of the story.

Reader Question: Do you think it's actually Lynera or someone with an unfortunate transformation? Any wacky zany theories about what's going to happen instead with the Lynera hunt?
MIR:02X01: Falling Star.

Chapter Summary

A Tale of Sorrow and Woes.... But that's just how the Story Goes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 02/20/0005.

"It's been a while since we thought about Astore, huh?"

Your name is Silica- Knight of Alfheim, Defender of Aincrad, dimensional Twin to Keiko Ayano... And a Mourner of Lost friends. You close your eyes for a moment, and swirl your can of soda like a wine glass as you and your twin sit at a table overlooking the ocean planet Atlantis sits upon.

"It has been," you say, opening your eyes again, and taking in the night sky. "Years, and years..."

"Mmh," Keiko sighs. "You know... I've been putting off telling Mallek about it. I only just... I only just had told him about how we even found that damned sword to begin with a little while before the rift opened. It felt... out of sequence to bring it up so soon. It took a year for her to get to that point, even, but..." She trails off.

"It was pretty out of nowhere for her, wasn't it?" You muse picking up the slack, staring out at the ocean's horizon. "Part of me still blames myself for not pushing harder to get her to stay with us on Aincrad. But... I know I couldn't have convinced her. Not with how she kept escalating. And Escalating. And Fucking Escalating." You snarl a little. "That fucking Sword was just too much power for her to hold in her hands."

"Caliburn," Keiko mutters the name with as much distaste and disgust as you feel. "The Sword of Selection, they called it." She scoffs. "More like the Sword of Ruined Lives."

"We're lucky that Oberonn never got his hands on it," you agree. "But that's really all that we got lucky on."

You can't help but dwell on it. Hearing report after report from Yuuki through the Mirror as Astore lead the Rebellion's march against Oberonn's forces with increasingly more violent uses of the sword's energy blasts.

All the while, you were off in another universe trying to clear a dead woman's name.

And then Yuuki and her Sister came through the mirror that one day and they asked and they begged for your help in stopping Astore from doing something suicidal.
Oberonn had clearly left an opening in his schedule and left the tree for a rare, rare chance to tour the Continent.

It was all a trap. He wanted the sword. Thought he could get it himself.

The brawl that happened in the Valley of the Butterflies was enough to rename it into the Valley of Molten Dreams.

---

**CLANG!**

**YEARS IN THE PAST...**

**SMASH!!!**

**BUT NOT MANY...**

**SHIIINKK!**

**A GALAXY...**

**THUNK-BWRRRRRRRMMMM!!!**

...AND SEVERAL DIMENSIONAL UNIVERSES AWAY...

---

Your name is Silica, no fancy titles at all beyond that of a CONCERNED FRIEND...

Oberonn's forces laid a fucking trap.

He had some sort of portal generating machine hidden away in his mobile, glying fortress styled carriage, and from it, came out machines unlike the likes you'd ever seen from this universe.

But, you'd seen images of them from another one.

Alternian styled Imperial Drones.

Hundreds and thousands of them flooded through the gateway like wasps, buzzing to the tune of Oberonn's mercenary Pucca band.

The Musicians played a godawful tune that set the mood horribly. A song of despair and of remorse... Of STORM and of FIRE.

You and Keiko and Touya and Minori and Yuuki were caught at the edges of the fight, working in towards the center of the battle...

The center where Astore locked blades with her demented father.

Time moved slowly from your perspective- or maybe it was due to some form of dimensional warping?- and so everything just moved at a snail's pace even if you were slicing down these Drones
as fast as you physically could.

Or maybe it was the... the... what did they call it on Aincrad? Adrennalin?

Whatever the cause...

You watch as they fight.

Astore swings into it wholely. Oberonn blocks casually. He leans back- Astore rebounds and he retaliates with a series of swings. Astore's armor blocks it and she lashes out with a kick. Her father's nose gets crush in and blood sprays.

You're still too far out.

Oberonn casts some kind of gravity spell- and everyone in the field save for him and his daughter suddenly find the ground VERY attractive.

You're trying to be sarcastic and joking, but you trip over your feet and you wind up face planting. It's only sheer luck that has you landing at an angle you can still watch the fight.

Still watch as Astore raises Caliburn and twists the handle- causing the entire Valley to glow with golden light as little speckles of magic drift upwards and a spiraling, massive beam of light emerges from the sword's blade.

"EX....!"

Oberonn panics, and throws his sword at her- hoping to hit her own sword and stop the attack... And he forgets about the gravity spell. The sword falls short of its target height.

But not short enough where distance is concerned.

"CALI--!!"

The blade pierces through Astore's chest. The golden beam of light flickers for a moment as her blood flies out behind her in a spray, and you can't see her eyes.

But her stance remains steadfast even as her knees wobble, the beam restores in steadiness, and Astore does the only thing she can.

"...CALIBRUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURN!!"

She swings to the side in a circle- blasting everything above her waist height and sparing everything below it. And at the end of her swing...

She throws the golden sword straight into the portal generator that was damaged in the swing.

The rift fluctuates wildly- for a moment showing what you almost think is Aincrad's Earth, except without the magnetosphere and the floating castles- and then Caliburn slips through the portal and the device explodes.
Your name is Keiko Ayano, and your watch beeps as Midnight transpires on Earth. It's not midnight here, not by a long shot. The planetary cycle around the sun is off for that.

Still.

You look over at Silica, and say, "We couldn't have done anything different."

"She died," Silica says, mourning the loss again. "He ran. She. Died. We BURIED her. Because he didn't even have the decency to even try to heal her or save her from his own damned sword and he didn't even bother canceling out the gravity spell!" she takes a hefty swig of her soda can, emptying it, and then throws it out over the ocean with one hand before letting lose a fireball with the other.

A small pop of fire, and a moment later there was no can.

"Damn it... Why did... Why did I even bring it up again?" she hisses.

"Because it was and still is an insane idea?" You answer.

At that, Silica sighs, tension melting out of her shoulders. And then she says, "I just hope wherever that Piece of Shit Sword wound up landing, it broke and didn't curse anyone else."

"Yeah," you agree with a nod. "Hopefully that's exactly what happened... but realistically? It probably got used again," you sigh. "I just hope whoever got that sword had a happier ending than Astore did..."

YEARS IN THE PAST...

...BUT THOUSANDS...

...ON THE BRITISH ISLES ON EARTH...

...IN THIS VERY SAME DIMENSION.

The sky stormed over with thunder and lightning as a small tear of golden light opened within the eye of the storm.

And then like a bolt of lightning- a sword flung at speeds and struck the ground with a clap of noise, dirt, smoke, and debris.

...And when it faded, the sword Caliburn lay pierced into a massive boulder- nay, fused into it.

It would be a hundred years later that a girl named Artoria Pendragon would find the sword and attempt to pull it from the rock that housed it... and would succeed, becoming KING.
Tuesday's Chapter: S9X01: Avalon.

...Nothing to really say about this chapter, save that you probably should have seen this kind of fate coming, given that Oberonn got dethroned by TRIZZA rather than his own daughter.
Your name is Nepeta Leijon, and you are currently quite enthralled with the story that's concluding so you'll save narration for when it's done.

"And so!" Argo Lalonde narrated the conclusion of the wild fantasy children's book "MAGIC TREE HOUSE: A MERLIN MISSION. A Thief At the Round Table" to her children and your fellow story tale listeners as the concluding act of tonight's sleepover. "King Arthur took the sword Excaliber from Jack and Annie and returned it to its rightful resting spot on the wall."

She coughs, changing to Arthur's voice. "Well, now, I think we've foiled those thieving magic ninjas quite thoroughly for one night. Thank you once again for all you've done for Camelot and my Kingdom, Jack and Annie,' Arthur said."

She goes squeaky high pitched. "Oh it was our pleasure, King Arthur! Merlin messaged us at just the right time to make it happen!' Annie said.'

She goes slightly deeper, but still squeaky, "And we got an eye witness account on the history of Ancient China for our History Report too!' Jack said."

"No," Rose interjects for the hundredth time tonight, "that should be 'Jack' and 'Annie exclaimed.' I heard the exclamation marks in there, Aunt Argo."

Argo squints at the tinier version of Rose, and says, "Well, that's how it's written in the book, Rose. I can't change that."

"But it's BORING!" Rose protests.

"Ssssh!" Your namesake tiny duplicate of Argo nudges the girl in the side with a wing. "I don't mind it, Rose!"

"But it's so grammatically..." Rose stops herself to duck as her own brother swings a pillow at her head. "John!!"

"C'mon, Rose! Let Aunt Argo finish it and then we can complain about the writing later," he says.

You can't help but giggle as Kanaya then leans up against Rose, shoulder to shoulder, and then places a hand on her head with a "Pat pat."

"Fine..." Rose crosses her arms, pouting.
"Right then..." Argo smiles. "Now, where were we?"

...Yeah, that narration might have to wait until morning. :33

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O<--STARGATE: SG-1-->O

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DIASPORA DATE: 03/14/0005.

"Okay, okay, but hear me out." Your name and rank is Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Mitchel, and you have the greatest idea ever. "So, you've got MnM's right? Candy shell around chocolate filling? What if... you did the candy shell around Reese's peanut butter instead. Now that's phase one. Call them... I dunno, Reese's Pieces?"

"Okay, I'm with you so far," Jonas Quinn muses. "What's phase two?"

"You stick those Peanut Butter MnMs inside of a Reese's peanut butter cup," you deliver the concept with a motion of an explosion by your head and a muted 'boom!'

"And you lost me," Jonas frowns.

"As someone whose father had a peanut allergy," Jude Harley remarks, "I am completely neutral on the idea, but it sounds almost vaguely disgusting on a existential level."

"Pft, c'mon, Cam," Cassandra Fraiser giggles. "On their own the peanut butter pieces might be alright. But. Why go to such a ridiculous level of inception on it for?"

"Well, that's--" you're interrupted as a knock resounds from the cafeteria door as General O'neil leans in through the doorway.

"Hey, kids!" He greets. "I'm off for Washington to deal with more of the usual politalk." A roll of the eyes. "Be good for General Landry while I'm gone now! And!" He wags a finger. "No starting any world ending apocalypses, alright?"

"Yes, Sir!" you four members of SG-1 chime in with a well rehearsed reply.

"Good!" O'neill nods, a bit hesitantly, clearly not expecting that. "Alright then."

And with that, he leaves the cafeteria doors swinging behind him.

"...Did anyone else find it weird he called us kids?" you ask.

"We all are a bit younger than him," Jonas remarks.

"I was eleven when I first met Uncle Jack," Cassandra states. "So the associations probably stuck."
"Ten," Jude echoes. "And yet thanks to time bubbles we're both almost two years older than we should be."

You do the mental math, with it having been Seven Years for them since that first Mission to Abydos... Plus two...

"Nineteen-to-Twenty is just barely edging out the 'kids' title, in my opinion," you remark.

"Yeah, well, that's Jack for you," Jude shrugs. "He just doesn't care when the kids he's used to already have kids of their own."

"Speaking of," Jonas leans forwards. "What's Penny doing today?"

"Roxy's got her for tonight. So..." Cassandra takes out her phone and taps at it. "Looks like today's plans involve more family bonding with Argo and the new baby while John and Jade continue working on hiring people for Atlantis.... generic party stuff and lots of book reading and tv watching... all leading to another sleepover tonight."

"Another?" Jonas asks. "Did I miss something?"

"There was a whole sleepover party last night while Okurii's on Earth," Jude answers. "There was this whooole thing with all the older kids, including a couple of Alternian kids who came through the gate too."


---

"Ugggh. Seriously? Earth??" Your name is Vala Mal Doran, and you lay a withering gaze on the Ancient Language Translator you hired for the job. "The Gate Coordinates are seriously for Earth??"

"Yes," Your translator, JAN... GEN.... GENIUS? Whatever his name is, he's no genius if he's sending you to EARTH. Still. He nods. "You'll want to go to Earth if you want to find this Ancient Treasure."

"But Earth is so... So... Back water!" you protest.

"It's also where this 'Avalon' in the text is located," your translator says, adjusting his glasses that you swear are just untreated glass lenses and not actually corrective. "And Earth is where quite a many of the Ancient's technologies were developed."

"Ugggggh. But it's also where those pesky Es-Gee-Number teams come from!" You grimace. "They're... not my biggest fans?"

"Well, I've done some translation work for one of their allies," your translator smiles. "I think I can put a good word in."
Your name is Teal'c, and things are... strange.

On its own, building a new Jaffa Nation is tough work. Spanning across the galaxy, gathering all the estranged Jaffa homeworlds, and putting in a government that can rule all without stepping on the toes of the individual worlds. With all of the various reactions to the renouncement of the Goa'uld as gods- the sheer abandonment of those false gods who had survived the Replicators of their people in the wake of the taking of Dakara, and all of those old guard who are still steeped in their old culture full of antiquated rights and religion.

But add in the sudden development of GENETIC POWERS and now...

Now you have a job that is already ten times worse.

There are those who think themselves gods in their own rights now, taking over their planets and refusing to do anything but rule their own isolated worlds away from the rest. There are those who are banding together to form miniature replicas of the System Lord councils and...

You wish you could take the time to go with O'neill to his cabin at his lake on Earth and just go Fishing again.

But you cannot.

"Excuse me, Teal'c?" And then a Jaffa approaches you. "Our Translator for the Ancient Ruins has appeared ahead of time, accompanied by a woman who wishes to speak with you."

FINALLY! Something you can deal with.

"I will speak to her immediately," you decide.

Your name is Henry Landry, HANK to your friends, and a MAJOR GENERAL In the USAF.

You're also now basically the DEFACTO LEADER of the SGC whenever General Jack O'neill is off dealing with Politics and other such... Shenanigans.

Ostensibly, General George Hammond placed you here, even if Jack was the one to offer you the job of keeping an eye on the base while he's out doing stuff.

You honestly don't mind. It's a pay check and a lot of flexible hours, and you shouldn't have to deal with too many crazy shenanigans. It's a nice easy road to retirement, you'd told George, who...

Well.

George just smiled knowingly and nodded in a way that said he was definitely expecting you to give him a phone call someday soon.

Also. Your daughter works here. Doctor Carolyn Lam- well, she took your wife's name after the divorce- the SGC's Chief Medical Officer, recently promoted to taking the job full time after the former CMO, Doctor Janet Fraiser, requested a permanent transfer to Atlantis. Something about medical laws being more lax in Pegasus, you'd heard.
One of the reasons you took this job is you're hoping to patch things up with her.

You think Jack and George had something to do with arranging such an opportunity.

You're heavily considering heading down to the SGC Infirmary when there's an unscheduled offworld activation.

You head down to the Control Room, and Chief Master Sergeant WALTER HARRIMAN reports that it's Teal'c from the Jaffa controlled world of Dakara on radio.

"This is General Landry, acting commander of the SGC," you greet. "What can we do for you, Teal'c?"

"General Landry, O'neill told me of your assignment and suggested I give you well wishes," Teal'c says. "However, that is not why I am calling through."

"What is, then?" You ask.

"A woman came through the Stargate an hour ago, accompanied by a man who has been helping us with the translation of the Ancient Ruins here on Dakara. The woman's name is Vala Mal Doran, and she is requesting safe transit through to Earth," Teal'c reports.

"Any reason why?" You ask.

"No. She claims she will only talk to one Jonas Quinn," Teal'c answers. "However, the translator has implied she is in possession of Ancient Tablets that talk about great treasures. I believe such a treasure may be located on Earth, if that is the case."

"Well, who doesn't like a good piece of treasure?" You muse. "Tell this 'Vala' then that we'll prepare a team to escort her back through to Earth and just sit tight until then."

"Very well," Teal'c replies.

Your name is Jonas Quinn, and SG-1 stands at the base of the ramp as the Stargate dials in.

"So, what do we know about this Vala chick anyways?" Mitchel asks.

"Not much," Cassandra says. "Her name popped up every now and then after we dug into the Prometheus Incident, but she's not made much of a name for herself in the circles we can talk to easily."

"So basically a whole lot of nothing," Mitchel summarizes.

"A whole lot of nothing but trouble," you correct.

WAA WAA! KAWOOOSH!

"SG-12 IDC received, Opening Iris," Walter reports, and the Iris spins open.
A moment later, SG-12 steps through the Gate, escorting the grinning face that's haunted your nightmares. She has a leather jacket slung over one shoulder, and strides casually down the ramp. A couple of SG-12's team members are carrying large metal cases.

This does not bode well.

"Ah! My Dashing Partner in Crime, Fish Boy!!!" Vala greets with a loud cry upon locking eyes with you. "I was hoping you'd join us for a bit of fishy fun!"

("Fish Boy?" Mitchel inquires, even as Cassandra giggles and Jude chokes slightly. The Gate shuts down in the meantime.)

"Hello, Vala," you sigh as she descends the ramp. "You were hoping I'd join in on this?"

"Well, of course!" She grins. "It's not every day I get bamboozled not once but TWICE on a job! Let alone by the same man. A woman? Sure, that's happened. But you? Most people would just leave me to starve, but no. You packed me a Lunch!!"

Cassandra's giggles descend into full blown laughter- "Y-You packed- haha- you packed her a- Luh-A Lunch!?"

"I'm starting to regret that choice," you mutter.

"Aw, now come on, Fish Boy!" Vala smirks. "I know the only thing you're regretting is-"

"AHHEM!" Jude coughs, loudly.

"Oh! Right, the greeting party," Vala eyes the rest of your team. "We haven't met yet, have we?"

"Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Mitchell," Mitchel introduces himself.

"Same rank, Alternian Branch," Jude says. "I'm Jude Harley, the girl unable to contain her laughter is my wife, Cassandra."

"Just give me a moment!" Cassandra wheezes. "Oh my god he made her a LUNCH! HEEEE....Ehehhehe!"

"Annd..." Vala peers at your jacket's right shoulder. "Going by the shiny silver 'One' on your shoulders, I guess you're SG-1?" She blinks. "I suppose that makes sense with Muscles back there working Jaffa stuff. Still. Wasn't there supposed to be a tall fellow, grey hair, cracked jokes? Heard a lot about that guy. Good sense of humor, I heard."

Cassandra immediately gets a far away look in her eyes as she sobers up mighty quickly. "We have to wrap this up before Jack gets back."

"Amen to that," you motion for the door. "Now then. You said something about Ancient Buried Treasure?"

"You got ripped off," you say as you stare at the stones all laid out before you on the SGC
conference table. "Half of these tablets are gibberish."

"Ugh, tell me about it!" Vala laments. "My dealer really screwed me over when he tipped me off on these! That's the last time I trust a man in glasses called Hans Olo!"
Casandra, Jude, and Mitchel all restrain the urge to laugh- visibly. Vala doesn't seem to notice.

"Anyways, just write off the gibberish ones and focus on the ones my Translator pinned with the pink ribbons. Those ones are written in code, or talk about what we're after specifically."

"You already had a Translator," you frown, glancing at Vala. "Why come to us?"

"Because he told me the treasure was on Earth and that he wasn't going to do any more work on it beyond funneling me towards you lot?" Vala asks as an answer, crossing her arms. "Now, look. Reading them is one thing. Understanding is another. I could have come to earth with a ship and searched and searched till the crows cowbell their way home... Or, however that earth saying goes."

"I don't think there's any that actually does go that way," Jude remarks.

"Anyways, point is, I don't know this planet's history well enough to pull something like a heist like this off," Vala says. "And if I DIDN'T do anything with it... well. Mister Genius Translator back there told me he'd tell the Jaffa who'd tell you anyways. What a greedy little money launderer. I don't think he's HALF as well versed in Ancient as he says he is!"

Cassandra seems to find that extremely funny for some reason she's not sharing with the team.

"Anyways, I've also got a couple of other tangentially related artifacts that might help in solving this," Vala says. "I can show them to you somewhere a bit more... private?"

You grunt a negative. "No. I'll work here. And you stay here too and don't touch anything. I don't trust you to not slap some obscure Goa'uld marriage bracelet on my wrist as blackmail to ensure we take you along to solve the puzzle, or whatever insane plan you cooked up."

"Well!" Vala huffs. "I never in my entire life would never ever--!"

"You mean these marriage bracelets?" Cassandra asks as she lifts a golden band out of a box.

"...Try that on you, Fishy Boy!" Vala says, defensive. "I was saving those for if I ever ran into that Olo guy! I need my money and he's disappeared off the grid for years now! I'm owed compensation."

"How exactly do these things work anyhow?" Jude asks, taking the Bracelet Cassandra had picked up as she hands it to him and takes out another.

You see Cassandra wriggling her eyebrows at Jude, who rolls his eyes.

"Oh, you slap them on your wrists and it creates a metaphysical link between the wearers that--" Vala's explanation is cut short as both of them put on the freaking Goa'uld Marriage Bracelets. "...Damn it! Now I really do have to wait for you to solve the puzzle, Fishy!"

"...And why's that?" you ask.

"Because I REALLY want my bracelets back unharmed and I am NOT telling you how to take
them off without getting my fair share of the Ancient Treasure," Vala says, crossing her arms. "I wasn't kidding when I said I wanted them for that Olo guy!"

"Cassie, Jude..." Mitchel stares at them. "Why exactly did you do that?"

"Because," Cassandra says, smiling. "They're a whole lot funnier to wear around than wedding rings!"

"And she dare-wriggled her eyebrows at me," Jude adds, similarly smiling.

"Oh, Gods, you two really are married, aren't you?" Vala groans, leaning back in her chair and throwing her head back over the neck rest and glaring up at the ceiling. "I thought that was a joke-but NO! You just put on the freaking distance-limiting bracelets I was going to use to keep Olo from running off before he paid me back!"

"Distance what now?" Mitchel asks.

"I don't know how they work!" Vala says. "All I know is they're proximity based and you can't go too far apart for too long or else you'll faint."

Jude looks un-amused. Cassandra just smiles, content, as she examines the bracelet with all the appreciation of a newly wed her diamond ring.

You sigh. "Mitchel. Go call Teal'c back, and see if he knows anything about these things."

"They are called Kor Mak," Your name is Teal'c, and you eye Cassandra and Jude with a mix of amusement and disapproval. "And no, they are not Marriage Bracelets."

"Aww," Cassandra pouts. "Are you sure we can't re-purpose them?"

"No," you shake your head. "I have only heard of them in passing a very long time ago. But I believe it was Cronus who used this technology when a prisoner of value needed to be transported by one of his Jaffa. He would affix a bracelet such as this to both the prisoner and the Jaffa responsible for him. If they became separated for more than a short period of time, they would both become ill and die."

"Oh that's just stupid!" Vala protests. "Who makes a slave bracelet that KILLS the keeper!? Gods, and to think I was going to use that on myself!"

"You didn't know?" Jonas Quinn asks.

"I knew it'd make you sick, but not the death part!" Vala groans.

"How could you not know about that!?" Jonas asks.

"Because the person that I stole it from didn't tell me that part!"

You feel oddly at peace as Jonas and Vala then break into a shouting match.
"Question," Mitchel begins, "Why would a Goa'uld make these things that way?"

"To punish the Jaffa for their Incompetence," you answer.

"Right, of course..." Mitchel sighs.

"Can you take them off, Teal'c?" Jude asks.

"No!" Cassandra interjects. "It's fine! As long as we don't have to separate from each other, we're good, Jude." She pauses. "Besides. I can tell Vala's going to keep her word. She'll take them off when we find the treasure."

"If the person she stole them from didn't lie about that too," Mitchel gripes.

"She didn't get lied to about that," Cassandra promises. "I can tell. The only way either me or Jude die from these things is if we're stupid and intentionally go against my vibes."

"So we're resigned to solving this Ancient Treasure Hunt then, I guess?" Mitchel asks.

"I'm game for adventure!" Vala interjects, before returning to fighting with Jonas- "And No! My leather jacket is NOT made out of Unas hide! Who would even do such an inhumane thing!? I may be a thief but I have STANDARDS, Jonas Quinn!"

Jonas' reply is stopped- he stares blankly, then says, shockingly calmly, "You know, I think that's the first time since you showed up that you called me by my name."

"Was it?" She then grins from ear to ear. "I guess that means we'll have to get married ourselves now and make lots of babies!"

"Aaaaand you lost me," Jonas massages at the bridge of his nose.

"Teal'c!!" Your name is Jade Jackson, and you give the Jaffa a hug. "Hey! How's it going?"

"Tiring," he answers. "How has the research on Atlantis gone?"

"Uggghh." You groan. "I don't wanna talk about it! It's a mess!"

"It's a literal mess of paperwork and recruiting nonsense," John gripes from behind a card-house made up out of manilla folders of personnel files. "When can we go back home again, Jade? I miss Argo cuddles."

"Another few hours, John," you roll your eyes, "But take a break and come talk with Teal'c!"

"Bluhhhhh..." he waves his arm. "Hi, Teal'c. Too tired to get up and move."

Teal'c cracks a smile, "That is perfectly understandable, Colonel Sheppard. Congratulations on the Promotion."

"UGh, everyone built up me getting to do cool time travel stuff right after I got promoted but instead
all I've done so far is paperwork!!" John gripes. "I swear, General O'neill keeps dragging this out as punishment for something! But what!? What horrendous prank could I have pulled to cause this pile up of paperwork?"

You sigh, and tell Teal'c, "He's been asking himself that for a month now. I think another month longer and he's just going to go steal the Time Jumper to complete the loop on his own."

"An ill advised move," Teal'c observes. "I believe instead he may have been waiting for specific information to become available."

"...Like what?" You ask, feeling curious.

"Perhaps you should inquire to Cassandra and Jude about their new Marriage Bracelets," Teal'c answers with a quirk of a smile. "In the mean time, I shall leave you to your work. I have much I wish to do while I am on Earth before the Dakara Council reconvenes tomorrow."

"Good luck, Teal'c," you smile. "And I'll ask Cassie and Jude the next chance I get."

Your name is Roxy Egbert, and you call out a "Just a minute!" when you hear the doorbell ring.

You step out of the kitchen into the hallway and past the living room where Argo and the whole gaggle of kids are currently staring at the TV showing the latest season of Power Rangers (*Time Force! Time Force! Po-wer! Ran-gers!* and open the door.

"Teal'c!" You squeal with delight, and give the big burly Jaffa man a hug. "Come in! C'm'in!"

"Miss Egbert," Teal'c bows slightly once he's inside and able to take his hat off. "I see the remodeling was completed successfully."

"Pssh, yeah," you wave it off. "What's a few dozen bullet holes to the walls and a smashed in door but an excuse to do some home remodeling?"

"Indeed," Teal'c nods. "How has life here on Earth been progressing?"

"Oh, you know, chaos, insanity, magic powers, the usual," you roll your eyes. "Can you believe they're actually talking about making a separate sports league for powered people already? Not days out of the gate of people gaining powers and the NCAA is all about making money off of it."

"That does seem to be a recurring trend," Teal'c observes, peering into the living room. "I see Nepeta Leijon is in attendance. Is General Leijon here?"

"Okurii's on the same trip Jack's on," you answer. "I volunteered to keep an eye on Troll Nep while she's busy. This whole powers thing is a mess for everyone."

Teal'c nods. "Indeed. The troubles we've been having with our own Governments has been... Vexing." He shakes his head. "But that is not why I came."

"Oh?" You ask. "Why did you drop by then?"
"In truth...." he pauses. "In truth I felt unable to change much of anything in recent days. Being asked to help identify an object in person was an interesting change of pace. A reminder of how things used to be. A small fraction of my own mind is devoting itself to wondering what the end result of all of this may end up being."

"Curiosity! That's normal," you grin.

"Yes, I suppose it is. But beyond mere idle curiosity, I came to check in with my friends while I am visiting Earth," he says, smiling back.

"Aww," you smile. "You big softy, T!" You lightly punch him in the shoulder. "You keep that up and people'll start thinking you're just a big ol' cuddly teddy bear!"

Silently, Teal'c raises a single eyebrow in that way he does, and you can't help but laugh.

Then, your darling Rose interjects- "But Time Travel doesn't work like that!!"

"And how would you know, Rose?" little Jade Harley asks. "Have YOU time traveled like that?"

"Well, no, but clearly it just makes sense to..." Rose starts rambling.

"Hah... Alright, alright. Let's go interrupt their show," you say. "The kids've missed you and that sounds like an argument waiting to boil!"

"Indeed," Teal'c nods.

"Wait. That can't be right," Jonas remarks as he peers at a Laptop.

Your name is Jude Harley, and you glance over at Jonas as he checks a tablet, and then back to the laptop.

Vala is the one who asks, "What is it?"

"Well, this," Jonas motions at the laptop. "This is a portion of the database from Atlantis that the Expedition brought back a few weeks ago. Specifically it's a log of the names of the Ancients who left the City when it was under siege from the Wraith thousands of years ago."

"Right," Vala says. "No idea what any of that means, but continue?"

"See, a lot of the gibberish tablets are signed Janus, who we know as a time traveler and probably made these as a prank," Jonas says.

"Fits with what we know of the guy," you muse.

"Others are signed by Ganos Lal, who we knew personally because she descended and helped us out before she died... But one of these is signed by a guy named Myrddin," Jonas smiles.

"Never heard of him," Mitchell says.
We have, actually. The thing is, his name is on the Database too, but it's listed as an aside like a nickname," Jonas says. "Moros, side name Myrddin."


"See, his nickname would translate a little differently into English," Jonas smirks. "Ever heard of Merlin?"

"Waiiiiiit," Cassie sits up, and the gears click in your mind too. "Ganos said she worked as a sort of corrector for the Ancients and one of her jobs had her taking on the alias of Morgan. So... Are we actually saying that-?"

"Merlin? Morgan?" Mitchel asks. "Like, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table Merlin and Morgan?"

"Yup," Jonas nods.

"We KNEW Morgan!?" Mitchel asks.

"Yeah, we did," you nod.

"Now THAT is what I'm talking about!" Mitchel pumps a fist into the air. "HAHAH! I LOVE THIS JOB!"

"Still no idea who these people are," Vala mutters to herself.

You rectify that by recounting Arthurian Myth. The sword from the stone. The rise of Arthur to King. The confusing duality of Morgan as a villain and also a hero depending on the renditions—which can easily be explained away by Ganos' job from the Ancients. The appearance of Mordred, and the inevitable colapse of Camelot and the Round Table in a fiery clash of death and destruction...

At some point during that whole tirade, General Landry joined the group to listen to you tell the tale.

"It's said that in the final minutes of the war," you conclude, "that Arthur and Mordred clashed Clarent and Excaliber to the point the energy lit up the sky for miles around. Mordred was consumed in the blast, and Arthur, wounded by the battle, was carried off by Merlin to the Vale of Avalon. Which, according to legend, was a magical place where the dead would meet. Rumor abound that Arthur went there to die, but other say he never did, and would one day return."

"From what Roxy told us Ganos said during the Ark Trip," Cassie starts, "She and Merlin were nowhere near that battle when it happened. It's impossible for Merlin to have helped Ascend Arthur, or get them there. Not directly in person."

"So what's all this got to do with our treasure?" Vala asks.

"Well," Jonas takes it from there, "there are a number of conflicting interpretations, but certain threads point to the Knights of the Round Table gathering great treasures from the far corners of Arthur's domain and hiding them in a magical stronghold at Avalon."

"Now," you say, "Avalon's likely a real place, from what we know Ganos knew, and it's one Merlin kept secret from everyone but Arthur. And when Ganos returned to Earth without Merlin, she had no idea where to go to look. So the question is, how does Merlin, not present, take Arthur to Avalon?"
"Transporter," Landry states the obvious before sipping at his coffee. "Either Asgard tech or Ring based."

"Exactly," you say. "It'd make sense if there was a ring transporter, primarily. But there's also likely an emergency in-case-of-near-death transporter Arthur would use."

"Right...." Jonas nods, and starts searching on his laptop. "So, if we assume that it's somewhere on Earth, and that whatever transporter was used is short range that narrows our location down by a lot... And... Ahha!" He grins, and then quotes, "In 1191, the monks at Glastonbury Abbey claimed to have found the grave of King Arthur. On the stone burial was an inlaid lead cross was the inscription: "Hic Iacet Sepultus Inclitus Rex Artarius in Insula Avallonis." "Here lies the famous King Arthur, buried on the Isle of Avalon." Now the claim was not taken seriously until 1278, when Henry II ordered the grave to be exhumed. Now Glastonbury, a small town about 125 miles west of London has been a pilgrimage for believers since."

"I've heard legends that Glastonbury Tor- the hill that overlooks that town- is actually hollow," you realize.

"So..." Mitchel sits forwards. "Has anyone dug into it or done geological surveys?"

"Yes. Several apparently disproving the claim, but-" Jonas says, raising a finger. "It might just be a lot further underground than anyone ever thought."

"Like the Antarctic Outpost," Landry guesses.

"It's the Ancients," you say. "We searched that whole area near the Beta Gate after it was found but we only found the outpost itself when we knew exactly where it was. Miles beneath the ice..."

"So..." Vala interjects. "Is this going anywhere or...?"

"What if we use the Asgard sensors onboard the Prometheus?" Cassie voices. "I think we could probably find something nobody's seen before if we check it out through that."

"Well, that's an idea," Landry smiles. "I'll go make a few calls to General O'neill and the President. Run it by them. See if the British Prime Minister is willing to agree to a little historical archeology."

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DIASPORA DATE: 03/15/0005.

"So.... what do you think the range on these things is?" Jude asks as you gear up in the Prometheus' Locker Room.

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser-Harley, and you glance down at the golden trinket on your wrist. Heh. It may not be a marriage bracelet officially, but you're sure going to think of it as one.

"MMh... I'd say.... within a hundred feet. Annnd More than half an hour outside that is when we'll feel the effects," you summarize.
"Lieutenant Colonels Fraiser and Harley, to Auxiliary Control Room Two," interjects over the ship's intercom.

"Well, I guess we're heading out," you grin.

"Let's just hope this doesn't end with us getting crushed under a giant rock or something," Jude mutters.

And so you head to Aux. Control Room 2.

You arrive to find Vala lounging against an annoyed Jonas, remarking about memories that clearly didn't even happen in this room.

Mitchel arrives just after you, and pushes between Vala and Jonas with a "'Scuse me, Kids," and then he approaches Lieutenant Marks, to ask, "What do you got, Marks?"

"Well," Marks rolls his chair across the floor to another station. "Thanks to Asgard sensors we were able to detect an energy distortion that would have normally fooled deep ground sonar. I was able to define the outlines of a large main cavern, a network of tunnels, and some smaller caves."

"Nicely done, Lieutenant," Mitchel grins, and claps Marks on the shoulder.

"Any piles of precious metals?" Vala asks, suddenly interested. "Wait, no, you just said you could only get the edges of it, right? I think I might have misheard."

"Just the exterior edges and outline, yes," Marks answers.

"So..." You peer at the screen. "Asgard beaming in or out?"

"Out, we can't get a lock through the energy field protecting the caves," Marks answers.

Immediately, SG-1 plus Vala all chime in with "Rings."

PVVVVMMMMMM-SHIIIIINNNNNGGG!!!

VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM!

VARROOOOOOOOOOOOOSH!!!!

VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM VRRRM!

SHIIIIING-SNKT.

Flashlights click on, revealing a large dark cavernous room before you.

"Well, this is a whole lot of nothing," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you squint into the dark.

"I haven't been this disappointed since Jonas and I had sex," Vala quips, to which Jonas just
immediately intejects:

"We did NOT!"

"Which is exactly why I was disappointed!" Vala turns it right back around on him.

"Staircase," Cassandra points her flashlight over in a direction, which you follow up to a large alter, upon which a sword sits.

"Well, this does not bode well for my future," you remark.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Vala asks.

"Oh, just, the last time I saw a sword styled like that I ended up fighting a Goa'uld named Ares and got my ass whooped," you lament.

"Wasn't that the mission with the Time Jumper that John and Jade save you on?" Jude asks.

"It was," Jonas answers. "Which means Janus probably left that statue there with that specific sword as a bit of clever and witty foreshadowing."

"This Janus guy sounds like a real prankster," Vala muses.

"So, the only question is if that's Excalibur or not," you say.

"Actually that'd be Caliburn," Jonas says. "See, Excalibur was supposedly forged by the Lady of the Lake at Avalon, but it wasn't given to Arthur until after the sword from stone, Caliburn, broke in battle."

"Like a cheap piece of shit," Cassandra says with a serious tone, before giggling. "Oh, I've got to tell Keiko and Silica about this when I see them next."


You go over ant grab the sword.

You yank, and tug, but it doesn't move.

"Well, that's a bust!" You grunt. "Anyone wanna get John over to make use of his-" Your hands release the sword right at that point, causing a large humming noise and a new light source to turn on. "Super... Strength..."

And then, standing behind the sword directly opposite of you is a wizardly looking old man.

"Welcome, ye knights of the round table, men of honor, followers of the path of righteousness." The hologram of the man you'd guess is Merlin speaks. "Only those with wealth of knowledge and truth of spirit shall be given access to the underworld, the storehouse of riches of Artoria Pendragon. Prove ye worthy, and all shall be revealed."

...The hologram then vanishes, upon conclusion.

"Well, bye!" You say. "Thanks for the pep talk!!"
"...Artoria?" Jonas asks. "People had thought-

"History got it wrong," Jude interjects, turning to Cassandra. "Didn't Roxy say that it was Artoria was Arthur's real name?"

"Yeah," Cassadra frowns. "But I'm starting to get the feeling she kept something from us. Something Ganos told her that Roxy didn't pass along." She growls, "Damn it, why did you have to Die, Ganos Lal!?"

And then there's another burst of light, and this time a new hologram appears. A woman you don't recognize but Cassandra and Jude clearly do.

"Hello?" She begins. "If you're seeing this message it means you spoke my name. My true name. Or part of it at least. I suspect that means you've likely either been sent here by me in some form or another. Is that the case?"

She hovers, waiting for a response.

"Holy shit," Jude breathes. "I think Roxy really would want to see this."

"Yes. Your name is Ganos Lal. Morgan La Fey," Cassandra steps forwards to speak. "We met you some years ago, in person. You helped us with a lot of problems, including helping us find the Ark of Truth, before you died."

"It's a hologram, I don't think it's-" Vala gets interrupted as the Hologram nods.

"I see. You've found the Ark? And used it against the Ori? A relief, then that they are finally defeated..." The hologram takes that with a nod.

"Going to respond but whatever," Vala mutters to herself.

"I suppose it is good that the purpose of this holographic repository is now fulfilled. As for my own death, that is surprising to hear that I would die," the Hologram frowns. "I would ask what century it is, but I suspect it may be long enough that your dating system is incompatible with my database."

"Yes yes yes!" Valla interjects then. "This is all Fascinating and all that. But how do we get the treasure to show up?"

The Hologram of Ganos Lal answers, "The Treasure is unlockable only through besting Myrddin's trials. I cannot say more as I was never allowed access to their inner workings before the point I made this program."

"Why did you make this, anyways?" You ask.

"I designed this hologram to forewarn anyone who knew my name upon entering this chamber of Avalon," the woman answers, glancing at you. "Within the stored chamber is a communications device that would connect to the Galaxy we had fled from so very long ago. Using it would risk drawing the attention of the Ori to this galaxy, or others. However, if you have truly defeated the Ori..." She smiles. "Well. I suppose I've indulged in this farce for long enough. You have a challenge to solve."
"Wait!" Cassandra reaches out...

But the Hologram is gone.

"Well, I guess we've 'got a challenge to solve,"' Jonas says. "Wealth of Knowledge and Truth of Spirit implies a test of faith. It's probably a challenge for would-be betrayers like Mordred ended up being."

"Somehow, I get the feeling it's not going to be easy," you say.

"So, guess what the kids are up to?"

Your name is Okurii Leijon, and you glance up from your early morning breakfast to lock eyes with a smirking Jack O'neill.

"To clarify before we continue," you flutter your wings menacingly. "I do hope you mean SG-1 and not the actual kids."

"I mean SG-1," Jack sits down with his own tray of pancakes. He grabs a bottle of maple syrup and starts drenching the poor things.

"Hmm... Off world adventure?" You ask.

"Nope, Earth based adventure," he says. "And they're searching for King Arthur's hidden treasure of Avalon!"

"...Huh, that sounds like fun," you muse. "More fun than what we've got to deal with today."

"Press Conferences, Closed Door meetings, more Press Stunts," O'neill sighs, and snaps the lid to the maple syrup closed. "Fun."

"Not as much fun as those pancakes are having," you quip.

"...Touche," O'neill remarks, and then jabbs his fork into the syrup soaked mess.

"GANOS!" Your name is Cassandra Fraiser. "GANOS LAL!!"

And you are unhappy with the recorded hologram that refuses to come back. You groan. And, alas,, your vibes are telling you the only way you're going to get to talk to it again.

"ORI! MESSAGING DEVICES! ARTORIA PENDRAGON!"

That still doesn't mean you're not going to give the old Doctor's Orders Voice that you learned from your mom to try and get her back.

"WRAITH! ATLANTIS! WE BROUGHT IT TO THE SURFACE?? EXPEDITION TEAMS"
And, well, the others are all out searching the cavern looking for the puzzles to be solved. Well. Everyone save for Jude, who keeps examining the sword in the stone with intent to dismantle.

"I don't think it's going to work, Cassie," Jude says, glancing at you with a concerned look.

"I know," you sit down next to the sword and sigh. "I know. I know and I know and I know. But... I don't know. It just feels stupid that Ganos would leave something like that."

"A different her from a different time," Jude muses. "Hell, it might not even be a full AI like the one on Atlantis. Ganos might have just left a few pre-recorded lines in a hurry. She clearly never updated the hologram again before she Ascended."

"Well, yeah, obviously that's-"

And then a vibe runs down your spine.

**A REALLY BAD ONE.**

"SHIT!" you take off and run for the tunnel that Mitchel went down.

"Wait! Cassie!" Jude takes off after you a second later.

You arrive at a place just as Mitchel enters a room and a door slab slides down, blocking the way.

"Shit shit shit!" You pound at the door. "Mitchel! Mitchel??" You take to your radio, "Mitchel? Jonas? Can you read me?"


"Oh, that's definitely not good," Jude mutters, searching through his bag. "Signal must be blocked by the door."

"Mitchel, can you describe the room you're in?" You ask.

"ZZZ-ngle stone alt-ZZ-r. Flam-ZZZZZ-orbs in the fl-ZZZ."

Your powers fill in the most likely scenario. A Single stone alter, and flames igniting from round objects set into the floor. Right. Okay... You can do this.

"Mitchel." you pause, over what your power tells you is Static."Describe the altar. Short bursts."

"If you immediately know the candlelight is fire, then you know the meal was cooked a long time ago," your name is Jonas Quinn, and you muse aloud as you and Vala find a chamber with a stone altar in the center of the room, along with a bunch of round indents in the floor that light up with flames, prompting the line you just spouted.
"What's that?" Vala asks.

"Just something I read from one of the Ancient Tablets you brought us," you answer. "One of the gibberish ones, actually."

"Wonder what that means for us then," Vala muses, entering the room.

You step in after her, and then a stone door closes immediately behind you.

"Well, that's trapish," Vala remarks.

You sigh. "Yeah. That it is." You shake your head. "Alright, so the hologram said 'wealth of knowledge' will help us pass, so... Puzzle time."

You approach the altar. There are two pots, one gold, and one silver, sitting upon it, and sitting in front of each are sayings written in Ancient.

"Well, what do those say," Vala asks. "Start with the gold one."

"Gold says 'The Universe is Infinite,'" you say. "And the Silver one says 'The Treasure is in this pot.'"

"Really? Well, that was easy-" She reaches for the lid on the silver pot, and you quickly stop her.

"Stop," you say, grabbing her hand. "Too Obvious."

"Give you a minute?" Vala asks.

"Yes, please," you nod.

"Ahhh. Right, so we've got Eight Stone Squares, each carved with symbols, set into indentations on the Altar," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you explain it in bursts as requested. "There are captions written in Ancient. Under each of them. It's a puzzle, right?"

A pause, a lengthy pause.

"Yes," Cassandra replies. "ZZZZZZZZZ. I think- ZZZZL- you're supposed to arrange- ZZZZZZZL- them in a specific- ZZZZZZZL- Order."

"Well that doesn't help me any," you lament. "I can't read Ancient!"

"Describe them- ZZZZZ- To me."

"Open both of them?" Vala asks.

"No, wrong idea," you wave it off. "There are two pots. We have to open One."
"Silver is Treasure, so we open it," Vala says.

"But that's the obvious first choice to lure people into a trap," you counter.

"So we open the Gold one," Vala says.

"No."

"Back to Silver, then," and then before you can stop her, Vala opens the silver pot. ..."Well that's disappointing. It's empty!" She huffs, closing the lid. "There's nothing I hate more than a Bold Faced Lie!"

Tiredly, you open the gold pot- empty as well.

"Well, this can't get any worse," Vala laments.

And then the ceiling clicks, groans, and sand falls on your head as it starts to lower.

You glance at Vala, and she sighs. "Knew that was a mistake to say that. Moment I said it, I knew it."

"Aaaand.... Nothing." Your scramble job of the plates didn't work.

Click. Groan.

Dust on head.

"Aaand now I've got a ceiling falling on my head, CASS!" you radio back.

No reply but static.

Full on static.

"Aw, crap," you mutter, and quickly rearrange the stones to form a different pattern. "...Two down, only a billion to go..."

"BOTH ARE EMPTY!?" Vala yells over the very loud groaning of the ceiling gears. "BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!!"

"I KNOW!" you yell back, staring at the pots.

"WHAT DO WE DO!?"

"I DON'T KNOW!!"

"LOVELY!" Vala yells. "WOULD THIS BE A BAD TIME TO TELL YOU I HATE SMALL
Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you have a very, very bad feeling about this.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Chapter End Notes

Whoo. That was a fun one... And potentially a cliffhanger.

Reader Question: Should I post a SAO-Side event recap chapter tomorrow (Wednesday's chapter) or as Fridays chapter? It's more Martin style fourthwall break shenanigannnnnssss. :33

This Chapter: Hey! It's Vala! We're officially in Season 9 so she gets a recurring role! She's a blast and a half to write, that she is. Hehehe.

Also, hey! IT'S ANOTHER GANOS HOLOGRAM! Yeah, Roxy's gonna wanna get her hands on the memory matrix for THAT. That's for sure.

Also Also, Hey!! It's some Teal'c characterization! :D

....Also Cubed, Heeeeeeeyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy------- I have nothing else to say except that I'm craving fried chicken right now. >_<
(2/3) >CAL: Be Too Tired To Be Witty.

Done. I am way too tired to be witty here.


DIASPORA DATE: 03/15/0005.

Your name is Jonas Quinn, and the room is getting really cramped really fast.

Vala's yelling at you to solve it but she's not helping.

That's when she repeats an earlier statement. "I REALLY HATE BOLD FACED LIES!"

"Wait-" you mutter, "That's it."

You grab both pot lids and replace them on their pots. Then. You take gold and silver's lids and swap them around.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING!??" Vala asks.

"HOPING THIS ISN'T A ONE SHOT!" you answer, before removing the lids and-

CLICK.

SHTUUUUUNK.

The Ceiling raises up again, and so too does the door open.

You peer into the gold pot, and there's a single gold coin inside.

"What?" Vala asks. "But that's-"

"There is Only One Truth, The Universe is Infinite," You quote. "It was half of a proverb. The treasure can't be in the silver pot, because it's a Lie. But at the same time... It isn't. The answer was-"

"Mitchel!!" Cassandra's voice echoes from outside.

"Nevermind!" You say, running out of the room.

You follow Cassandra and Jude's shouting to find another sealed room. Mitchel has to be inside.
"What's the puzzle?" You ask.

"Here!" Jude shoves a sketchbook to you. He must have drawn it based on--

**LATER.**

"The writing says 'Reflect,' but, I don't recognize the symbols on the squares-

"Reflect?" Cassandra grabs her Radio and practically screams into it- "REFLECT! MITCHEL! THE SYMBOLS ARE REFLECTED! MITCHEL!! THEY'RE REFLECTED!"

Reflected???

You look at the symbols and... Oh. If you cover up part of that one it looks like a Four. And that one a Six. And...

**CLUNK.**

Then, the door rises, revealing an empty room.

And then Mitchel's head peeks out over the top of the altar in the center of the room.

"All I heard was 'Reflect' repeated a bunch of times," He says. "I think you were saying more than that, though?"

"The numbers were the Arabic symbols one through eight-" you start.

"And their Mirror Images," Mitchel nods.

"Well," Vala says, arriving. "I guess everyone's alive. Should we leave the squishy trap rooms alone now?"


"Let's regroup at the sword," Jude suggests, putting an arm around his wife.

It doesn't take long to reach the sword area again.

"Alright, let's just hope those were the only two tests," you say.

"Agreed," Mitchel nods, reaching for the sword and tugging at it.

It pops loose.

"Booya!" Mitchel hefts the sword high into the air, grinning.

...And then there's a flicker of light behind the altar and an armored knight hologram appears, drawing his sword and entering an attack stance.

"...Knew it couldn't be that easy," Cassandra laments.
The Knight charges Mitchel, and he fights back- sword clanging, CLING- CLANG- SMASH!

"This!" Mitchel yelps, dodging a strike. "IS SO WEIRD!"

"I can only imagine!" Vala agrees.

"I am SO GLAD!" Mitchel ducks a swing that could have taken his head off. "That I took a Refresher Course!" He blocks a strike. "ON FENCING!"

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you glance at Vala. You get a bad vibe. Ceiling falling kind of Bad. You ask, "Did You Take Anything?"

"I resent that!" She protests.

"Well how else do you explain the angry knight!?" You ask, pointing at it.

"Obviously another test to best!" Vala says.

"Well what if it isn't?" You ask.

"...I...", Vala grunts, and pulls a coin out of her pocket. "HERE. Fine. Are you happy?"

Jonas takes the coin and rushes out of the room--likely back to the other test.

You turn back to the fight, feeling that bad vibe simmer down and fade away as Jonas returns it.

"Come on!" Vala huffs. "That's the only treasure we've seen so far! Why can't I keep it?"

"As part of a puzzle that involved a ceiling falling on you, and crushing you to death," you glance at her. "Removing it might prevent the treasure from spawning. Removing it from the entire CAVERN might cause the whole thing to COLAPSE!"

"...I," Vala blinks. "That's a very good point.

ZAAAP!

"OW!" Mitchel yelps as the Knight's sword clips his right arm and shocks him, causing him to drop the sword, and forcing him to run. "THAT HURT!"

VIBE!

VIBE!

You rush and grab the sword, waiting, waiting...
"CAM!" You yell, and hurl the thing at him.

And with a duck and a roll to avoid a death blow- Mitchel grabs the sword handle first and brings it around in a devastating blow to the backside of the Knight Hologram’s left leg- through the knee.

The Hologram kneels, forcibly, and then Mitchel follows it up with a swing to the back of its neck.

FWASH!

The Hologram flares, and then vanishes.

"Well... that was exhausting..." Mitchel laments.

"...No treasure?" Vala asks, even as Jonas returns.

"Coin's returned," he reports.

"...So... What now?" Mitchel asks.

"Well," Jude glances at the sword in Mitchel's hand. "We put the coin back... Why not the sword?"

And so Mitchel gives a nod and takes the slow route back to the sword's altar.

It slides back in, and--

PVVVVVM- SHING!

The whole room is suddenly filled with golden, gleaming treasure, and-

Vala shrieks in shock and surprise.

...There's a cryo pod with a bloodied, battered woman inside, clinging to a sword.

"...That's not treasure," Vala hisses.

"No," you stare at the poor girl. "We need to get a doctor down here ASAP."

Your name is Carolyn Lam, SGC's Chief Medical Officer, and while the Prometheus' crew and SG-1 sort about the treasure, you and your team are preparing to retrieve a heavily wounded woman and quick transport her to the SGC for proper medical care.

"She's remarkably well preserved, compared to the other example we have of long term stasis from Atlantis," you observe.

"Her pod was stored in whatever matter buffer was holding the treasure," Jude Harley explains as he prepares to activate the defrosting process. "A double precaution of stasis. She likely never experienced any significant amount of the passing time within the cryopod unlike the other timeline Weir."
"Which is probably good," you say. "I can't imagine she'd still be alive if that hadn't been the case."

"Yeah," Jude takes a deep breath, and then nods to you. "Defrosting on three..."

Your nurses get the stretcher into position.

"Two..."

You tense up and get ready to roll her over once she's landed.

"One!"

The Ancient Cryopod hums to life as it lights up and the wall of ice recedes, allowing the normal flow of time to touch her once more, along with gravity.

The woman collapses forwards onto the stretcher, and you move to act. ". . .Pulse is rapid, she's losing blood. Get to staunching it as we move her to the Rings!"

Your name is Jude Harley, and you watch as the ring transport flares to life, taking the medical team to the Prometheus, where they'll immediately be beamed down to the SGC.

You take a moment to steel yourself, and head over to Jonas, who's reading a book.

"How's it going, Jonas?" You ask.

"Oh, trying not to think about how long I was stuck in one of those things," Jonas answers. "And distracting myself confirming a lot of history we had."

"Like?" You ask.

"It's a fictionalization of the events that lead to the Ancients leaving their home Galaxy, and finding Milky Way. I skipped ahead a bit and saw some mentions of Atlantis, so I think it's a complete History of the Ancients as a race. Well. The 'Altera' as they were originally called."

"Does that make them 'Alterans'?" you ask.

Jonas looks up and stares at you. "Well, yes, I suppose. But that's way too close to Alternian for my liking so let's just keep calling them Ancients."

"Fine by me," you say. "So, long story short the Ancients ran from the Ori, found Earth, made Stargates?"

"It doesn't talk about the Ori specifically, and given what we know about the situation I can't imagine they'd want to remember it," Jonas says. "It starts with them already traveling the universe, looking for a new home. Which they find after thousands of years, call it Avalon, and build 'Astria Porta'- Stargates."

"Hey! Jude! Jonas!" Mitchell calls out, lifting up a spiky looking dome device. "Look what I found!"

"Oh my God, Mitchel! Put that down!" Cassie interjects. "I think that's the communication device
Ganos mentioned in her-

And the Cameron Mitchel collapses onto the nearest pile of gold, dropping the apparent communication device and--

Vala snatches it mid air before it could hit the ground.

"Whew," She says, kneeling to place it on the ground much more gently. "That was a close-"

And then she collapses too.

"NEW ORDER!" You yell. "NOBODY TOUCH THAT THING! Not unless you've got a sudden desire to go into a coma!"

"I'm vaguely glad I was nowhere near it," Jonas remarks.

"Me too," you sigh, and go over to examine the communication device.

"-Call!"

Wait.

What?

Your name is Vala Mal Doran, and you find yourself suddenly in someone else's body entirely, lying on the floor.

You pick yourself up and blink. You're shorter than you were before.

"...Hello?" asks a boy you don't recognize- wait. No. After a moment his visual appearance sort of flickers in the process of speaking and. FLARE. Suddenly he's the familiar visage of Cameron Mitchel, sort of super-imposed in your minds eye over the image of a dark haired boy.

"Mitchel?" you ask.

"Vala?" He asks in turn. "What just happened?"

"Well. I'd say we both activated the communication device we weren't supposed to activate," you say in answer. "Where are we?" You and he look around the room.

You're in some kind of basement. There's a table, and chairs, and boxes and crates and-

"Oh, hello!" You peer into an open one between you and Mitchel. "Return device!"

"Well, that's good. We should probably head back, I'd think," Mitchel says. "Before we run into-"

That's when there's a loud knocking on a door from upstairs.

"...I think that's for us," you whisper.

"No, you're horrible at bluffing," you counter.

"Like hell you could even know that! You didn't even meet me before yesterday!" he counters your counter.

"Funny, cause it feels like I've known you my entire life," you say and- "Wait. No. That's new. Like. Just a minute ago new."

"...Feedback from the bodies we're in?" Mitchel asks, and then there's more knocking, faster, more urgent.

"Must be, we'll go together and see what this is about," you decide.

"Right," Mitchel nods, and you two head upstairs- closing a bookcase disguised door behind you and then heading towards what seems to be the front door. You can hear wind roaring outside.

You open the door, and barely manage to close it again after someone comes barreling in with a panicked look on their face because HOLY SHIT that is a ton of wind.

And then the person tears off a hat and- okay, really, you can't tell if this blond haired newcomer is a boy or a girl. "Sachi, Keita, I'm glad you're still here."

"Of course we are," you say. "Why wouldn't we be?"

"Th..." The blonde blinks. "The device? The warning beacon?? Did it not send you to another world as promised?"

You look to Mitchel, and he blinks in confusion. Then, he says, "I don't think that device worked the way you thought it did."

"..." The unknown stares at you, and then frowns, and says, "You're not Keita or Sachi, are you?"

"Well, so much for that," you say. "Cat's firmly out of the bag now."

The unknown grins. "I knew it! It's not a physical transporter! It sends minds, doesn't it? You're the ones they switched with!"

"Or we switched with them," Mitchel frowns. "What's the situation here?"

"So, definitely a communication device," your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you stare at the two... well... Foreign minds placed within Vala and Mitchel's bodies as they sit within an isolation room on the Prometheus.

Sitting, and arguing with eachother. Like children. Children who knew eachother for years. Children who are sure they contacted the wrong group of people entirely.
Arguing and refusing to explain anything of what message they were trying to deliver. And refusing to even contemplate that maybe they HAD gotten through to who they wanted to contact.

You just hope that Mitchel and Vala are having a better time learning about what's going on than you are.

In the mean time, you turn your vibes down to the planet down below... towards the SGC. Towards the woman pulled out of the cryopod...

...You smile as you feel no bad vibes of immediate death returning from your inquiry.

She'll be fine.

Your name is Mordred, and your eyes snap open.

"Hunt!" You call out, into the endless void of the Ascended Plane, and find yourself drawn immediately into a ruined negotiation chamber, where Hunt stands atop a pile of broken marble tables.

"Yes, Mordred?" He asks, glancing around for any survivors of his recent attack on those who resisted his plan. "What is it?"

"They're alive!" You tell him. "After all these years- I can finally tell! They survived my Clarent's--!"

You stop as Hunt's eyes turn towards you, a cold glint in them, and he says, "Irrelevant."

"Irrelevant!? IRRELEVANT!?!" You stomp your foot, temper flaring. "How is this irrelevant!? My one goal in life was to best them and become King! You promised me when I Ascended. If they survived, You would:"

"Yes, yes, I would let you descend and confront them," Hunt's cold eyes narrowed, freezing the whole air around you. "However... plans have changed. We are in the middle of too critical of a step in our plans to lose your presence in this plane."

You...

You....

"The only reason I went along with this crazy plan of yours was because you promised me I would have my revenge, immediately!" you remind him.

"What is a few days to beings such as us?" Hunt asks casually, generating a spear of light and then hurling it at a nearby overturned table.

It pierces through, and there's a scream and a burst of ascended light shattering into orange flames that spiral out from behind the table and into Hunt's body.

He closes his eyes as he absorbs the flames, and then stills as they flicker out of sight.
"Now," he begins, "when Oma returns from her mission, you may Descend again. Until then, I need you here. Am I clear, Mordred?"

....

"Fine," you lie. "I'll go wait in my room like a good little princess, if that's what you want." And with that, you storm off.

Hunt doesn't even acknowledge or otherwise notice you leaving, returning to his own hunting of the other Ascended beings.

You find yourself alone, soon enough.

Nobody wants to be near you or any of the other members of the Andromeda Ascendants. With how unforgiving Hunt has been about membership since the defeat of Anubis...

Well.

It's easy enough for you to leave that plane entirely and search for the place where your sword was banished and hidden from prying eyes.

---

You are Teal'c, and you find the Politics of the current situation unstable.

"The Jaffa of the Onac Ka equal as many as all the other regional coalitions, and they are supporting Gerak," Rak'nor explains the recent updates. "And I fear if we allow them even one more vote based on unconfirmed power levels, then the Council will be in Gerak's hands."

"Indeed," you growl. "To think that Gerak would abuse the sudden theft of a historical relic as a means to take power and claim we do not need the alliance with the Alternians and Tau'ri anymore."

"Bad, yes, but not the worst thing he’s said." Rak'nor says, "What is worse than that is that he thinks we can similarly maintain alliances with the Tok'ra to use them for a source of Symbiots? And promoting the idea of continuing the old ways for the new generations? What a fool!" He sighs. "It's unfair. That we all fought for the freedom of all Jaffa only to have it corrupted by power hungry individuals."

"Neither did I. However, Bra'tac and Rya'c are still negotiating with coalitions who have yet to declare their allegiance. There is hope," you remind him. "And in the mean time, we must hope that the Ancient storehouse contains some knowledge that we may be able to use to enlighten our people about the merits of learning from the past, while not continuing to wallow in it."

"Which brings us back to the problem of the stolen Sword," Rak'nor says.

"I will have to gather as much information as I can," you say. "I believe I can convince the Tau'ri to help us track down the thief, and the relic. Knock some wind out of Gerak's sails."

"I certainly hope so," Rak'nor says with a nod.
"So, just to make sure we've got this all this memorized," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you're peering out from behind the curtains of a window into a town currently besieged by a massive storm. "A woman came out of the skys, calling herself 'Mother Nature', and said that if your people didn't worshipping her and the 'Andromeda', then a massive storm would strike the town and wipe it off the map?"

"Yup," the visitor to this lovely little house in the middle of this chaos, 'Ducker,' nods.

"And because you'd all just come off of the Ori-eating monster that was Lord English and didn't want to devote yourselves to another gloaty, glowing force of nature promising powers for everyone, everyone said no?" You continue to summarize.

"Yep," Ducker nods again.

"So, Mother Nature out there dropped a Hurricane down on your town and is trying to scare you all into worshipping her because otherwise she'd have actually blown all the buildings off of the map?" You continue further.

"That's the gist of it," Ducker says.

"And to wrap it all up," you conclude, "There's a big honking space worm meandering its way over here either to attack miss glowing winds out there, or join their side."

"Pretty much," Ducker nods again,

"So... what do we do about it?" Vala asks.

"I've got some sort of idea," you venture, then turn to Ducker. "Is there any other tech beyond the communication device you've got squirreled away here?"

"Yes," Ducker nods. "it's down in the basement."

"Of course it is," Vala remarks.

You head downstairs as quickly as possible, and start searching crates for anything that might help you out.

...And you find something really interesting.

"Now, I'm no Jude Harley or Sam Carter," you start to smile. "But this looks like a Proton Pack."

"A what now?" Vala asks.

"...Oh, never mind," you shake your head and unpack the boxy contraption and its nozzle-emitter thing. "Let's just bust some Ghosts, shall we?"

Your name is Teal'c, and you growl as you approach the council chambers, finding that they've already voted and are dispersing.
"Rak'nor, what happened?" you ask, frowning at the man.

"The council was called to vote so rapidly," Rak'nor shakes his head. "I dare to think that Gerak was
behind this as well. The timing while others were trying to figure out what to do about this missing
sword...."

"What were the results?" You ask.

"The vote was quick. Many of us who were not on Gerak's side could not attend properly, leaving
our votes to be levied by proxy. I too had to deliver yours. Even so, Gerak's motion was resolved by
a slim majority. The Jaffa will continue to be ruled by High Council. However, Votes will be
attributed to the various coalition representatives based on military assets and the gathering of these
mystical powers."

"Meaning Gerak is now the new leader of the Jaffa Nation," you swallow in dismay.

"Indeed," Rak'nor nods.

Shit.

The Denizen TYPHEUS was not having a good month.

It had been so quiet and calm after English's stranglehold on the galaxy had been revoked. Everyone
was coming around to the idea that they could finally be their own civilizations without false gods
running the show...

And then this glowy bitch from another plane of existence showed up, claiming she brought with her
the gifts of powers, and that those who followed her would gain those they could control and those
who did not would die horribly. Well.

Typheus hated nothing more than a bold faced lie.

A couple of civilized worlds had already been wiped out by this bitch.

After the Ori? After English?

Typheus had had enough and was going to do something about it, especially when she was using
HIS signature Windstorms to cause trouble.

Correction.

Typheus hated nothing more than a bold faced liar who STOLE HIS TRICK.

And so it was that as he traversed the stars, bursting through the atmosphere of a small planet,
already dispersing and overwriting the Ascended Being's control over the planet's atmosphere, did he
sense an oddity.

A connection to a far away galaxy, linking two minds here with two minds elsewhere.
And so it was that Typheus looked, and he saw a human with Ancient Tech preparing to sneak up
on the glowing bitch who was rapidly distracted with trying to reassert her control over the winds of
the planet.

Typheus briefly tapped the connection, and got an image that he had not seen in years.

A Planet called Earth, allies with a Planet once known as Alternia... and a familiar set of faces. The
ones who had come for the Ark of Truth.

And though Typheus' face was hidden away with the heat of re-entry, he smiled a happy smile, and
sent a message by once more tapping into that exotic connection between minds.

[YOU THERE. MAN IN A BOY'S BODY. Is that what I think it is you're holding?]

[...Uhhh... Something that looks like it'd mess up an Ascended Being pretty badly?]

[You indeed have something that would 'mess up' an Ascended being very significantly, MAN
IN A BOY'S BODY.]

[You can call me Mitchel. Or Cam. Whichever.]

[Very Well, MITCHEL. I am TYPHEUS. I have a CHOICE to offer you.]

[Typhueus, huh? Oh, this should be good! Hey, Vala. Guess what. Giant space worm is trying to
talk to me... Uh, no, I'm not crazy. Joey talked to him before and- Who?? Oh, right, I guess you
haven't met her yet... Uh- wait. Is this thing still on?]

[It is, Yes.]


Typheus couldn't help but laugh- an event which sent shockwaves through the planet's atmosphere.

Oma Desala was not having a good day. Or a good week. Or month. Or even the last year....

Hell, just, sort of, write off the last whole century, even.

Just one long string of bad decisions after another- and an even longer string of putting her faith into
the wrong people and being forced to do stuff she really didn't want to be doing. Again. And Again.
And. AGAIN.

If Hunt hadn't started displaying his ability to literally absorb other Ascended beings into himself,
she'd have split ways already. But...

UGH.

And now she couldn't even keep a simple hurricane running.
What was going on with the winds all of a sudden? It was like...

It was like they were suddenly responding to a power above hers. But that should be impossible. Nothing could trump the abilities of an Ascended--

And then a shockwave rippled through the air- carrying with it the sound of laughter.

Oma Desala turned her attention upwards, and watched as a massive beast descended from the heavens.

By all that was good in the universe- what kind of monstrosities had English left behind in this Galaxy!?

"YOU!" She bellowed, gathering her energies. "I Don't KNOW what you are, but you are going to stop this right now and let me go about my business, or I will smite you, Monster!!"

[I am not here to Fight.]

Oma stopped. That was a surprising statement.

"T...Then LEAVE!"

[No. I think I would rather stay and watch the show.]

"...What show?" Oma asks.

[I believe the people of Earth call it... GHOSTBUSTERS?]

What the hell was THAT supposed to mean?

And then Cameron Mitchel turned on an English-tech designed Proton Pack-equivalent, and launched a beam of pure, concentrated, FUCK YOU, ASCENDED BEINGS! into the unsuspecting Ascended being, disrupting her energy matrix and... Well...

For the second time in about twice as many years, poor Oma Desala found herself forcibly descended back into the mortal plane.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Chapter End Notes

Gonna post the SAO Recap Chapter tomorrow. Part 3 has been kicking my ass in terms of not coming together and I need the extra day.
"Aaaand- CUT!" Martin Lloyd calls out, triggering the RIIING RIIING of the end scene bells.

The Pair of totally identical twins exhaled in relief, shed their depressed manner of acting, and then happily started chatting as they stepped off of the balcony overlooking a green screen ocean.

"Okay, and that's... that?" Martin pauses as he checks his script, then looks up. "OH! Hey! It's you again!" He smiles at you, the audience surrogate camera person, and then motions for you to follow him. "Come back for more, eh? Well, I can't blame you!"

He steps up to a door that should lead into a replica of the Atlantis Set, and you follow through, instead finding both of yourselves once more in Martin's Trailer.

"So! What'll it be this time?" He asks, rubbing his hands together. "The Alternia Shenanigans? Atlantis recap? The-" He stops as the audience interjects silently. "Wait? Alfheim? Aincrad? Well, alright, I mean, it has been a pretty confusing retelling so far, hasn't it?" He smiles. "Drinks, before we begin? Same as last time? Cool, cool."

Martin fetches a bottle from the minifridge, rambling all the while. "So, before we get started. How about that Atlantis season two opener, huh? That was a lot of complicated camera work, if I do say so myself. Heh." He hands you the bottle, and then motions for you to follow through the trailer door once more.

You find yourself this time in the interior of a Time Drive equipped Puddle Jumper, as Martin sits down in the pilot's chair and preps it for flight.

Or, he would, if there were anything but a green screen outside.

"So!" Martin grins. "Let's start at... the beginning, yeah? To do that, we have to go, ironically, into the not so distant past of an alternate timeline."

The time drive flares, and the green screen wavers out of sight, replaying a clipshow of that one episode where SG-1 went to rescue SG-10 from a blackhole.

"Now, as we saw it, this series of events was nicely wrapped up with a stable time loop. But. What if it didn't? What if that John and Jade never came back to rescue them? Well..." Martin takes out the lifesigns detector- tackily rebranded with a large sticker on the back reading "TV SCHEDULE"- and presses a few touch-screen buttons. "Well, what would happen is a series of events that really don't need to be touched upon- read, I didn't actually write any of this section of events in detail beyond the end result! Consider that fanfic fodder. Anyways. Said end result!"
The greenscreen replay wavers, and shifts to the intro to Atlantis, RISING, except, without Argo Lalonde anywhere present on screen.

"Argo stayed behind on Earth, and Atlantis flooded, killing off everyone except Jade, who through vague, undefined solar flare shenanigans, went back in time to Atlantis during the war with the Wraith."

A clip shows Jade arguing with the Atlantis Ancient Council.

"Now, in a series of events that we saw in Atlantis, a Doctor Weir from yet another canon-like version of events wound up showing up there and causing what we saw. Except, what if they didn't happen and what if she didn't succeed in making it to the past again? Accidents happen, in any way, shape, or form." Martin sighs, pressing a button. "And so Jade succeeded."

The clip shows Atlantis taking flight from the ocean, with a massive bubble shield of water hovering above it, suspended by Jade's powers.

The Wraith move in to intercept--but--

**SPLASH!**

Jade's water bubble suddenly superheats, and explodes outwards with a flash of green--rapidly boiling the Wraith Hiveships into submission, and leaving an opening for the City to launch out into hyperspace.

The Time Drive flashes again.

"They escaped the Wraith, and returned to Earth. Where, well. Things went pear shaped for the Goa'uld."

A clip show replayed sequence of the Goa'uld Ha'tak armada getting intercepted by Atlantis.

A somewhat older than usual Jade Jackson grins, and then the Goa'uld pay for their treachery.

"...But they didn't die without getting some vengeance. Earth's surface was bombarded, and heavily decimated. The Ancients on Atlantis decided to build new City Ships to house the people of Earth... And they built them BIG. The skyscrapers of the heavens. CASTLE SHOPS!!"

The green screen cuts to a BURGER JOINT with half of a sign cut off screen by the frame of the Jumper's window, leaving only a "CASTLE" visible in frame.

"...Heh. Sorry. Typo in the script," Martin apologizes. "Just rolled with it." He coughs, grinning, and then repeats- "CASTLE SHIPS!"

And then a view of AINCRAD appears in the Jumper's windshield--floating gloriously in the heavens.

"Now that's more like it," Martin smiles, and then takes the jumper in for a landing. "Let's go take a walk, shall we?"
You exit the jumper, and start walking through a field.

"In this parallel universe," Martin narrates, "Castle Ships are massive, towering things. Ten Kilometer wide floors at the base floor, that go up for a hundred floors, and rapidly get smaller the higher you go up. And they Ancients built an incredibly vague amount of them that I'm not sure anybody has actually bothered to count."

Martin pauses, then says, "So I'm just going to spitball it and say there's, like two-hundred and sixteen of them."

He approaches a pair of houses near a large support structure, and pauses to stop, with it framing the background.

"So, anyways. The Goa'uld who survived the massacre wanted revenge. So they planned, plotted, and did recon. Moving symbiotes this way and that until they finally got one in the head of someone who could do some damage. Kazuto Kirigaya's parents ended up killed in the crossfire, and he was adopted by his aunt, Midori. Their neighbors were the Ayano-Bishop, the mother; Shiori, the eldest daughter; and Keiko, the youngest. Bishop Ayano and Midori Kirigaya worked together to help maintain Aincrad's engines... Bishop gets Goa'ulded, starts sabotaging things..." Martin waves it off. "The more interesting thing is that Keiko, Shiori, and Kazuto went exploring the nearest support structure, found an Ancient Lab with a Quantum Mirror."

And then with a flash of a mirror like transition, you find yourself standing in a field outside a town at the base of a giant, massive tree.

"Alfheim is another parallel world, far, far different from anything we know. About eight to ten years before Keiko found the mirror, and tumbled through, the Tyrant King of Alfheim, Oberonn, began a sinister plan involving his infant, second daughter, Hakase. His eldest child, Princess Astore, made the decision to spite her father's tyrannical rule. She had her personal guard, Sakamoto, take the girl and flee to another world- Aincrad." Martin pauses.

"Her father was not happy, and so kept her locked up for some time, as punishment, before eventually allowing her a mostly free reign over her actions once again. During this time she cultivated friendships. Close ones, though secretive. Years later, finding that her father was searching for a way to find the younger Princess, Astore reached out to those close friends of hers, Silica, Minori, and Touya, to find the world Hakase was in, and warn Sakamoto." He pauses, even as a burst of smoke from some distant building rises up into the air. "Oberonn, learning of his daughter's treachery, once again locked her up, but... Well, needless to say, there were other forces at work in Alfheim."

Martin smiles, and steps around a tree, transitioning to a forest scene where a group of people were discussing events.

"While Minori, Silica, and Touya went back to Aincrad to save it from crashing, this world's version of Kazuto, an ancient Spriggain named Kirito, began to gather up his loose, scattered allies into a tighter, cohesive, rebellious whole." Martin narrates, "Together, they began to plan to get Astore out of trouble. They had no intent of reaching out to Aincrad again unless there was a dire need for it."

Another flip of the mirror effect, and Martin stands on a fishing boat, with the water-bound Aincrad framing the scene behind him.
"Meanwhile, Aincrad was damaged and under heavy strain. Preparations were made for potential evacuation, and meanwhile, Keiko, Silica, Minori, Touya, and eventually Sakamoto joining them, would work towards securing as many points of entry to their world through the Quantum Mirror as they possibly could. Allies were made, such as those at the SGC from our meta-canonical reality."

Martin takes a step off of the boat, and well into the deep dark of a forest overshadowed by a massive tree.

"What nobody realized, though, was that the Goa'uld were still lurking about. While the snake inside Bishop Ayano was taken care of, others were even higher in Aincrad’s ruling council, as well as in the other castle ships, still high above them." Martin peers up at the tree, frowning. "One of those Goa'uld would kill Bishop Ayano, and pretend that she was simply still in isolation following her possession. For years, that went on, with nobody the wiser... Well, that is until just shortly after Astore was finally rescued and gained possession of the Sword that Chooses- Caliburn."

Martin steps up onto a large boulder, taking out a pair of binoculars, and peering into the tree's branches.

"When Earth had been damaged by the Goa'uld, another race of aliens who had been living on the planet in secret, far, far beneath the surface were forced to adapt and change. They grew a massive tree on this world, and made their home within it. Aincrad would contact them through words and letters, and slowly, surely, over the course of many years, reach a point where first contact through a face to face conference was to be handled."

Martin lowers his binoculars, and frowns.

"In the days before the battle were Astore would lose her life, Keiko, Silica, and their team would join the ambassadors and the leaders of Aincrad as they met with the leaders of this tree dwelling race of people." Martin steps off the boulder, and into a root and branch woven conference room. "What they found was both remarkable and terrifying."

Inside the room, Keiko's group watched in shock as the Ambassadors from the Tree dwellers visibly appeared out of thin air, one after the other, all in the same spot.

"The people within this tree were capable of traversing the Multiverse through books," Martin retells a tale not yet told. "And they had once enslaved another race of beings, capable of doing the same, except... on their own. With no need for a physical book. A race of beings once called The Least..." Martin then smirks. "A girl had discovered this hidden injustice, centuries before, and fought to right the wrong, somehow managing it, and restoring this other race to the level of equals. And as such... they were entitled to joining in the discussions and negotiations."

Martin pauses, as one of the creatures appears then. Grey, leathery skin, gleaming blue eyes on either side of an ant-head shaped skull, a matching set of clawed digits on each hand and foot, and wings like a bat folded up around their chests. Clashing with such a wild physical appearance was the fact that this one wore fancy merchant robes of red, gold, and black.

"One more thing," Martin adds. "This was a race of beings who were deathly afraid of snakes in any form."

The Merchant spotted one of the Aincrad representatives, and screeched in terror before vanishing from sight. All eyes and weapons from both sides of the negotiation turned towards the man in question...
A sort of perpetually frowning fellow, whose grey hair was tussled and mangled even on the best of
days, and his eyes...

His eyes had this sort of offness to them. Like a snake peering out through eyes that were not its
own. Eyes that flashed with an ominous light as his voice suddenly shifted into the gravely tones of a
Goa'uld possession as he yelled and ran.

"The man known only in that moment as 'Kraydyl' turned tail, and ran," Martin narrates. "But he did
not get far."

Silica and Touya plow the man to the ground and Minori casts a binding spell- locking him in place.

"You are Too late!" The Goa'uld growled. "You are all too late!! My plans have been
completed!! My Allies In Place!! You won't find them until it's too late!!"

"And then," Martin sighs, "the Goa'uld self destructed, taking the poor, unfortunate man and any
secrets he may have learned with him."

There's a knocking, suddenly, and as Martin looks up, you're back within his trailer.

"Ah, yes?" Martin asks.

"Director Lloyd, you're wanted on set in five minutes," a woman replies.

"Ah, I'll be right there!" Martin says, then, turns to smile apologetically to you, the audience
surrogate. "Well, I suppose we'll have to get back to this later. Uh. But yeah. Astore died a few days
later, trying to dethrone her Father from Alfheim's throne. That should have aired just recently
enough you shouldn't need a full reminder on that." He sighs, and bows. "Thanks for taking the time
to listen to me ramble on about all of this again. I'm sorry we can't talk more. Until next time?"

The camera person nods, and Martin smiles, before running out of the trailer.

...

...

...

Wait. That last part. The part that was about the Goa'uld in the guy and the people with the tree.

Wasn't that something entirely and completely new and not a flashback thing at all????

 Somehow, you feel as if you were blessed and cheated out of something all at the same time.

 Chapter End Notes

Oh, wait, that wasn't entirely a recaped clip show, wasn't it?
Right, yeah. Figured if I was gonna do another recap chapter, I might as well give a LITTLE bit of new content that wasn't just summary. Might as well make some use out of this one.

I think I've got the next SG1 chapter almost finished. Not sure how next week's arc is going to play out, but it might be some more shorter scene chapters again. We'll seeeeee. In the mean time, I'm hungry and need to get dinner going. Woooooooooooooooshhhhhhhhhhh.....

...Yeah, i'm hungry and feeling a mite ditzy, as is known to happen.
Your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you open your eyes to a familiar ceiling.

The SGC infirmary.

"Thank you, Tyheus," you tiredly mutter, before trying to sit up--

"Huh??"

You've been restrained to the bed with a pair of handcuffs and leather belts. Also, the act made your stomach twinge just a bit.

"Colonel Mitchel?" Doctor Lam asks, peering at you as she looks up from her work at a desk. "Please tell me that's you. Actually, wait. What's my full name?"

"It's me, and you're Doctor Carolyn Lam," you frown, playing along with the request. Thankfully, she sighs in relief upon hearing those three words. "What the hell did Keita do while I was in his body?"

"Keita, huh?" Doctor Lam gets up and walks over to start unlocking you. "Well, he and the girl in Vala's body got into a fist fight over who got to eat pudding in the cafeteria. You might feel a bit sore in the stomach. She kneed you a bit higher than she was aiming."


"So, what happened?" Doctor Lam asks.

"That's a long story, but in summary, we came, we met a giant space worm, and kicked some ghostly ass," you crack a smile. "Then we stayed for tea and crumpets and worked out a means of getting the Ancient we demoted back to the Mortal realm back here to Earth."

"You did, huh?" Doctor Lam blinks. "Wait-" She does a double take. "Did you just say you returned an Ascended Being to a Mortal Form?"

"Yeeep," you nod. "Like I said. Long story."
There was a moment of delerium, and eyes cracked open as something tugged at the mind seeing through them.

"NNh... Wh..."

You are... An unfamiliar ceiling greets you, and you stare at it bleakly before peering around at the room you were in- some form of stone, cold, Isolation Ward. Lights of an odd nature fill the room with no source of warmth.

"Where..."

You stare up at the window overlooking this place, and at the unfamiliar person sitting in a chair writing on some oddly shaped parchment.

"Where am I?"

The person looks up, eyes widening. They mouth something in surprise- audio severed by the glass wall.

Though you don't know what he says, you recognize the look in their eyes, and you recognize the haste within which they get up and run off.

And so alone, you who lay in bed, trying to recall what had happened to the her- no. Wait. To the woman who once fought? No. To the King who had fought and--

It came back with a flash of gold and red clashing, and with it, that you were missing something important.

Your Sword.

A surge of panic briefly floods your system before the sympathetic bond between yourself and the blade activated-

[Location.]

-And revealed its location to you. Just a room away, at the very edge of the distance it could be physically removed from you person, and was within the presence of... of... Of the remnants of bloodied clothes and battered armor. And there were hands on your precious blade, yes, but...

Neither you nor the sword could sense any malice or ill intent. Not as they gently scoured the weapon’s surface with warm water- cleaning away the blood.
And so you exhale in relief. The sword was simply being taken care of, much as you yourself was being tended to after such a grievous battle.

...Time had passed. Too much time had passed and yet it felt nothing had passed at all. Merlin and Morgan should have been here at your side when you awoke.

That they were not... Spoke ill of the world you now found yourself in.

The construction, and that clothing style... it's...

It's not...

And then there's a beeping keen, and a hissing of air, and then a door opens to your side, and figures in large, odd, white near-cloth suits that cover their entire being step into the room, closing the door behind them.

What manner of oddness is this?

One of them, a man by his voice, starts running through a series of oddly worded phrases and sentences that were antiquated by your time that-

Oh. OH.

They're trying to find what language you speak.

"-If you can understand this please say 'yes'?"

"Yes," you answer immediately, though your voice croaks under the pressure.

Ugh. If any of the Knights could see you now, they would surely-

"Okay, that's a lot... better than I was expecting, actually," he sounds surprised. "Though considering the [Hologram] spoke perfect, if ancient English I don't know why I am."

Hologram? You don't recognize that word.

"Ah, anyways," the man coughs, "Doctor Lam, I think you can talk to her without much trouble."

"Thank you, Jonas," and then one of the other suited figures, a woman, speaks. "Hello there. I'm Doctor Carolyn Lam. I'm the physician who helped save your life. What's your name."

"Arturi," your voice cracks again. "Ngh. Artor." you start coughing, and you're quickly handed a container of some sort that you chug down without hesitation.

It's... Water? Surprisingly clean water at that. And it... it helps. You stop coughing as much, though your throat is... very poor feeling.

"Let's try to keep the talking to a minimum, okay?" this Doctor says. "Going forwards, nod if you understand, shake your head if not."

You nod.
Okay. I know this is going to be hard to believe, but you've been in suspended animation for a very long time. Long enough that I'm not sure if your-" She starts speaking words that you don't understand, and you frown, and immediately shake your head.

A sigh. "Jonas?"

The man, Jonas, takes it from there. "Uh, what she's trying to say that you might be at a greater risk of getting deathly sick while you're recovering. That's why we're wearing these suits."

Hrm... That's... If it's been so long that even the diseases have changed...

That's reasonable, you suppose. You nod in understanding.

Jonas continues, "Now, we, ah, have someone who's willing to come in and try and update your body's responses, in what we think should be pretty safe, but they'll be a few days before they can get here, minimum. They have to travel from a very far away place and by ship because right now the- ah. Astria Porta? It isn't working properly in both directions."

Merlin's Stargates, not working properly? How... bizarre. But even the greatest of roads will fall into disrepair, given time.

You nod in understanding.

"In the mean time, Doctor's Orders, you need to rest and try to recover as best as you can," the Doctor continues from there. "You were hovering as close to Death's door as I'm comfortable with, and I'm honestly surprised you're awake this soon."

You smile at that, and she sighs.

"Great. I know that look. That's the look of someone who's been told that far too many times to be surprised by it."

You dare risk speaking, "Sword."

"...You want your sword?" The Doctor sounds appalled. "Why would you want it for?"

"Helps," You manage to answer only half of what you actually want to say.

"I think the sword might have something to do with her recovery speed," Jonas says.

"...Fine," the Doctor says. "I'll have it moved in here after it's been cleaned."

You smile in appreciation of that choice.

"Well. That's problematic," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you frown at the images of a KULL WARRIOR tearing their way through a Jaffa museum to get to the Stargate just outside of it- a grey and crimson sword in hand.
"So, what are we looking at here, exactly?" Cassandra asks, looking up to Teal'c, who had come to bring this to your attention. "I mean, the weapon itself. What do we know?"

"Very little," Teal'c says. "Just that the blade fell from the heavens many centuries ago, lodging itself within the head of an enemy Jaffa commander serving a rival Goa'uld during a time that they and the planet's ruling Goa'uld were in conflict. The First Prime, assuming this to be a gift from their God, took the sword out of their enemy's corpse, and used it to turn the tide of battle. That Goa'uld, of course, took claim for the weapon's appearance, even if rumors would circulate that even he had no true idea where it came from. It was afterwards relegated to status as a historical and religious artifact for some time, never used again for battle, and eventually forgotten about and left to gather dust."

"So... It's a magic sword that suddenly decided to up and walk away?" You ask. "Did it get overcharged from the rift energy?"

"I don't think that's what happened," Teal'c says. "Given events within the Jaffa Nation, I believe the sword's theft was planned to cause turmoil. But by whom... I have my suspicions."

"It's a problem," General Landry muses. "But not our only one. This sword's theft happened just after we pulled Artoria out of the ice. We've got Ascendants from our galaxy going around in the Ori galaxy trying to recruit followers, and now a stolen sword. SG-1, get Jonas and gear up."

"Yes, sir," Cassandra says.

"In the mean time," Landry says. "Teal'c, may I have a word in private?"

You are TEAL'C, and you nod, following the General into the office.

"I informed Jack about this vote," Landry tells you. "He asked me to ask you what you can tell us about this Gerak guy."

You nod at that. "He was First Prime of Montu, a minor Goa'uld who served Ra, then later fell in with Ba'al when Ra was killed. After the fall of the Goa'uld, Ba'al's armada was led by a Jaffa named Hubrok. Hubrok was an ally of Bra'tac's and would have supported our desire to reform the Jaffa nation with democracy. However, approximately two weeks ago, Hubrok disappeared."

"And you think Gerak had a hand in it?"

You nod. "While no evidence was uncovered, shortly after his disappearance, Gerak began quietly gathering military might, and promoting the more traditional ways of the Jaffa High Council. I suspected he was making a play similar to this... however, once the rift appeared and powers began flowing out to the people of this Galaxy... Gerak began incorporating powered individuals into his ranks. We thought he would take his time, however... the theft of this sword has pushed his agenda forwards faster than we could plan against." You shake your head. "After the most recent vote being so hastily scheduled and performed... the Council played squarely into Gerak's hands."

"Well," Landry muses. "that makes him one of the most powerful guys in the galaxy right now." He then says, "I'm authorized to extend an invitation to him. General O'neill wants to meet him face to face. As does General Leijon."
"Are they on their way back already?" you inquire.

"Soon," Landry nods.

"Then I will extend the invitation," you bow.

---

"No," Gerak says.

"No?" Your name is Teal'c and you frown. "We are to be expected to maintain our alliances, Gerak. This invitation has been extended for such an opportunity and--"

"We will not tie ourselves down to the heel of some savior-minded fools who did little to actually free our people," Gerak says, eyes narrowing at you. "Especially when they seek to end the so-called source of the powers that our people have been gaining since the defeat of the Goa'uld."

"A rift in space that leaks an exotic energy into space in all directions," you try telling him.

"HAH! Another Tau'ri lie," Gerak says. "The powers do not come from any such rift, should it even really exist."

You frown. "I have seen pictures of it, Gerak. People I trust were there and watched it open before their very eyes. They are not liars."

"And they still seek to close it!" Gerak scoffs. "These powers are a gift from the True Gods, for us throwing off the shackles of the Goa'uld!"

"These powers are the result of an energy particle that is not native to our universe," you tell him. "It is a foreign entity that is as invasive as the Goa'uld are to a host body. There is no telling what long term exposure may do to us."

"It grants us power, Teal'c," Gerak narrows his eyes. "Power we would be foolish to turn down. No longer will these Alternians hold such a monopoly. We will be the strongest leaders in the galaxy... And we do not need alliances such as the Tau'ri or Alternians to be maintained. We do not need such false protectors to guide us. Not when the True Gods send their Messenger Representatives to guide us along the path to righteousness."

...What.

"Messengers?" You ask. "You speak as if you have met such beings, Gerak."

"Indeed I have," Gerak says. "They call themselves the Andromeda Ascendants."

"What kind of a fool are you, Gerak?" you ask, narrowing your eyes at him. "They are no different than Anubis. Mortals who Ascended to a higher plane of existance, and nothing more."

"They are very different from Anubis, Teal'c," Gerak counters. "They did what none could. They defeated Anubis personally."
"They take claim for Anubis' demise!?" You ask. "When? Where? How?"

"They were the ones who planted the weapon on the Tau'ri planet to allow them to destroy Anubis' ship," Gerak boasts. "But mere hours before the fleet arrived, it was through their interference that-

"That structure was beneath miles of ice for thousands of years," you counter the blatant misinformation. "It was built by the Ancients! The ones who created the Stargates!"

"You are the true fool, Teal'c," Gerak says, and you feel as if there's no getting through to the man now. "The Ancients were but scavengers much as the Goa'uld. Parasites without knowledge. The Stargates are much older than them. They existed far beyond even this Universe's creation and will far outlast us by a vast measure. They are as timeless and indestructible as-

"I will hear nothing more of these lies, Gerak," you tell him bluntly. "You have not seen with your own eyes how Stargates can be destroyed. They are not indestructible. And neither are your newfound beliefs." And with that, you turn and leave, scowling.

This... This is not good.

"So, where exactly did the Kull Warrior come from?" Your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you are currently acting as a lead detective. What fun!

"We are not certain," a Jaffa who had served as a security guard for the museum says. "The direction of the footprints and the blast hole in the wall indicates that it came through the alleys behind the building. It definitely did not come through the Stargate to begin with, unless the thief was not wearing the armor to begin with."

"Right... I'm gonna need to see where that was, in case they left anything behind," you say.

"Follow me," The Jaffa nods, then leads you through the hallways of the building.

You pass by the broken into display vault, where Cassandra, Jonas, and Vala of all people are examining the crime scene to see how the theft was accomplished, and then past a few scorched hallways to find a wall that had been blown inward.

"Well, this doesn't look like a Cull Warrior's wrist blaster damage," you observe the rather large hole with suspicion.

"No, it does not," the Jaffa agrees. "I would say it seems like the results of a concentrated fire of Staff Blasts, however... we would have been alerted if it were such a thing. Instead, all we were alerted to was one large explosion."

"Yeah, this looks pretty similar to a single shaped charge explosive," you say. You kneel down and start searching the rubble and debris left from the collapse to see what you can find. "A bit more enthusiastic than C-4, though nowhere near as clean."
"I have seen this C-4 in use before," the Jaffa says, joining you in looking at the rubble and debris. "I am inclined to agree."

It's a tense silence then as you search... And then.

"Hey," you nudge a rock aside to reveal a rounded shell part. "Is this part of any display that was on this wall when it exploded?"

"...No," The Jaffa stares at it. "That looks to be part of a Grenade device, which should have been stored on the other side of the building. This wing was for physical, non incendiaries..."

You take out an evidence bag and carefully grab the shell fragment and seal it up.

"Let's see if we can find anything more like this," you say. "If this is what blew open the wall..."

"The more shell fragments we find the more likely we are to figure out whose stockpile the weapon came from," The Jaffa nods in agreement.

"Well, this is just lovely!" Vala remarks. "Not only am I still waiting for my compensation pay on that finders fee, but someone stole a trick right out of my book! Probably intended to frame me for it, too I'll bet. If I hadn't been on Earth... Hm. Good timing that, actually."

"Really?" Your name is Jonas Quinn, and you frown. "Wait. No. Wrong question. How is it a page right out of your book?"

"Whoever was in the Kull Warrior suit barged into the room, walked through the forceshields protecting the display, grabbed the sword, and then used it to disable the shield from the inside." Vala points at the slashed shield emitters. "Vulnerable from the inside. See? This is a particularly cheap model of shield emitters. You barely even need the Kull Warrior Suit to let you pass through it."

"Well, that's-" Cassandra stops suddenly mid sentence- eyes widening. "Uh oh."

"Uh oh?" Vala asks. "What's uh oh?"

"We just ran out of time to find the sword," Cassandra says.

"And how do you know that?" Vala asks.

"Because its owner just found the thief before we did," Cassandra answers. "And that's bad for us."

"Why's it bad for us?" You ask.

"Because there were two thieves," Cassandra answers, and then takes off running in the direction Mitchel went in.

"What does she mean there were two thieves?" Vala asks. "I could have sworn everyone only saw one-"
And that's when there's a loud crack of thunder, rolling through the air.

"GUYS!" Jude comes running in then- "The Gate just activated an an Ascended being came flying through before it- uh... where's Cassie?"

That's when there's a lot of shouting from down the way Mitchel and Cassandra went.

"That way," Vala points. "Towards all the screaming."

Needless to say, you and Jude take off running.

"WHY!? Why are we running TOWARDS the noise again!?" Vala asks, before running after you.

You are now Cameron Mitchel, moments in the past.

"This was definitely one of the grenades from our storage locker," the Jaffa frowns at the shelled remains of the grenade in the bag. "But how did it get over here?"

You grunt out the obvious, "An Inside Job."

"But why?" The Jaffa turns to look at you, "What possible reason would one of my staff have for doing such an elaborate, destructive stunt?"

"Let's find who worked in that department to have access to those grenades and ask them, shall we?" You ask.

"Of course," The Jaffa nods, turning to head down a hallway... but you both stop, because a staff weapon is pointed your way.

A snarling, Jaffa woman stands there, with tears in her eyes, the staff weapon in hand, and a cloth wrapped object on her back- a sword hilt peeking out from behind one of the cloth folds.

"Jhas'min!" The Jaffa with you- who you still hadn't gotten the name of, you're suddenly realizing with a pit of dread in your stomach. "You did this? Why!?"

"It wasn't supposed to draw the attention of the Tau'ri," the woman, Jhas'min, replies. "The vote was over. We were supposed to return the sword before-" Before she can say what was supposed to happen, a very loud roll of thunder pierces through the air.

"Rain?" Your Guard-companion asks. "But it's not supposed to rain for-"

And that's when a burst of blinding light floods the hallway behind you, forcing the woman pointing the staff Weapon at you to gasp and hastily shield her eyes.

There's only one place that a light source that bright could come from- and that's emerging through the hole in the wall.

"Aw, crap," you mutter before turning slowly to look over your shoulder.
An Ascended being floats in the hallway- no, stands. The light is congealing and forming together into something solid. A body. You see bones and muscles and skin all forming within a deliberately drawn out show of power. You watch as a mane of blonde hair forms and then cascades down around a slender form...

And then the light show shifts in hue from brilliant bright to a dull, crimson aura.

Green eyes peer out from behind a cascading fall of golden hair, and a snarl forms on the mouth.

"Give. Me. Clarent." They demand.

Your Jaffa Guard Companion swears by some ancient Jaffa saying before falling to his knees and crying out- "DEMON! AKUMA!"

He runs away past Jhas'min, who stands rooted in place probably by fear or... well. Actually. Probably by whatever force of nature is keeping you rooted in place too.

Your every instinct is to rush this ascendant and knock them down, but... you can't do anything of the sort. You're locked down to doing nothing but standing there and following the events with your eyes. Your mouth refuses to move.

The crimson aura clad figure steps forwards, moving at a deliberate pace towards the Jaffa woman with the sword. The sword that's glowing within its cloth wrapper and vibrating almost like it's being drawn to the hand of the figure who just appeared.

"GIVE!" They demand, coming to a deliberate halt between you and the Jaffa.

"ME!!" Their hand reaches out, grasping for the blade.

"CLARENT!!!" and then the blade bursts forwards and lands in the figure's hand, covered in blood.

The body of Jhas'min falls to the floor, revealing Cassandra standing at the far end of the hallway, pointing her Zat at the figure who just summoned their sword through a living person.

"DROP THE SWORD!" She orders.

You can't see the face of the former Ascendant being, but you'd assume from the way Cassie flinches that it was not a pleasant expression.

Cassandra fires her Zat- **PCH-ZYU!!**

"HAH!" And then the crimson aura flares out like flames- blowing hair in all directions and- Wait, what? The Zat shot gets absorbed by the flame aura and goes nowhere.

Suddenly, form fitting armor spawns around their body, materializing out of thin air.

All of that golden hair gets blown up around the face and then encapsulated by a very demonic looking helmet (well demonic from the back at any rate).
"...No," The armored figure says, and then-

**KRA-KOOOOOOM!**

Your ears ring like someone just set off a lightning bolt right ontop of you.

You're vaguely aware of the demonic knight stomping off back through the hole in the wall...

And then the next thing you know, Vala and Jonas are prying you up off the ground and Jude is helping Cassandra to her feet.

The armored knight is nowhere to be seen, and you Jaffa Guard friend is mourning the death of the apparent sword thief... who just got their own stolen sword yanked out of her control.

"...Somehow," you mutter, "I get the feeling this is out of left field for just about everyone."

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**EARTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 8TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 03/18/0005.**

"What?" Gerak hisses within the privacy of his own personal chambers. "The Sword was Stolen from our agents!?"

"A demon formed out of crimson light snatched the sword, according to the witnesses," a Jaffa reports to him.

"And where are they?" Gerak asks.

"Unknown," the Jaffa reports. "Everyone within a mile of the Stargate and the museum was rendered unconscious by the pressure wave the creature unleashed, and all recording devices were disabled. The Tau'ri assume they went through the Stargate like our False Thief had."

Gerak tenses. "And the address repository? Surely the address could be traced through-?"

"The whole dialing device was wiped clean," the Jaffa reports. "Every operating file on the control crystals had been erased. It was only because the Tau'ri missed their scheduled communication with Earth that a replacement program was even able to be sourced and replaced onto the device and we were able to retrieve this information."

Gerak simmers in anger for a few moments, and then he says, "We MUST retrieve the sword."

"The Tau'ri are already making preparations to do such."

"We must beat them to it. Use our abilities to teach this thief not to steal from those who rightfully own it," Gerak says.

"If... If the reports are to believed, Gerak, then..."

"Then? Out with it, son!"
"Then the sword's thief was actually its once Ancient owner."

"Unlikely," Gerak grunts. "So very, very, unlikely. After all, they called the Blade Clarent, according to this. That is not the weapon's name."

"The sword is Clarent," Artoria scowls as she sees the picture of the twice stolen sword.

Your name is Jonas Quinn, and your heart skips a beat as she looks up, meets your eyes, and says:

"The thief is Mordred. My... My child." She closes her eyes, and quietly says, "There is only one thing that the blade Clarent in Mordred's possession can mean. I am to be hunted. It is not safe for me to be here. Mordred will come, and Mordred will find me, eventually."

And with that, Artoria Pendragon goes silent, clutching the photograph, and staring at its image.

You leave to report the confirmation to the rest of the team and General Landry.

"So... Mordred," Jude summarizes. "As in... the same Mordred that Doctor Jackson saw in the Ascended Plane. Who worked for the Andromeda Ascendants..."

"Who are making moves to place themselves as the gifter of powers," Teal'c adds on.

"...Yeah," Cassandra sighs. "We really should have seen this coming."

"In the mean time" General Landry says. "General O'neil's given me the go ahead to send the Time Travel team back. You should all head home to rest while I get them on their way out."

"Wonderful," Mitchel says, voice sort of flat, but then he slowly gets excited. "That's... that's actually perfect! Can't we like, leave a message for ourselves to stop this before it happens?"

"We already did," Landry answers. "The letter came in while you were off world. Believe it or not, the postage history shows that for some reason it got sent to Guam, then Japan, and then to Florida before finally making its way back here to Colorado... where it wound up in Walter's home mailbox instead of to General O'neill's house."

"But that doesn't make any sense," you say. "How did it end up in Guam, Japan, AND Florida, in that order??"

"Jonas," Mitchel says, "I've seen my Ma's cookies wind up half way across the country when I was only half way across town before. Sometimes this kind of stuff just happens."

...You're not going to deny it. The way the universe works... that is the kind of thing that just... happens, isn't it?

Chapter End Notes
Yeah. That. Did not go how anyone expected. It certainly didn’t end up in the way I was expecting it to end up.

See you guys Monday.
INTERMISSION: Crystal Wings.

Chapter Summary

Janus learns one of the fundamental rules of time travel. Sometimes... it doesn't go the way you hope it would.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 11/08/0004.

Your name is Rodney Mckay and...

"Wait? You're saying you DIDN'T have the control crystal for Atlantis' DHD when you went to the City?" The Time Traveling Ancient by the name of JANUS asks as you and he work on repairing a very badly mangled TIME JUMPER.

"Nope," you answer.

"But it should have been placed next to the control chair in the outpost," Janus says. "Atleast... that was where I intended to leave it before I permanently returned to the past."

"Wait," you blink. "Are you saying you HAVE the Crystal on you right now?"

"I never let it out of my sight after I stole it from Moros by claiming I was going to destroy it," Janus proceeds to pull a crystal necklace out from beneath his shirt.

"Hah." You start to laugh. "The reason you never leave it behind is because you give it to us to take back to Atlantis."

"To be fair, you did make your own, so it seems it wasn't needed," Janus shakes his head, removing the necklace from around his neck and handing it to you.

"Well, it broke after a single second of running the connection, so don't sound so impressed," you say, taking the necklace and captcha-loging it.

"Incredible," Janus stares at the feat. "More of that code-loging technology miss Jackson used?"

"Yeah, it's pretty handy on occasion," you say.

"I can imagine..." Janus trails off for a moment, lost in thought. "...So. What happened to the Weir we left in the stasis chambers?"

"She died," you answer. "She told us the story of her timeline. It's, uh, pretty wildly different from ours."
"A sad end," Janus muses. "At least she had a chance to see her younger self alive again."

"Ah..." you stop.

"She didn't, did she?" Janus asks, sounding sad.

"She died, a little before we found the Weir from the older time line," you answer. "A madman shot her. It... It wasn't pretty."

Janus goes silent for a moment, then says, "Excuse me, I need a moment to process that," before exiting the Jumper and standing outside the ramp, staring up at the Stargate that had once initiated a huge time loop for Earth and fourteen other gates.

You let him mourn.

A few minutes later, he returns, and then asks, "Did you at least get the list of planets with the, ah, 'ZPMs' wasn't it you called them?"

"Yeah. We could only use one of the two we found," you answer. "The other one was nearly depleted from being used in an EMP generator. We replaced it with one of the ZedPMs we'd brought with us that didn't work."

"Didn't work...?" Janus pauses. "Why wouldn't it-?" And then both of his hands hit his face. "No! I'm an idiot! I forgot to remove the security lock out before we left! How could I forget such a thing!"

"It happens to the best of us," you tell him. "We're only human, or, well, mortal, I guess."

"I suppose so," Janus sighs. "Okay. Let's get back to work... Though, one more question. You mentioned a Siege earlier? How did you defeat the Wraith?"

"Oh, that's easy, we blew up Atlantis," you answer- and you feel only a little bad savoring the look of confused concern on Janus' face.

"You did what now?!"

Chapter End Notes

To be fair, Janus would later consider, it was a solution the Ancients never thought of.
MINISODE: A Loop Closed.

Chapter Summary

Set right about now among current events.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"--like I was telling Argo!" Jade's voice echoed out through the Egbert house as the front door opened. "Sometimes Time Travel doesn't fix everything! I knew something was up when Landry handed us that letter to mail off on top of everything else we had to do in the past!"

"But if we just went back a bit further to send it on a different day-" John's voice echoes out following Jade.

"Nah! Nope! I'm done with the time travel and you're not ever gonna catch me in a time machine unless I'm actually dead and you're trying to save my life!"

"Yeah, well... okay. Fine. Fair enough."

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you smile upon hearing their voices. Your family is back.

Sure, from your perspective they were only gone for a few hours, but... you know they've been through a lot to get to this point.

You quickly disentangle yourself from the blankets on the couch you were snoozing on as John and Jade step into the room.

"Hey, Argo," John smiles.

"We're back," Jade grins.

"Welcome back!" You smile right back.

Chapter End Notes

A short scene, closing off some of that huge time loop. Whew. Now that we're done with that we can deal with more important future stuff!!!

One more intermission for tomorrow, and then two ALT chapters for Thurs. and Fri., during which time I'll be adding in another setting to the Fandom tags. :33 Some of you might have a firm idea of what that'll be. (I know I've told one reader already over discord, you know who you are. :P)

DIASPORA DATE: 03/23/0005.

"Welcome back, Daniel," Sarah Gardner greeted.

"I'm glad to be back, Sarah," Daniel Jackson returned said greeting.

"So. Shall I help you get all of this started packing to go to Atlantis, then?" Sarah smiles.

"Yeah, just let me check the mail that came while I was..." Daniel stops. "Uhoh."

"What uhoh?" Sarah asks.

"Old classmate sent me a folder envelope, from New Mexico, and it's been stamped with a bunch of those confidential stamp things," Daniel answers, staring at the hefty, large, yellow wrapped envelope. "Do you recognize this stamp?" He points at a triangular shaped stamp with three letters emprinted on it.

"D.R.C.?" Sarah muses. "No, I can't say that I do."

Daniel opens the package, retrieves the first letter, and pauses upon seeing its hand written header. Then, he reads it.

To Doctor Daniel Jackson.

It seems weird writing that. Last we'd met, neither of us had a doctorate in anything. Then the next thing I know, I'm hearing you've been laughed out of the archaeological community for your controversial theories on the Pyramids.

I hear you're working at a part of the Atlantis Expedition now. That's... quite the step up. I'm writing to you now to say congratulations, primarily. I suppose the people who laughed you out are the ones being laughed at now.

I was recently asked by a family member if I would be joining your Expedition. I told them no, I'm not really sure how much my specific branch of Anthropology is a needed field in a whole other galaxy, with many living cultures. And I've always been more of a fan of the old, and dead ones, anyways.

I've heard you and others from that Expedition are recruiting for new positions, and, while I'm quite happy and secure in the job I've somehow managed to get, I'd like to offer some of my colleagues from the school I went to as people I think could benefit greatly from your work in Pegasus.
As an aside, I've also gathered a few similar resumes from those of my team working here who, well... they put on brave faces, but events recently happening down here has made some of my team scared to continue on working here. I can't blame them. Though, I suspect there's a lot more to be scared of in a Galaxy Far Far Away than here at home, I've heard them expressing interest in joining the Atlantis Expedition now that communication has been restored.

I've marked the resumes respectively. Blue flags for those I went to school with, Green flags for those who I've worked with down here in New Mexico. I hope they can be of help out in Pegasus. :)

With warmest regards,

Dr. Marie Sutherland, DRC Anthropology Office.

"...Wonder what she was almost going to write there when she fixed it to New Mexico," Sarah muses.

"No idea," Daniel answers, peering into the envelope and seeing... quite a few resumes resting within. "...I get the feeling I'm going to need to reach out to Mikari about this."

Chapter End Notes

You know what's frustrating? I've finally gotten the model kit for the Astro Megaship/Megazord, and some of the parts are already cracked. :/ The red wings on the back and one of the toe-tips on the feet. Plus, some of the joints on it are annoyingly tight, and they're all in the same silver color as the toe piece that's cracked. It's kind of annoying and concerning... but, I was considering getting a second set eventually anyways. One to leave in ship mode and one to leave for transformation. We'll see what ends up breaking on this one, I guess, and make changes when assembling on the second one...

Delta seems fine, though, beyond some roughed up stickers that I failed to place properly.

Hopefully it's not a widespread production error like some of the transformation parts on the Shogun Megazord was. They're neat little kits and I really like them... Just wish they'd designed the parts tolerance for the Astro Mega better.

Life is never easy, is it?
Chapter Summary

Joey, Dammek, and Callie in Hauntswitch.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.


DIASPORA DATE: 03/23/0005.

Your name is Joey Claire, and you huff in annoyance as you sit down at the restaurant table your team is waiting at, a cute little plastic number tab in hand. "Order's placed, food'll be out soon." You place that number sign thing down, and look at your teammates.

It's surprising how little attention you've all been getting since returning home. A group of trolls, one with a fancy cane, one of whom has giant fluffy wings as white as a cloud- matching her hair, and one who has a fairly large bandage plastered on their forehead.

But, then again, considering one of your former classmates is across the dining room and has their entire head obscured by a ball of yellow flames that put out no heat... yeah, not the most distracting sight in all of Hauntswitch.

It's you, Callie, and Dammek. Xefros is keeping an eye on things with the BELTUS while Okurii is here on Earth, Mierfa is still helping out with the grub caverns on Diaspora, and Polypa... well, Polypa and Tegiri are training the pilots for the next mobile suit scaled Mech. Something that's supposedly going to be able to transform into a shotgun weapon for the Astro Megazord.

Honestly, you're one of the dream-teams that's been on the news for... uh almost a year now? Ugh. No, less than that. Even so, you've not gotten too much attention since coming to Hauntswitch to investigate the Lynera sightings.

"I'm thinking we should call it," you venture.

"Agreed," Dammek nods. "It's been. What? Two weeks? And we haven't seen anything interesting at all."

"Four weeks, actually," Callie corrects. "And we definitely have seen interesting things. Just, not what we're after. Remember, you hit your head on that lamp post a couple days ago, Dammek."

"What? No I didn't," Dammek says- reaching up to touch his forehead. "See I- Wait. Where'd this bandage come from?"

"Note in Left jacket pocket," you and Callie chime in at once.
"Huh.. Oh... " Dammek reads the note over. Then, he promptly put it back in his jacket, and sort of sat there, silently for a moment. Then, he asks, "What were we talking about again?"

It's not humorous at all, despite some people giggling in the corner. Oh, sure, they'll laugh at someone being forgetful, but not... ugh. Whatever.

Hauntswitch has definitely been plagued by dimensional weirdness, and none of you are certain as to what's caused it. For about two weeks, a whole other town ended up overlaid in the middle of everything else in Hauntswitch- and it kept moving around, like it was pinned down only in one spot and kept spinning around it.

Hence, Dammek running face first into a lamp post that was definitely not there a second before.

You'd tracked down the cause to a poor girl you were brought along by Roxy to baby sit once when you were ten. Ellie Fitz was her name. Basically, the poor girl's imagination got supercharged by her powers manifesting and she began pulling a whole other dimension into play. It hadn't been too bad... just localized reality warping confined to their house...

Except, then some jerks decided to bully Ellie and, well...

Boom. Ellie dove too deep into her own mind and her powers struck out at the town. You're not entirely sure that the bullies didn't get offloaded to another dimension entirely during the whole process.

Once you managed to bring her back to reality, everything went back to normal... But everyone who'd been harmed in some way because of the revolving dimensional transposition was having memory issues, because when the town went back to normal, so too vanished memories of the entire time the town was going bonkers.

If one managed to avoid harm, like you and Callie did, though, the memories were retained just fine. It was a weird sort of power interaction with reality. A really concerning one because you have no idea if all the Lynera sightings were because of Ellie's powers or not.

Still, at least you'd managed to keep that event off the radar and quietly arranged for Ellie and her Mother to get transferred to the LOPAN settlement in Alternia Galaxy. Just to be on the safe side. Better to put Ellie in an environment where people are definitely going to be more accepting of a weird power than, well...

A town that was home to people who'd giggle at someone forgetting the last two weeks after a serious dimensional upheaval.

"We were talking about how despite all the rift-induced activity here, there doesn't seem to be anything Lynera related that we're able to find, Dammek," Callie reminds him. "We're voting on whether or not we should call it quits and leave."

"Oh, yeah," Dammek nods. "Definitely. It's been, what, two weeks? And we haven't seen a thing."

You sigh, even as those gigglers upgrade to guffaws and full blown laughter.

You will not snap at them. You will not snap at them. You will not snap at them.

"Here's your food," and then a waiter arrives, delivering your orders... except for Dammek's. "Oh,
wait, was it the Chicken salad sandwich with ranch dressing or was it the pork salad sandwich with mayonnaise? I forgot."

GLUB.

You’d forgotten how much you hated this town.

People look at you differently than they used to. They see the horns and stare for a moment, but then they look away... Not even a whole year and Alternians on Earth isn't as interesting of a sight as it could have been.

Before, when you were human... it was a whole different kind of staring. The attention paid towards you was because of your Pa. Your genetic relation to a super adventurer and CEO. And Pa... Jake...

Well, he's still in the news, but he's... somehow more subdued? Happier, at least, because it's as "Chixie Roixmr's Matesprit" rather than as "Jake Harley."

You need to call him and check in and see how he's doing while you're still on Earth.

After.

After you're done packing up and ready to head back.

Your old house in Hauntswitch is a dust collector. You would have thought it'd had been sold off at some point- actually, some small part of you insists that it did, and that's probably related to paradox related changes- but nope, the house has stayed in the family, it seems. But yeah. Dust. Callie sneezed once upon entering the place and it sent dust clouds everywhere because her wings flared out in the process.

There's not much left in the house itself because all of that got moved to Colorado... But what little furniture did get left behind has been just about the same as it was when you left all those years ago.

Your room was basically left untouched beyond someone- Jude, you suspect- going through and removing batteries from every electronic device at some point.

None of you have been staying here, rather, staying in a hotel while investigating the incidents in town, but... now you're here.

Retrieving everything you want to take home with you to Diaspora... especially...

Especially those memories of home you want to share with the little grub to be who hasn't hatched yet.

You haven't even settled on a name yet.

Will you go with a six letter name, or four? Or... or...?

FWASH! THUNK-WHUMP.
There's a noise in your attic.

You tense up, and twist at your cane's handle- immediately, your laser cutter decaptchalogues from the hidden slot and into your hand. You pocket it beneath your sleeve, and start heading up the stairs to the attic.

When was the last time you were ever up here?

You... you can't remember, but a slinky remains precariously perched between two steps. Nobody's moved it in all these years? Weird.

You approach the attic door, and carefully twist the handle open with your right hand.

RATTLE-CLINK.

Right. Something is definitely in there.

You open the door, and peer inside.

It's an empty attic. Emptier than you've ever seen it. All of the stockpiled junk and guns and all sorts of "TREASURE" is gone. You're pretty sure that's normal, because only a few piles of boxes full of old stuff marked "FRAGILE" remain.

What's NOT normal is the small, glowing rift in the air through which half of a miniaturized Mofang Cruiser juts through, its side wing having knocked over one of the few piles of remaining boxes.

"What in the-" you barely manage to get out before the wing and the rift it came through FWASH away, leaving nothing behind but knocked over boxes.

Then, there's a distant flash of light through the attic window. You run over and peer out into the forest outside.

A full sized Mofang Cruiser- half covered in an ice like substance on one side- lay crashed into the middle of the forest.

You grab your radio, and let Callie know about the situation.

"So... where did this come from?" your name is Callie Ohphee, and you stare up at the crashed Mofang Cruiser. Well. Not crashed in the sense that it's actually crashed into the ground. More... it has the appearance of having crashed, except it's somehow appeared, just... There. At an angle. Fused into the trees, and suspended high up into the air.

It's a mystic marvel, is what it is.

"If I had to guess... Ellie's powers weakened the space around Hauntswitch, and drew this ship in like a magnet," Joey says. "And if it's the ship Lynera was on... that might explain our sightings."

"We'll have to get a closer look to see," you say. "There's no telling what's onboard that thing, or if we're just seeing a visual image of."
And then the strangest thing happens.

The whole ship just sort of... shimmers, like a rainbow. It sort of vanishes from sight before reappearing again.

"...Or if it's even stable within our dimension or not," you correct. "I'm not looking forwards to stepping foot onboard, that's for sure."

"Me either," Joey says, smiling faintly as she decaptchalogues an Arai Beetle. "Scout Drone has been deployed!"

And thus, she sends the beetle up to look.

"...This is trippy," Joey says, once it's inside.

"How so?" you ask.

"...I can see out a window. Look left, I'm peering into space and there's the Sovereign Slayer approaching from the direction of Alternia Galaxy," Joey answers. "Look right, I'm looking at a cavern of some kind, frozen over with ice. Look Up...?" She shakes her head. "I don't even know what that is, but there's a fucking icebreaker boat traveling at speed towards what I think is a Dyson Sphere." She then says, "I'm not looking down."

"Wise decision," you say, peering up at the ship. "This is almost certainly the ship Lynera and Elwurd were using, if you saw the Sovereign Slayer."

"I'm trying to find the engine room," Joey reports. After a minute, she remarks, "What the shit?"

"What is it?" You ask.

"There's a pink mech, about the size of a Stargate, stuck inside a doorway, and all kind of... tangled up with some kind of snake-squid shaped machine thing. It looks like it's just... frozen. Mid explosion."

"That doesn't sound good," you say.

"No, it's-" Joey stops, and then puts a hand to her head. "Woah."

"Are you okay?" You ask, moving to support her in case she falls over.

"Not, sure, I-" Joey stops again as you both hear a grinding, keening noise, and look up.

FWAAAAAAAAAASII!

And then the Mofang cruiser is just gone, along with all the chunks of the trees that had been jammed into it.

"...I guess that explains it," Joey answers, tiredly. "I lost contact with the beetle."

The Prometheus' sensors recorded the huge burst of rift energy- heavily charged with Zillyum- when
the Mofang Cruiser appeared and disappeared.

And now, you had an idea of how to track the ship's appearances if it were to appear anywhere else on Earth.

"We watch for bursts of Zillyum- of any scale," you grin. "And once we find a source identified, we beam point to point to get there. If we're lucky, we'll be able to track down anything that emerges-Lynera, Mofang cruiser, or otherwise."

"We'll need some localized scanner," Joey says. "In case something happens near us."

"In the mean time," Dammek asks, "what now?"

"I wanna swing by down to New Mexico," Joey decides. "Apparently a couple more people have gone missing down there- same way as before. Except after what we just went through I'm really concerned that it's related to all this rift shit."

You ask, "So, how do you want to go about getting there? Prometheus transport?"

"Rent a car and drive down there," Joey says. "I get the feeling we might run into more rift things that way anyways."

"Road trip sounds like fun," Dammek says.

"Mmh," you nod. "That might be fun, yes. What's the worst that could happen?"

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Chapter End Notes

Well, there's a chapter. To be continued tomorrow.

With the cold front of freezing temps rolling across the country, please stay warm, folks!! Don't go outside unless you absolutely have to and be *warm* when you do it! Alright?? Stay warm and don't freeze to death!!

EDIT: Something went weird and the chapter posted twice. IDK what happened. Ignore the duplicate chapter notification. 0-0;
Chapter Summary

Joey, Dammek, and Callie arrive in New Mexico.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 03/30/0005.

>S [S] Dammek: Simmer

The New Mexican desert was hot, but it was a dry heat, even despite the time of year. It's like time itself had ceased to have all meaning.

Your name is Dammek, and as the sun glints against your sunglasses, you nurse a headache. Not from the time you apparently you ran into something so hard you forgot a whole two weeks. No, but from the fact that the car you'd rented broke down in the middle of nowhere, because a spike in Zillyum had been detected and so you'd gone off to investigate.

First, Callie's detector had stopped working, followed by the car engine shortly there after... and then your radios that were capable of reaching the Prometheus lost power too.

Joey's working on fixing the danged engine, meanwhile, you and Callie rest in the shade of the car itself. Callie pouts as she tries to get the detector to work again.

Your headache really comes from trying to figure out how the hell all these different electronic devices could fail so completely at the same time. Probably whatever had been brought along with the rift flare of Zillyum is behind it, but, fat chance figuring out what that is now.

That, and the heat. The dry, dry heat.

And then your ears catch the sound of a rumbling engine.

You sit up, and peer out the back window. There, approaching along the road, is a vaguely truck shaped vehicle.

You quickly get out of the car and start waving to flag them down.

Thankfully, they pull to a halt alongside the car, and you can see the truck, of all miracles, is a TOW TRUCK.

A short while later, the truck has your rental car hatched up, and you're all crammed into the truck's cabin, soaking up the chilled air of the truck's air conditioning on the road to the nearest town.
"You're lucky I came across you," the driver, a woman whose name tag reads "FLO", explains. "I got a bogus prank call out to the middle of nowhere by a couple of teens. I was on my way back home when I found ya."

"We're really grateful," Callie says with a nod.

"If there's a bank in town I can pay you for the ride," Joey says.

"Naw, there's no need for that 'til I fix your car up for ya," Flo says. "Just happy to be doin' my part out in these here hills otherwise."

You glance out the window at the endless expanse of desert that seems to be framed in by mountains on all sides.

"So, what're you Alternian folk doin' out this far in the desert anyhow?" Flo asks. "On vacation or somethin'?"

"Sort of." Joey explains, "We're trying to find the ship that we think caused all the magic powers and body transformations."

"And you think it's out here in the desert?" Flo asks.

"Well, something was," Callie adds. "We were tracking a burst of Zillyum energy when our car died on us. And so did my tracker."

"And our communication devices," you add.

"Ah, I hear ya," Flo nods. "There's been some mighty odd things happenin' round here lately. My own sister just up and decided to drive out into the desert one day. Haven't heard from her since save for a letter saying she'd gotten a new job with some archeological group. Weird thing is she never was interested in any of that stuff before. Left me hangin' with the truck business tho."

"Let me guess," Joey remarks, "she felt 'called' to something?"

"Uhhuh, you too, I take it?" Flo muses. "Well, you ain't the first and last bunch of outsiders feelin' called to this place. If you've got any people you want me to contact when you inevitably go missin', just let me know."

"We'll keep that in mind, thanks," you say.

Soon, you drive into a small little highway town called CATHERINE, which Flo tells you is nestled in the desert heart of EDDIE COUNTY, NEW MEXICO, despite it not being on any map. Framed off in the distance is a volcano caldera that Joey has a sharp intake of air upon seeing.

While Flo drives the rental car over to the nearest CAR GARAGE, you, Joey, and Callie head into a place called the GATHERING CAFE- as for why it's called that, a handy little sign in the window advertises a MAGIC THE GATHERING card game tournament on every Saturday. Which would end up being on the 22nd, if you've got your dates right.

"Cute," Callie says. "It looks like some Earth variation of Fiduspawn."

"No, I think they call that Pokemon," Joey says, making you glance at her oddl as you enter the cafe
(Ding ding, goes the door). "What? Penny had something about that in her backpack when that one
time loop happened, so I'm keeping up with Earth trends to see if things changed or are the same."

"Whatever," you shake your head.

A waitress shows up to take you to your seats- a booth, handy, you and Joey take the side facing the
door- and then you get your orders for lots of water-heavy drinks and some tasty food content for
your stomachs.

"So, what's with that volcano?" Callie asks once the waitress has left to process that order.

"I saw it in some of Argo's memories," Joey answers. "Of the Aschen timeline."

"So we're in the right area for that, at least," you say, and she nods.

"I wonder if the rift we were chasing has anything to do with that?" Callie muses.

"No idea," Joey answers.

Around the time your food arrives, there's a 'Ding ding' from the door, and in enter two men, arguing
over something in hushed tones.

"Doug, Victor," A Waitress greets them, "I'm surprised to see you two together. Should I get you a
table together?"

"Yes, please, Sammy," the man wearing a strange hat, with one of its brims folded up against the
side, says with a polite nod and smile. "We've got a lot to discuss."

They get taken to a booth next to yours, and the man with the hat eyes you three cautiously from his
seat directly facing yours. The other man doesn't seem to have noticed you at all. The first one seems
to find your presence acceptable, though, and dares to resume his discussion with the man he
entered with. "Look, Laxman, I'm telling you. I don't need an air cannon installed. The area's
perfectly secure without it. More so, even."

"It's not my decision to make, Sharper," the other man, 'Laxman' says, taking something from his
jacket and twirling it around in his hand like a nervous habit. "With everything that's been going on,
Mike's riding my ass to see if I can get this tech online again. Atleast it's not thematically out of place
from your project, and this particular model-"

"Yes, yes, I know, it came from the warehouse," the man in the hat, 'Sharper' says, aggravated. "But
I'm worried that if we start putting these things up everywhere... well. People might get hurt. And I
know, that's rich, coming from me. But seriously, Engberg's over-reacting."

You eye Joey, who seems equally as interested in the conversation happening as you are. Callie's
busy fixing the tracker still.

"Don't tell me you're falling in with Zandi's group now," Laxman grumbles. "I thought you were
better than that."

"I'm not choosing sides, and you know that. I'm just concerned that we're taking things too far for
our little Expedition," Sharper states. "If we put these things in and someone gets hurt on my land
because of it? You know I'm gonna be held liable, and worse than that, we might draw some
"Unwanted Attention." He pointedly angles his chin towards you with a sideways nod, and smirks.

"What are you-?" Laxman takes a moment, and then glances over his shoulder at your group of grey skinned, candy corn horned individuals. "Oh. Hello."

You give a small wave at them, and a "Howdy."

Laxman turns back around and seems to sulk. Heh, grade-A conversation dodge, there.

"You folks look lost," Sharper remarks. "And a bit far from, home, even. Desert been treating you well?"

"Beyond a broken down car, the desert's been quite nice actually," Joey states.

"Yeah," you say. "Reminds me a lot of Alternia, back when it still was in one piece."

"I can imagine," Sharper smirks. "So... Car troubles, eh? Just passing through?"

"Something like that," Joey says. "We were tracking some odd energy signals across the countryside. We were just up in Hauntswitch a couple of days ago, actually."

"Oh, yeah, I think I heard something about that," Sharper muses. "A town appearing ontop of another town?"

"That's the one," Joey nods.

"I take it you guys resolved it?" Sharper pries for intel- you can tell that's what he's doing. He's looking at you and Joey respectively.

"Yup," Joey answers because you sure as hell don't remember it.

"Neat, neat," Sharper muses. "So... where were you at, there abouts, when your car broke down?"

You glance to Joey, and she nods, so you answer. "About a couple miles from town. I think the rift we were tracking was a few more miles in the direction of that volcano on the other side of town. Though, I'd say a good ways past it, probably."

"That volcano falls on private property," Laxman interjects, suddenly. "Hope whatever you're searching for isn't in it."

"Knowing our luck it probably would be there," Joey muses. "Or was. The rift might have closed by now, taking whatever it was with it."

"We'll find out once Callie gets the tracker back online," you say.

Callie doesn't respond beyond a grunt as she pries loose what looks to be a rather melted fuse circuit free from the tracker, and then a sigh and a muttered, "Stupid cheap Radio Shack parts."

"Well, you know," Sharper muses, "I do know a few guys who know that area pretty well. You get that tracker up and running and I might just be able to help you get around and find whatever it is you're looking for."
"Sharper, what are you doing?" Laxman inquires, a bit harshly.

"C'mon, Vic,'" Sharper says cheekily. "What's wrong with helping out some folks who are just passing through on a wild goose chase?"

"We appreciate the help," Joey says. "Depending on how long it takes for our car to get fixed we'll probably be staying in town overnight or for a few days. Do you know if there's a motel we can go to?"

"Yeah, I know a place," Sharper nods. "Down the road, just past the gas station, and make a left at the first intersection. There's a cute little inn that charges by the night. Can't miss it."

Laxman grunts something you miss, but you get the general vibe he doesn't like that you three are going to be staying around for long term.

"Thanks," you say. "Much appreciated."

Silence falls again as you three return to your meal, and those two guys talk about football while they wait for their food. You get the feeling Sharper is way more into it than the other.

Soon, you've paid for your meal, and checked in at the INN that Sharper had mentioned. It's a cute little place called "The Hive." You get the feeling there's a reference to something in that name, though you can't quite place what it is.

Joey goes to check on the car while you call into the SGC to let them know about the radio failure and car troubles.

Once that's done, and you're assured that they'll pay for the Car repairs, you turn on the TV and check the news.

There's something about General O'neill and General Leijon's press tour from earlier this month still in the news cycle dominating the local channel. Must be a slow news day if they're talking about Okurii's balance of dedication to maintaining alliances between the two Galaxies with her life as a 'single parent'.

To a more national and international ranged news channels, it seems like there's a lot of talk over the discovery "AVALON" deep beneath some hill in some countryside you don't recognize the name of. Lots of treasure to be divided... Oh, SG-1 were the ones who did the discovery.

Good for them.

Then... Oh. There's some talk about the Astro Mega being deployed to orbit Earth while the Prometheus departs for some other part of the galaxy. Apparently they're done with the first batch of pilot training and would be returning them to Earth ahead of schedule to help oversee some of the construction of those still-unyet-named mini-zord things, or something like that.

You feel a little indignant as one particularly dumb correspondent on one channel remarks that the Astro Mega would look a lot more streamlined without the red flag-wings on the back. That's YOUR DESIGN there. Really. Those wings are important to the overall design of the ship and it'd look dumb without them!

Joey returns soon after you shut the TV off in a huff, and tells you it'll be a few days to a week on
the car repairs- apparently every piece of electronics in the thing had been utterly fried somehow and needed replacing.

Which brings you back to that headache that had faded away somewhat.

What the HELL came through that rift earlier today??

"Look, all I'm saying is. I help them out. They get out of our hair. Simple as that."

Douglas Sharper had a good feeling about this.


DIASPORA DATE: 03/31/0005.

"So, I don't think I can fix the tracker with any of the parts in town," Callie reports as she slips into the booth at the cafe across from you and Dammek. "There just aren't enough electronics shops here."

"That's too bad," you say- and you are Joey Claire, Extraordinarily hungry. "I guess we'll have to wait for the car to get fixed and hit up a town that's a bit further away."

"Mmh," Callie nods. "Unfortunately so."

"Well, that'll give us some time to-" whatever Dammek was going to say next got interrupted by a pair of sounds. The first is the "Ding ding" of the cafe door opening.

The second...

The second is a growling sound that turned into a high pitched shriek that echoed across the landscape, piercing through buildings and windows like they weren't even there.

"SKRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOOOIIIAAAAA!!!"

There was a flash of light from distant in the horizon- the Volcano area, you'd be willing to bet- and then...

\[VRRRROOOOOMSSSHHSSSHHSSSHhsshhh...\]

Callie suddenly vanished right in front of you. Literally, just faded out of existence.

"CALLIE!" Dammek jumped to his feet immediately, reaching out for someone who's not there anymore.

You, meanwhile, take in the reactions of everyone else in the cafe.

Patrons look away, trying to pretend like it hadn't just happened. One of the Waitresses shakes her head tiredly...
One woman looks shocked. Utterly shocked. As if she hadn't expected it to just happen like that.

You get up from your seat, and stomp your cane onto the floor to make a loud CLAK sound to get attention. Eyes dart towards you, and you say as calmly, yet firmly as you can- "Who the HELL knows what just happened to my friend, and what can I do about it to get her Back?"

Everyone else remains silent, looking away then. Everyone except for the man from yesterday, Sharper, who had just entered the cafe when that cry happened. He says, quietly, "Follow me, please."

And so you do.

Douglass Sharper is the man's full name, and he takes you to a small office building marked with the letters "DRC" as innocuously as could possibly be. You and Dammek follow him inside, and up to an office door labeled with a sign- "Dr. R. Watson."

So, this is it, huh? Time to meet the man behind all this mystery archaeological stuff.

"Give me a moment to explain first," Sharper says before knocking quickly and interjecting himself into the room.

You can hear a distance muffled, "Sharper? What are you doing here this early in the morning? And were those the-?"

"One of them was taken," Sharper starts, surprisingly loud. (Must still be next to the door.) "Right infront of them, in the Cafe. Saw it myself right as I got there."

You hear a tired sigh and something that sounds like a "let them in."

Then, Sharper opens the door, and you and Dammek walk into a surprisingly spacious looking office.

No, not just an office. A conference room. There's a large round table in the center of it, and the man at the far end in the tan hat reading "MYST" on it has to be....

"Claire, Dammek, meet Doctor Richard Watson, Chairman of the D'ni Restoration Council. Doctor Watson, this is Colonel Claire and Tetrarch Dammek, of Alternia."

"Well," Watson says, standing. "I suppose my hopes of keeping the SGC and Alternia out of our little project were dashed the moment you stepped foot into town. I should have known you would have been dragged into this. It was foolish of me to think otherwise."

"The universe has a funny way of working out like that," Dammek says. "Where's my Moirail?"

"The one who was taken?" Watson asks, glancing to Sharper, who nods.

"Yeah, she had big bright feathery wings, too," Sharper says.

"Mnh... As for where the girl would be," Watson shakes his head. "That is a mystery at the moment. But, I have some idea of how you can begin to locate her, even if... even If I personally do not agree with their methods."
"Before that," you say, raising a hand to stop Dammek from immediately ending the conversation. "We need context. What the hell is going on down here?"

"It begins about ten thousand years ago," Watson moves over to a bookshelf. "A group of refugees came to Earth from another world. Another reality, even, disconnected from our own. I suspect you're familiar with some means of this kind of inter-reality travel, though, the method used was... very unique."

He pulls a book off of the shelf, and carries it over to your end of the table.

"This civilization lived in a cavern beneath the Earth for a very long time. Ten thousand years..." Watson sighs. "Unfortunately, like any long lived civilization, they had their faults. A woman from the surface found the Cavern dwelling civilization- D'ni as it was called- and triggered a series of unfortunate events leading to terrorists gassing the cavern with a deadly plague. Most died, others escaped to their other worlds- their Ages. Some made it to the surface."

He places the book on the table.

"My friends and I rediscovered this cavern some years ago, began researching into its history, planning a restoration. We had our friends at a Gaming company produce some titles based upon journals of a family descended from the survivors. I'm not sure if it was pure luck of who we chose, or if She had anything to do with it. I wouldn't be surprised, really."

Watson shakes his head, and then opens the book before you.

It looks a normal book at first- except where title information would be pasted, there's a black window in the upper half of the page.

A black window that flares to life and begins to show some exotic location with a familiar sort of shimmer to the window's surface. It's a swamp covered in mushrooms- giant sized ones. You almost think the image is fixed, static, except then a SUN rushes by from right to left across the horizon, casting a real time lightshow across the landscape.

"Holy shit, it's a Quantum Mirror in book form," Dammek breathes out.

"They're called Linking Books, and they let you travel to Ages," Sharper chimes in. "The D'ni had all these fixed rules about how the functioned. What to do, what not to do..." He nods at that book, and says, "That one's a project I've been working on restoring, called Teledahn. There's a dark history to that place. It changed hands, and went from a Garden World, to a Bread Factory, to an underground Slave Trader's haven."

"The Ages are almost always in another universe to our own," Watson says. "Baring very certain exceptions, it's near impossible to Link to a world within the same universe that you're in."

"Link?" You ask, having caught onto that odd pronunciation of the word.

"The process of traveling from one world to another," Watson says. "Not too dissimilar to those Stargates you're used to, I'd imagine, except much more fixed. A Linking Book is a one way door. You touch the pannel, and you're Linked through to the otherside- appearing out of thin air, or so it seems."
"What happened to your friend in the Cafe was someone Linking her out, remotely, without the use of a book," Sharper says. "It was the same sound and everything. Just... No Book."

"You mentioned exceptions to the rules," Dammek begins. "What are they, who are they, and what do they want with Callie?"

"The D'ni had rules, on the surface of it all," Watson says, "against slavery. Against ruling over other races deemed lesser. There was a whole division in their society over it. D'ni was supposed to be better, when they left their dying world. Unfortunately... Unpleasant people find a way to be unpleasant."

You nod in understanding. "They enslaved a race that could 'Link' without books, didn't they?" Watson nods. "Thought so." The pieces are fitting together now. "That cry we heard before Callie vanished... that was one of them, wasn't it?"

"We're not sure how it worked, or why the enslavement has lasted past D'ni's Fall, but..." Watson explains, "A member of that family we chose their journals to adapt into those games, a woman named Yeesha, has been working to free these creatures. The 'Least' as she's calling them. The things she and they have done even before the Rift opened were quite a nuisance to our project."

"She and a few others have been recruiting people to come to D'ni," Sharper says. "'Calling' them down here. When that 'Rift' happened and people started gaining powers, or changing shapes, or whatever... things... things got bad. The creatures have begun appearing more frequently and... Personally, I think they found a way to break their enslavement, with the Rift energy."

"We're not certain what's happening on their side of things, but Yeesha and her followers have become... eccentric," Watson says. "The people who are taken from the Surface inevitably re-appear within D'ni after some time. Similarly, some of our own team members have been taken at random, to return later. But they're all changed. Stubborn. Refusing to return to the surface until they've accomplished something they don't even understand. But... There are still those who come from all around and go through whatever insane process that was set up before all of this happened." He shakes his head. "It's not safe, with how many risks those fools take. It's inherently dangerous and I and the others are scared for what events are transpiring. But..."

"But if following whatever path this Yeesha woman has set up is what lets us find Callie, you're willing to point us in the right direction?" Dammek asks.

"Reluctantly, yes," Watson says.

"A friend of mine went missing recently, too," Sharper says. "If you don't mind, Doctor Watson, I'd like to accompany them through this. See if I can find him and some of the others?"

Watson grimaces, then asks, "Is Teledahn in a stable state?"

"Beyond Laxman and Engberg pressing me to let them install some air gun? Yeah, it's stable enough," Sharper answers. "Enough for me to leave it to its own devices for a few days or a month."

Watson then looks to you and Dammek, "Whatever happens, whatever you find. I must ask of you to not tell anyone within the SGC about this Cavern. We've strived for so long to keep it out of the more Militaristic of the Government's hands. We truly feel this would be best accomplished as a Civilian effort."
"We can't promise that," you say. "But... it all depends on what we find down there."

Watson sighs. "I suppose that's the best I can get. I'll allow it then, and... I'll call ahead to Jeff and let him know I'm breaking protocol. To 'expect' you. Don't tell him I told you, though. I think he gets a kick out of playing the Mystic Guide."

"Thank you," Dammek nods. "We really appreciate it."

"Don't," Watson shakes his head. "Somehow, I get the feeling even if I didn't let you know, you two would end up finding your own way in later, and be twice as troublesome."

You were given some "Novelizations" of events, complete with 'fact correcting annotations' as well as a small laptop with some of the adapted games on it to familiarize yourself with the universe in the mean time before your expedition into the desert officially launched tomorrow morning.

One of the novels, "The Book of Ti'ana," centered around the woman, Anna, who came to D'ni through a tunnel entrance hidden in the desert. The novels said it was in the Middle East, but apparently that was a deliberate misdirection to keep people from looking for the Cavern of D'ni in New Mexico. Smart move, that. Over all, the story flowed about just as you'd expected it would from the brief summary Watson gave you.

Anna, or TI'ANA as the D'ni called her, would marry a D'ni man, AITRUS (the "I" at the beginning was apparently a quirk added into the novelization to separate him from someone else with the same name who stared in the next book), they would have a son, GEHN, and one of Aitrus' friends would be so angered by this that he'd join a terrorist group and try to kill everyone.

Honestly, this D'ni could have really done with the Quadrant system. This VEOVIS guy might not have gone down such a dark path if he had a proper Moirail.

Apparently, Veovis and his co conspirator also linked through DEAD BODIES infected with the plague they'd unleashed through to commonly accessed Ages to kill off survivors. Definitely someone who needed a Moirail to stop him, you'd say.

Hell, if you're reading the subtext right, Veovis was flushed for Aitrus, and pitched for Anna. They could have just hooked up entirely if they'd had the Quadrant system from Alternia in place.

Aitrus would die seeing Anna and Gehn to the surface, and they would live on. Gehn would eventually return to D'ni, seeking survivors, and to potentially rebuild. The next book began when Gehn would return to the surface home Anna had set up for herself outside one of the possible entrances to D'ni- a small cleft in the desert next to a volcano.

Why? Because his wife was in labor, dying, and his mother was the only person Gehn could turn towards.

The wife died in child birth, and Gehn left his unnamed son to Anna to raise while he went off in his solitude. That boy would be named ATRUS, for whom this book was named after. (Literally, "The Book of Atrus".)

This story was... different. Concerning, even.
Atrus was raised a simple life in the desert on stories of D'ni, when Gehn suddenly returned one day to "teach him how to be D'ni." He took Atrus down into the empty cavern, and began teaching Atrus a heavily flawed method of Age writing- literally copying and pasting whole sale passages from these mystical books that went to other worlds.

Gehn thought himself a GOD- and god, isn't that a tired story as it is?

Gehn's ages were flawed in their writing- inherently unstable. The Fifth Age Gehn had written, called RIVEN, was a world where he was pushing the locals to become his new D'ni. He ruled over them like a tyrant, and a girl he'd taken a disturbing interest in, KATRAN, teamed up with Atrus and Anna to trap Gehn within the age itself.

You read these two novels at the same time Dammek was powering through the games themselves. You swear you've seen Jude playing the first one at some point- a game called MYST- which followed on after the events on Riven.

Either intentionally or accidentally, Katran or Anna had written in a rift within the Age of Riven, risking the age's already unstable writing to trap Gehn. It was a rift full of stars within the ground itself. Katran would link away to Myst, and Atrus would fling himself into this "Star Fissure" with a Myst Linking book to escape Gehn.

Years later, that book would, according to the notations, wind up on Earth in the hands of a "mysterious stranger" who would arrive on the Island to find that Atrus' sons had burnt down the library on the island, gotten themselves trapped within two ages, and similarly trapped Atrus himself in a room with only the Riven book as a way out...

A book that the boys had convinced their mother, Katran, that Atrus had already gone through, and so she'd followed, not realizing the trap until it was too late.

The Stranger would free Atrus in the game of MYST, and the sequel game, RIVEN, showed the rescue attempt that was put into motion to save Katran, the locals of Riven, and trap Gehn once and for all.

Dammek stayed up all night to finish both games after you'd finished the second of three books. You slept through most of that part of the game session, though you left an Arai beetle awake to watch it and share the memories with you as it watched.

You're pretty sure he didn't get any sleep.


DIASPORA DATE: 04/01/0005.

As you finish packing up all of your stuff back into its suitcase and captchalogueing it up, there's a knock at the motel room's door.

You open it up and find there's the woman from the cafe earlier- the startled one.

"Hello," She says. "I'm Marie Sutherland. I work with Douglas Sharper and Doctor Watson. Can we
"speak?"

You look to Dammek, and he nods, catpchalogueing up everything he was packing up too.

"...Sure," you say, and let her in. "What do you want to talk about?"

"Mostly, I'm just here to say that not all of us on the Council are opposed to the SGC or Alternia's involvement in events down here," Sutherland says. "Honestly, I've been advocating that we could use the resources. Unfortunately, there's a lot of sentiment against the SGC for how long it was kept underwraps."

"I figured as much," you say, crossing your arms over your chest. "How many of the people in town here are involved in keeping things under wraps here?"

"A lot of people in town know and are keeping things quiet, and a few of them were burned before by military minded folk in the past," Sutherland says. "I'll be honest, I know a few people who have come here are using false names to hide from family using their positions in some of the more top secret organizations to cause them trouble."

"I'll be honest with you too, I don't really care about messing with any of that," Dammek says. "I just want my Moirail back safe and sound."

"I think that can mollify a lot of people's anxieties," Sutherland says. "It's just... a lot of people fear that your presence here means that we'll all be kicked off of the project and it will be scooped up by the SGC and used to all sorts of unknown ends."

"I'll be frank, Miss Sutherland," you say. "I did have reasons to come down here beyond the rift or our friend being taken."

"Of course," she nods. "May I ask what those are?"

"It's based on intel from a future, averted timeline," you explain. "I'm not sure if it's going to happen or not, but... there's a chance these creatures that are causing trouble might fall under the mind control of someone with less than honorable intentions and attack the galaxy."

"That's..." Sutherland breathes in. "That's very interesting, and concerning."

"Rift activity aside, I was going to come down here to investigate it," you say. "That said... I'm not going to ask you to hide this from anyone higher up. But... try to keep it out of the general public's perception? If we can avert it before it happens, well... best not to stir up a panic."

"I'll pass that along to Doctor Watson, I think," Sutherland says. "Though... why not tell him?"

"I get the feeling if I had, he'd change his mind about letting us down here," you answer. "And that'd be no good for getting Callie back."

"...Fair enough," Sutherland nods. "I think I should go, now." She stands to leave. "I hope you can find your friend... And... do keep an eye on Doug? He's a bit... stubborn at times."

"Thanks," you say.

Dammek adds, "We will."
And with that, Marie Sutherland leaves.

...This is going to be a very long adventure, isn't it?

Chapter End Notes

Welcome to Myst territory. Specifically, the URU branch of the timeline- the modern day section.

...The modern day section of the timeline that's been completely upheaved by Disclosure of the Stargate program and basically isn't going to follow anything that happened in URU at all. Because this is 2001. Two years before most of the major events of any of the following ten years of timeline ever happened. I may have inadvertently gotten some small details wrong but at this point there's been enough world-based butterflies to cause them.

So. Yeah. This is a thing that's happening. I don't plan for this arc to take all that long, and should mostly be self contained to this Act. Is it a bit out of left field? Maybe. Think of this as little fun detour down a side road. There'll be a bit more importance of establishing this side of events for context in the Mirror side of things.
SG1:09X04: A Red Flag Operation.

Chapter Summary

Hit or miss, Hu--*Gets tomato'd*

Okay okay! Fine. I won't do that meme! Geeze.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 03/19/0005.

"Aaaand. There. Powered down," Vala states after inputting a series of strokes onto the two bracelets and...

Clink!

Two bracelets fall off of your respective wrists.

Your name is Jude Harley, and you sigh in relief as you massage at the skin that had been compressed beneath the bracelet. "Good. Now, are you seriously keeping them for using on this Hans Olo guy?"

"No," Vala shakes her head. "The whole... death thing is a bit of a deal breaker for me."

"Good, because I'm pretty sure that Hans Olo guy is someone who was trolling you with a fake name from a movie here on Earth," Cassie says.

"...An Earth Movie, huh?" Vala muses. "I have to see this now, just to make sure I get the reference and catch it in the future!"

"Right, right!" Cassie nods, then motions at you with her eyes. Oh, you gotta help with this. It's a VIBE thing, you guess. Delaying the inevitable. "You know, there's atleast four of them we could watch. They just did a fourth one last year! I think a fifth one is coming out either this year or next."

Well. Alright. Fair enough. You were sort of thinking about watching Star Wars again for some TECH inspiration.

And then Vala says the damnedest thing.

"Oh! Mitchel mentioned this thing called Ghostbusters. That sounds like a fun one. How many did they make of that? Four or five?"

You don't need Cassandra's vibes to tell that the answer to THAT question is going to be a bit... uh... complex. (Given your Pa's investment in that particular part of the film industry, there's atleast twenty
of the damned films by now. They just keep making them! You'd think countless films about comedians blasting ghosts and get covered in slime would get old eventually.)

O<--**STARGATE: SG-1**-->O

**EARTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 03/25/0005.**

Your name is Tegiri Kalbur, and you feel on edge.

"No No NO!" You yell. "That's the wrong formation, again!"

Unsurprisingly, your students have missed their mark and put the wrong halves of the Mini-Mechs together. A solid Green mech and a blue and Silver mech. Damn it.

"No its not," one snide sounding, stuck up primadonna of a princess counters in that same faux-innocent way she's done through every other fuck up the last few days.

"Today's formation was Silver top, Green Bottom, Green Top, Blue Bottom, not- THAT!" you facepalm.

Damn it all. Just...

Damn it.

"Break it apart and land! We're taking a lunch break!" You order, and then dramatically storm off of the Astro Megaship's bridge.

These humans that they got recruited/voluntold/designated pilots just... are not the best. AT ALL. Seriously, it feels like none of them are taking any of this seriously.

You know they have a heads up display in their ships showing them which ones they're supposed to combine with.

It's part of today's training exercise carried over from yesterday. They combine on your orders first. The freeform exercises are tomorrow.

Or, they would be if they could follow damned orders.

They look at you and see just some swooshy-jacketed sword wielding crazy kid. Never mind that you have some of the most Megaship piloting experience among anyone on this abandoned mining planet.

Canyons, canyons, more canyons, and lots of rocks for miles around. But no people anywhere near the Stargate. Perfect testing grounds for the new Mini-mechas and their inexperienced pilots who think they're all hot shit.
It's the problem you had with Ashler/Vriska way back when. No idea how to use the technology they think they're the hottest shit with.

"Sup, Kalbur?"

Ah, and speak of the proverbial spider, there's your co-pilot/Moirail now.

"Training sucks, recruits're too stubborn and aren't listening to orders at all," you answer. "How's your side of things going?"

"'Bout the same on the stubborn front," she answers, joining you on a walk down the hallway, no real destination in mind. "'Scept, they're listening to my orders cause they know I'm able to make 'em see things that seem damn right real."

"Maybe that's the problem," you muse. "They're sure it's all a game and they don't think that there could be real stakes to any of this."

"MORDRED!!"

The ascended woman who was Carolyn Lam's ancestor appeared with a burst of lighting into the middle of a cave half full of treasure on an isolated world. Sorting through it all was the blond haired, green eyed Knight, Mordred, who was wearing nothing but a crimson flag, wrapped around her body like a cloak.

"Ugggh, you again," Mordred turns around to glare at Not-Carolyn. "What do you want?"

"Hunt hasn't noticed yet, but I have," Not-Carolyn says. "Come back to the Ascended plane this instant!"

"Tempting offer, but no," Mordred says. "Did you know that my sword was stolen out of my vault here? Some jerk-wad took off with it and most of my treasure, took it to another planet, and threw it out the window of a ship during a huge battle. Landed in some bastards' head and ended up being some historical relic in a museum."

"Yes, we know," Not-Carolyn says. "Hunt thought it would be a prudent way to only allow you access to the blade when-" And then she stops, seeing the grinning expression, almost feral, on Mordred's face. "...You knew."

"Gotcha," Mordred says, shrugging off the flag-cloak as she grips her sword, summoning her armor around her body once more. "I just wanted to hear you bastards say it to my face."

"We only what what's best for you, Mordred!" Not-Carolyn starts.

"You're not my mother, or my father," Mordred says, twisting the handle of their sword, and generating not a crimson beam of light, but a soul sucking, electrified purple arc across its blade. "There's only two people that role falls to, and despite your meddling, none of you are THEM!!"

"Mordred! Please!" Not-Carolyn starts to retreat. "Be reasonable!"
"I'm DONE with your GAMES!" And then Mordred swings Clarent at the Ascended Being with a cry of- "CLARENT HEART!!"

The cry of pain that echoed across space and time in that moment made certain people, far, far away, stop and take attention not at how betrayed the owner of that cry was, but rather at how brutally abrupt its sudden silence was.

Others who were closer had a much more... painful reaction.

Your name is Ashler Dering- Vriska Serket to only a select few- and you're lying on the ground gripping at your head as the echoes of that death cry rattle against your skull. "OWwww... What the fuck was that??" You try to stand, and sort of fail at it on your own.

"What was what?" Tegiri asks, helping you to your feet.

"Didn't you hear it? Some kind of..." you shake your head. "It was like someone had their soul torn to shreds, and that was it. Poof. Gone." You frown. "They were close. So god damned close."


"...Within the canyon," you answer.

Tegiri considers that for a moment, then radios to the bridge to get everyone onboard and take off and that... "This is NOT a Drill. I repeat. NOT A DRILL."

Mordred stepped out of the entrance of the treasure cave, and began making their way towards the Stargate, pausing only upon seeing a large blue and silver ship parked over it. A ship that hadn't been there when they'd arrived. How long had they been inside that cave, waiting for someone to come?

Long enough to miss all the apparent training exercises going on, it seemed.

"Pilot Kalbur!" Your name is Tegiri Kalbur, and your radio buzzes from the Bridge. "Security's spotted the knight SG-1 encountered nine days ago! They're exiting a cave and making their way towards the camp site."

"Double time the evac!" you order. "Get us in the Air ASAP!!"

Glubbing DAMN IT. You only got on this planet six days ago. Of course that Knight would be here. OF COURSE they'd be here.
"CLARENT...." Mordred twisted the handle, "TIME!" and swung the sword at a large pillar of rock.

With a flash of red, it crumbled to dust at the base and began to collapse downwards- smashing onto the top of the Astro Megaship's front nose section, pinning it into place.

The ship shook from the impact, and you growl as you and your Co-pilot finally make it to the bridge. "Where are they?" You ask.

The bridge tech brings up an outside camera, showing the Knight oh so casually strolling towards the ship.

No. To the Stargate.

"Sir, we're trapped," the tech says. "It looks like several tons of rock have-"

"Deploy the MiniMechs to clear it," you order. "And make it abundantly clear they're to retreat to high orbit if they're targeted by the Knight." You turn to your Co Pilot, and order, "Once we're clear, take the ship to the air. Don't transform. Just focus on escaping."

"Aye, aye, Boss-man," she nods, and you head towards the Ring transporter. "What about you?"

"I'm going to stall," you answer.

Mordred halts in their march as the tiny little ships all flee for the skies, and someone else descends from a set of transport rings from the ship.

When the lightshow fades away, Tegiri Kalbur stands there, sword drawn, glasses tilted at such an angle that their lenses reflect the sunlight back at Mordred menacingly. A long distance separates them, long enough that shouting is required.

"WHO ARE YOU?" he demands. "STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS!"

"MORDRED!" Mordred counters. "KNIGHT OF CAMELOT! FUTURE KING OF BRITAIN! I SEEK THE ASTRIA PORTA! YOU ARE IN MY WAY! LEAVE OR PERISH!"

Tegiri scoffs. "WE WERE!" He yells back. "UNTIL YOU TRAPPED US!"

Mordred's eyes were locked on the Alternian, and not the ship, even as the halved Mini-Mechs worked to clear the rock off of the Astro Megaship. "VERY WELL THEN! YOU SHALL PERISH!"

"I CAN'T ALLOW THAT!" Tegiri levels his sword at the Knight. "I AM IN CHARGE OF THE SAFETY OF THESE PEOPLE AND I WILL NOT STAND BY AND LET YOU GET AWAY
WITH MURDERING THEM!"

"HAH!" Mordred scoffs. "IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE A CHALLENGE!?"

And then Tegiri Kalbur ignited an aura of rippling air around himself, his coat and hair billowing dramatically around his body, and Mordred took stock of the situation a bit more seriously.

"IT IS!" Tegiri yells.

And then he launches himself at Mordred with a cry of battle.

The pilots of the mini-mechs hurried as fast and as safely as they could to break apart the rocks covering the Megaship and knock them away safely so that the ship could take off and launch.

There were some who thought even now this was still just a training exercise... but the furious fighting below gave them pause to question orders.

The clash of blades down in the yard below is intense to watch, and... you are torn.

The part of you that is Ashler Dering knows to stay here and wait for the rocks to be cleared.

The part of you that was once Vriska Serket wants to intervene so badly and take the spotlight.

Your tongue rolls over the dry feeling roof of your moth with anxiety and dread.

And then you get the all clear- the ship is cleared off and clear for take off.

So you punch the engines and the ship ROLLS FORWARD- passing over the Stargate and the duel between Tegiri and that Knight with ease.

You get enough momentum built up and you tilt the nose upwards and you ASCEND.

You're still deep within a maze of canyons, though. Lots of rocky overhangs. You're going to have to navigate carefully inorder to find a place with enough width clearance to escape higher. Well, atleast now the Mini Mechs can---

WHUMP!!

The ship shudders under an impact near the rear.

"What was that!?" you demand to know.

"Mordred just landed on the rear of the ship!" techy #1 replies.

WHUMP!!!

"...And there's Tegiri!" They add. "They both just jumped from the ground!"

...Heh, you guess Tegiri's weird NULLIFICATION ZONE thing works on Gravity after all. You'd
thought that might be the case.

---

**CLASH! CLANG! SHINGGG-TINKG!**

Your name is Tegiri Kalbur and you REALLY JUST DID THAT.

You really just told Gravity to fuck off and leaped after Mordred onto the back of the Astro Megaship after it had taken off and was IN THE AIR!!

And now your fight continues on the back bow of the Astro Mega- wedged between the space of the two rear tail fins.

"You're good!" Mordred laughs. "I'll give you THAT!" A false lunge that turns into a swipe- you dodge and roll and then attack in turn.

"You're not so bad yourself," you narrow your eyes at them as they block your strike. "But why attack the ship twice now!?!" Your blades continue to grind against eachother. "Why go after the ship for a second time when you could just go for the Stargate!?!"

"Because I like what I see," Mordred answers, kicking out at your legs. You jump back, breaking the lock. "AND THIS SHIP WILL BE MINE!"

"FAT CHANCE!!" you then feel the world tilting slightly- no, that's the Ship tilting to a side to squeeze through a somewhat more narrow space.

You throw yourself towards the tail fin that'd serve better as level ground in that case, and Mordred does the same. Your duel continues as you fight at that steep angle, even with the tip of the tail fin scraping against the rocks of the canyon slightly.

A shower of debris falls upon you and your opponent- vanishing into the Void in your case, and bouncing harmlessly off of the armor in their case.

The ship starts to level out again, and Mordred twists the sword handle- gathering a bright beam of golden orange around its blade. "CLARENT SUN!"

You jump away as Mordred swings, and misses- the blinding beam of light that smashes into the Astro's wing burns a large scorch mark near the front hinge, seeming to melt away some of the protective armor in spots.

"HEY!" You yell, "Watch the PAINT!" And then you gather your VOID AURA around your sword and launch a strike out at Mordred and ONLY Mordred.

With a LAUGH, they run up along the tail fin and then does a triple back flip to land on the fin opposite them, before running down along its edge, sword twisted and--

"--WIND!"

You barely hear the cry of the next attack before a blue hued blade of air comes at your head.

You slice it in two with your sword- but the attacks still hit home against the red fin that was already
"DO YOU EVEN CARE HOW MUCH DAMAGE YOU’RE DOING!?" You yell.

"I DON’T LIKE THESE RED FISH FINS ANYWAYS!" Mordred yells back, leaping at you with a jump that should fall short, but doesn’t.

You clash blades again.

You're going to have to make a call.

There's a spot thats wide enough up ahead for you to fit the ship through, but it's not nearly tall enough for the ship to fit through on its own...

Well. Not with those wings still attached and standing upright. You could try to lower them down to be more level with the ship's profile, but the mechanisms for one of the wings are already jammed and not responding from whatever that knight hit it with...

You think that this stunt might also have the added benefit of scraping your little TICK PROBLEM loose.

You briefly project an image to Tegiri's mind of your plan, and then glance at the video feed of the fight.

Tegiri stalls for a moment, and then he yells "LET'S ROCKET!" as he starts making his way closer to the valley in the ship's armor where the Megazord's waist is.

There's your answer.

You veer the ship upwards, towards that narrow spot. You reach out on ship wide radio, and say, "Everyone hold on, this is about to get a little bumpy!"

Mordred laughed as the fool retreated, going for lower ground. Sure, the ship was angling upwards, and that was going to be more level, but there was no way that it was a winning sign from him!

Mordred thus paid no attention for the way the sunlight narrowed into a beam focused on the ship's front. Paid no attention as the ship gained speed. Failed to see the Astro Mega's cannons turning around to aim at the tail fins. Paid no attention as darkness suddenly obscured everything.

Tegiri vanished in that moment- falling into the valley that was the Megazord's waist belt area- and Mordred stopped right on the edge of it to laugh.

And then massive bolts of plasma slammed into the tailfins first, and a massive chunk of rock hit Mordred second.

*KABO-SCRAAAAAAAAPE-OOOMN!*
The overhang of rock exploded as the Astro Megaship burst out of it- a bit more battered looking than it had been before, and definitely damaged in ways that needed hefty repair, but otherwise intact.

Taking a moment to brush the dust of the collision off of himself, Tegiri then started to laugh as he spotted the remains of the mangled wings and a small armored figure falling down towards the ground below among the debris of the busted rock overhang.

"THAT'S WHAT YOU GET!"

Your name is Tegiri Kalbur, and as you settle into your chair on the Astro Mega's bridge, you watch as the Mini-Mechs finally redock as planned. Good. They're safe.

Now to peer over the damage report.

It's minor, but problematic if you have to transform any time soon. Front nose, left side severely
cracked to the point of the entire forwards nose section that holds the Mega Shuttle is unable to sustain atmospheric pressure, meaning that the right foot toe for the Megazord would similarly be damaged in transformed modes. The tail Fins utterly blasted off. The cannons... Well, they weren't meant to rotate back that far and the turntables are jammed.

You're screwed out here in unfriendly waters.

You're going to have to return to Earth ahead of schedule. Damn it. To think one human-sized knight with an absurd ASPECT SWORD could do this much damage to a Megaship just by being there.

"Sir? Could I speak with you for a moment?"

You look back over your shoulder, and see one of the test pilots - the one who was being smug earlier about getting the formations right.

"Sure," you say. "What about?"

"I'm sorry," she says. "About messing up the formations earlier. I thought... well, we all thought... mostly me, though. I egged them on. I mean." She shakes her head. "I said there was no reason for us to follow orders because there weren't any large enough threats that could hurt us. Every time we went out with our partner to a fight, there wouldn't be any danger and it'd just be us..."

"And then one tiny little knight with a sword causes us so much trouble?" You ask, rhetorically.

She nods, silently. "I thought that was... just another drill. Up until the rocks fell. I... I realized I'd screwed up."

You sigh. Damn it. "As long as you understand that mistake and can correct it in the future before it becomes a problem, I don't see any reason to complain."

"Thank you, Sir," she bows. "I won't let you down, Sir!"

You dismiss her, and turn back to the damage reports...

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it! Dammek is going to throw a fit when he finds out you gave the okay to blast the ship's wings off.

Chapter End Notes

You might ask, 'why not shoot forwards?' Well, that would have destroyed the rock overhang and failed to knock Mordred off.

And before you ask, yes, she survived that fall. Magic armor and such. She's hurt, and quite a bit peeved off, that's for sure, but alive.

Tomorrow: continued Myst-verse shenanigans, and at some point this week, a musical sequence... Based on OLD SECRET. :33

Hope you guys enjoyed this brief little sequence of action! It's going to be a bit slower the rest of this week for the most part.
And now- I'm gonna go get dinner going. Don't forget to eat if it's time for that whenever you're reading this. If in archive mode in the far flung future, take this as your hint to go take a break from reading if you haven't taken one recently.

Also, this chapter is posted for February 4th, and it's not a Myst Chapter. There's some karmic irony in that, but I'm not even going to bother writing about it here. If you care to know, ask me in comments. It's nothing particularly interesting to this story, though.
Your name is Joey Claire, and there were two men waiting at the truck outside of the motel as you
and Dammek left the room, chatting with the woman who had just left a few minutes ago.

Two you recognize- the man in the hat is DOUGLAS SHARPER, and the woman is MARIE
SUTHERLAND. The third one... He looks new.

"Look, I feel for you, Mike, but it's not up to me," Sharper was saying as you approached. "It's up to
them."

"What's going on?" Dammek asks.

"Hello," the man turns towards you, he looks like he's been tearing his hair out. "I'm Michael
Engberg, Head Restoration Engineer for the project. Call me Mike for short. I'm on the council with
Marie, Victor, Ikuro, and Richard."

You can only place a couple of those names to faces, but you nod regardless. "Pleasure to meet you,
Mike. What's up?"

"My daughter was taken last night," Mike says. "We saw one of the creatures in person. It just...
hovered over her. Put up some kind if bubble field around her room we couldn't get in through and it
took her. I'm coming with you to get her back."

"It's a break in M.O.," Sharper muses. "It could be a bad sign."

You look to Dammek, and he nods. "We'll let you come with us. What's your daughter's name?"

"Willow, though we call her Wheely," Mike says.

"If we find them, we'll make sure to bring them back safe," you say.

Marie sighs. "I'll go tell Doctor Watson that you're going with them, then, I guess?"

"Do that," Mike nods. "Thank you, Marie."
"Just come back alive," she makes him promise.

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\[O\)\--STARGATE: ALTERNIA--\](O

"So, I've got a question about this 'Art' of writing worlds," Dammek asks as Sharper drives the truck out of town towards the volcano. "How the hell do Books have that much control over a planet in real time?"

"That's concerning me as well," you say. "Are you making Bridges, or making Worlds?"

"That's one of the great mysteries about the Art, and largest debate about Age Writing between even Gehn and Atrus," Mike muses. "Gehn thought the D'ni were gods making worlds, Atrus thought they were just making bridges. But the truth is it's probably making bridges that have some level of control over the world they connect to. The D'ni had rules against modifying a world once it was linked to for the first time. Ages like Gehn's didn't exist in a properly taught environment."

"So the D'ni came to Earth through another world- if you follow Gehn's logic, they 'wrote' Earth into existence?" You frown. "That really doesn't track with the state of the galaxy ten thousand years ago."

"Exactly," Mike nods. "You follow that train of logic, it would imply that by bringing Earth into existence, it also would bring along everything else that happened before it elsewhere in the universe through sheer coincidence. The books only focus on one world and everything else just is incidental. It's sheer chaos theory." He shakes his head. "No, it makes the most sense that when you're writing a book to a world, you're writing what kind of world you want, and somewhere out in the multiverse, it exists, so the book makes a bridge to it."

"So out of all the Earths out there in the multiverse, they'd connect to ours?" Dammek scoffs. "Seems a little self centered when you think about it."

"What I'm wondering about is alternate worlds like Keiko's which are branches of ours," you say. "Did THEY have a D'ni? With books and creatures? Was it a branch of the D'ni from this world, or did a completely different version of D'ni form from a different timeline connecting to their world?"

"Probably best not to think about it," Mike says. "I know I've been trying not to ever since Anubis showed up."

"It's hard to believe that was only January," Sharper remarks. "Feels like it was longer, somehow."

"Makes you wonder if the Ancients knew about the D'ni?" Dammek muses. "Honestly, it'd be shocking if they didn't meet up at some point in the Multiverse."

"Marie could tell you better, but the D'ni were very closed off," Mike says. "I doubt they'd want to interact much at all."

There's a bit of silence as you drive along. The volcano gets closer and closer, larger and larger.
"So... Who exactly are we dealing with when we get to the volcano?" you ask.

"Jeff Zandi, son of Elias, who... used to work with us," Mike answers. "He died of a heart attack a while back. Prompted us shifting from a Restoration Foundation to a Restoration Council. Jeff owns the land around the volcano. Recently he closed it, and one of our access points to D'ni, off to us."

"Weird," you muse. "Why'd he do that for?"

"Why? Well, he's working with Yeesh, as far as we can gather," Mike says.

"She wasn't in the books or games we managed to get through last night," you tell him. "But Watson mentioned the name yesterday."

"Yeesh's the daughter of Atrus, born about ten years after the events covered in Riven," Mike explains.

Sharper interjects, "If you've got that copy of Book of D'ni on you still, she's born somewhere during the events of that. There's another game coming out in a few months that covers some events that happened just after her birth, too. The book's meant to be a tie in, even though it's standalone. Stupid choice of adventure to adapt, if you ask me."

"It has its important moments, Sharper," Mike reminds him, then continues on. "Anyways. Yeesh... She's breaking the rules of Age Writing in ways we can't figure out. Stones that work like books except they can work within an age to another point in it. Books that travel with you when you link- and worse, do the same travel-within-itself nonsense. Placing weird tapestries with handprints around the Cavern and ages-"

"Don't try removing those, by the way," Sharper says. "Someone tried and it... was not a pleasant experience. Whole thing ended up replaced within a day anyways."

"Yes, well, and there's also this Door," Mike continues.

"A Door?" You ask.

"Big, metal, kind of round, marked with the hand shape from the tapestries. Can't open it unless you've met some kind of unknown condition. Showed up in the Garden world, Eder Kemo, a few months back," Mike says. "Before the Rift, I should clarify."

"Phil was talking about messing with it before he went missing," Sharper adds. "No idea if he went missing normally, or if the door had something to do with it."

"Conjecture," Mike waves it off. "And beyond the Door, there's been... weird Age linking behavior. We're terming it Instancing for the moment."

"Odd how?" Dammek asks.

"It goes back to what we were talking about with the Descriptive Books and how they locate ages," Mike answers. "You can write two identical Descriptive Books and they will never link to the same copy of the world it travels to. Sure, they'll look the same, but there's differences. Noticeable ones. Now, Linking Books are just bridges, right? They're fixed to whatever world they're written in and you always travel to that world regardless of where, when, and who uses the book. We've been seeing... oddities lately. People using the same book and winding up in empty versions of the same
"You'd never know if someone was reading your journal if you left it behind in an Age, and someone visited their own version of it complete with the journal," Sharper remarks, then mutters "...Hrm, maybe I should move that somewhere private now that I'm thinking about it..."

"So, basically you think Yeesh is modifying books to give people private access to versions of various worlds?" You ask. "Why would she do that?"

"No idea," Mike says. "But I get the feeling we'll find out soon enough."

You soon arrive at the volcano, or, rather, the gated fence that separates you from the land beyond. The truck pulls to a stop, and as Sharper parks it, you all stare upwards.

The volcano towers above you, silently, and motionless, casting a shadow upon you and the dislocated sign next to the gate. There are some hawks circling in the air above, and some crickets chirp in the shade. The wind blows silently, and-

"Oh, God, there's one of those tapestries here too," Mike laments, interrupting your thoughts.

"There is?" Dammek asks, and Mike just points at the dislocated "NO TRESPASSING" sign. Pasted onto it on the side facing outwards to the town is a tapestry, almost burlap looking in nature, with woven edges fraying out impossibly in all directions.

In the dead center of it all is a black painted spiral with four markings along the top, making it look like a hand print.

"Huh," Dammek stares at it. "Good eyes. I didn't see that."

"So, I guess one of us is going to have to be the key master on these things," Sharper starts to talk. "If no-one else volunteers, I'm up for being the guinea pig."

"I'd like to see what happens first, before anyone else touches them," you say.

"Fair enough," Sharper says, as you all get out of the truck and check the gate.

"Well, ol' Zandi left it unlocked like Watson said he would," Sharper says upon finding it swinging open without hassle. "Guess that means we're going in."

And so the four of you step into the land owned by Jeff Zandi.

Almost immediately you feel some sort of compulsion try to worm its way into your mind-something simple. [Unknown Location.]

You know exactly where you are, though, and you dismiss it through Admin's powers.

"Woah, wait, where'd the town go?" Dammek asks.

"Huh?" Mike asks. "It's still back that way," he says.

"Yeah, I'm still seeing it," Sharper says.
"I'm not," Dammek says. "What about you, Joey?"

You turn and look back the way you came... "Town's still there," you point at it.

"But, it's not..." Dammek frowns, takes off his glasses, and squints at it. "I'm not seeing it."

You reach out to Dammek's mind and pluck the stray thought away from his mind. "Try it now."

He blinks, shakes his head, and frowns. "That's weird. I could've sworn it wasn't there a second ago."

"There's a psychic field over this place," you explain. "Probably to hide it from prying eyes who don't already know what's out here. Now that I'm thinking on it, it probably expands well out to include the town. It's not on any map that I'm aware of."

"Well, that's an encouraging sign," Sharper mutters, before taking a step over to the back side of the sign. "Shall we give it a go on touching this thing?" he asks.

You reach out with your powers to touch his mind, then give him the go ahead.

Sharper touches the cloth, and a fraction of the hand print pattern glows a pale blue, making a sort of "Vrrroooooorr...rrssshhhhh" sound.

[JrnyChk? > 00. >CreateMrkr. > PreafterJrnyMrkr setstage 01; ClothID Cleft01]

A harmless sort of kibble of information is left behind in Sharper's mindscape.

"God, that sent a chill down my spine," he says.

"That'd be a progress counter," you say. "I think the cloths check if you've touched one before, and then add a counter based on if you have touched it before. Try touching it again."

Sharper does such, it glows with the same amount, and makes the same sound, but no new data is added.

The ping reads:

[JrnyChk? > 01; ClothID Cleft01 > NoAct]

"Yeah, it registered that you'd touched that one already, so it didn't do anything new," you confirm.

"Good to know," Sharper frowns. "The marker's harmless, right?"

"As harmless as it can be at this stage," you say. "I think I could fake the ping return if I need to, given enough samples from you."

"Yay, test subject Sharper," he gripes.

"Let's get going and see Jeff," Mike says. "The sooner we get this done, and get my daughter back, the better."

"Agreed," Dammek says.
And so you trudge on into the desert, closer to the volcano, until you spot an old AIRSTREAM TRAILER resting nearby. There's a man sitting in a lawn chair below the trailer's shade casting overhang, dressed in shorts and a bright hawaiian button-down tshirt over what you think is a white tshirt, but could be anything. He has his feet propped up near a grill, and seems to be reading a book.

As you approach, you hear he's listening to a radio. Of all tracks, the station seems to be playing one of the Grubbel's songs at the moment. Closer to the Truth? Oh, geeze. Here's hoping he doesn't recognize you.

"Welcome," the man you'd assume is Jeff Zandi starts speaking without even looking up from his book. "I'd imagine I know more about why you're here than you do."

"Cut the mystic guide crap, Jeff," Mike interrupts. "And talk to us like a normal human being."

He looks up from his book, and frowns. "Ah, sorry. I wasn't expecting you until after ten."

"It is after ten," you say.

Jeff Zandi glances at his watch, and laughs. "Huh. So it is. Got too caught up in my book, I guess." he puts it down, and you see it's a book on QUANTUM PHYSICS?? Good grief. He takes a moment to look at all of you, then frowns. "Okay, Mike, you're the only one I don't get why you're here."

"My daughter was taken by one of the creatures last night," Mike says.

"Oh... God-" Jeff Zandi pauses, horror flashing in his eyes. "Seriously? You saw one of the Bahro in person?"

"If that's what they're called, then yes, we did," Mike nods.

"...That changes things, by a lot," the man grimaces.

"Excuse me, Mister Zandi, but we need to know what's going on," you politely request. "One of our friends was taken too."

"There's not a lot I can tell you," he answers. "I'm out of the loop most of the time- by request. I like my life as simple as it can be. But... Yeesha did visit recently. Discussed possibly changing the message in the imager, but she wasn't sure what she would change it to just yet. She also thought about changing the structure of the Journey itself. Making it simpler, more symbolic."

"But she hasn't yet?" Sharper asks.

"No, she hasn't," he shakes his head. "Look, you'll have to go through the Journey here at the very least to unlock the cave. I'll make sure that there's an appropriate amount of Relto Books waiting for you inside. If Yeesha's changed anything, I'm sure it will have been on the island."

"We might not have to do that," you say. "How many cloths are here within the land around the Volcano?"

"That's sort of in flux," Zandi answers your question. "There's one that... well, I'm not sure how she does it, but it hides itself until you've listened to her message."
"But how many are there?" You ask, again. There's a pause. A very long pause within which Mike and Dammek both level stares at him that make him consider his answer very carefully.

"Seven, counting the one that hides," he finally answers after significant debate. "There's one 'round the back of my trailer. And, ah, beyond the sign there's only one other up here on the surface. Around the back of the volcano. The rest are in the Cleft If it helps?"

"It does," you say.

Sharper uses the one on the back of the trailer and it gives off a ping like the first one, except subtly different.

[JrnyChk? > 01; Cloth ID Cleft01. > PreafterJrnyMrkr setstage 02; ClothID Cleft01, Cleft03]

Upon finding that, you release an Arai Beetle into the air- startling Zandi as it buzzes by him, heading out across the whole fenced in area to search of the last tapestry- or a Cloth, as they're seemingly called in whatever internal makeup is running them.

You find the third surface one around the back of the volcano, alright, among a large whale skeleton and some twisted metal remains you recognize as something from the Riven Game.

You have the Arai Beetle land on the cloth and you intercept the check pink.

[JrnyChk?]

You return with the ping: [>02; ClothID Cleft01, Cleft03]

It pings back in return: [PreafterJrnyMrkr setstage 03; ClothID Cleft01, Cleft02, Cleft03]

"I can trick the Pings," you say with finality.

"...You can do what now?" Zandi asks, concerned.

You descended into the cleft in the desert via a ladder. It's a cooler environment compared to the above desert. A refuge from the sun and wind. There are bridges suspended in all directions, as well as some small stairways carved into the walls leading to the ground level- which is covered in moss, a small pond, and a set of pale blue flowers in one corner. In the other, there is a small tree, its branches barely reaching out the top of the canyons walls. Set within its surface is a stone door with a metal plate in the center- circular, with a handprint carved into it.

There's a timeless vibe to this place. While Sharper went about making sure he'd grabbed all the Tapestries anyways, just to be sure that you could progress incase your pings didn't work on the Door, you focus on taking in everything you can about this place. Photo documentation is key, in your opinion. You never know what might just come up later as important.

This was the home to Anna and Atrus, and, apparently at one point, Yeeshas as well. A letter from her father rests in a bedroom, telling about a dream. It's impossible to tell the paper's age, given the state of just about every piece of cloth or fabric in the small canyon. Everything feels ancient, and yet brand new at the same time.
It's a paradox.

You find a pair of GOGGLES resting within a stone dresser that look at least a hundred years old, yet feel like they were brand new and produced yesterday. You take them, but don't put them on, because Goggles aren't your thing. Still, it can always be handy to have extra eye protection in case you need them. Maybe Polypa would like them when you get back? They're pretty intricate at any rate.

You find an old Dining room with an imager settled on a counter with a symbol interface on the interior dial. It doesn't do anything without power, and Mike sets about doing restoring it rather quickly.

There's a table with all sorts of blank books, spare belt clips attached to nothing, and a bunch of rolled up documents.

You find a sheet of paper depicting the imager, and a specific set of symbols. One Mike has the Power restored, you plug the set in, and wait for everyone to get together.

"One short," Sharper reports. You check the ping roster and find he's missing Cloth 6.

"Well, I guess that's the one from the imager," you say, preparing your camera. "Shall we play this message then?" You wait for four nods before turning on your camera, and pressing the power button on the imager.

With a flicker of golden light, one of the most basic holograms you've ever seen flashes to life, and a woman stands there, dressed in greys and browns, her hair has a reddish hue, and over one of her eyes is a tattoo of some foreign writing you don't recognize.

"Shorah," she begins speaking- and to your surprise, a language you don't immediately recognize or have translated for you thanks to the stargate. Then, she stops, and to herself, corrects, "No, Not in D'ni, they won't understand." She steps forwards. "Once again, the stream in the Cleft has begun to flow. It was dry for So Long. The water is flowing in from the desert."

She walks towards the door to the outside, and peers upwards at the sky.

"The Storm is coming, but I've been preparing. D'ni awaits everyone who goes there..." She continues to speak, "Some will seek more there, and find more... But the water will flow where it wills. It seeks its own path, uncontrolled; except that it flows downward. Always downward." She turns and starts walking into the room, arms out to her side as if walking a tightrope. "That is beyond its control."

And then she stops, and turns to look at you- unnervingly, directly at you specifically. "You can't imagine what you'll find. You won't understand, all that you will learn, only now for myself has it become who I am. Only now have I realized my own purpose within this plan."

She meanders over towards a wall- "I've learned things they never thought possible." -reaching out to touch it- "I've lived in lands beyond their boundaries." and when she does so, a Tapestry fades into view. "And shattered the rules behind their laws." She steps away, and says, "I've become more than even I thought possible. But none of this for my own gain, No." She shakes her head, and peers at the pile of books. "There are much greater things than me."
She turns to return back in front of the Imager, quietly singing in D'ni the sentence she opened with.

"The water flows downward," she continues, looking up, and as she does so, you see less of a woman, more of a child within her eyes. "And there it pools and collects, and finally once again- It reaches the roots." A girl eager to do good for the world and hoping to accomplish it with ease. "And the tree begins to grow again."

She pauses, and then finally says, "I'm Yeesha. My parents brought me to this place." And then she turns around and presses the imager button- powering it all down and ending the recording.

You, too, stop recording.

"Well," Dammek says. "That was enlightening. Except, not. Did anyone understand a single thing she said?"

"I think it's a metaphor about how we're water, and this journey is us finding our own path," Sharper muses. "Growing a new Tree of D'ni, I think."

"Does it matter?" Mike asks. "Just get the cloth, Sharper, and let's get into that cave."

Sharper touches the cloth--

**[JrnyChk? > 05; Cloth ID Cleft01, Cleft02, Cleft03, Cleft04, Cleft05, Cleft07. > PreafterJrnyMrkr setstage 07a; Cloth ID Cleft01, Cleft02, Cleft03, Cleft04, Cleft05, Cleft06, Cleft07. > MrkrMrg> PreafterJrnyMrkr setstage 07b; Cloth ID CleftAL.]**

-And it makes the same ordinary sound, with not even the full hand filled up. But, then, it glows a second, full glow filling in the void with a different color- a deeper, slightly more vibrant blue- and makes more of a GONG sound at the beginning before fading away.

God, though, you're glad the ping condensed itself. That was, what, three lines full of data made up mostly of counting the cloth counts?

You're silent as you head down to the tree, and Sharper opens the door.

The ping is simple.

**[JrnyChk? > 07b; Cloth ID CleftAL.]**

The door resonates with the gong-version of the sound and slides open- descending down into the ground, and leaving a hollow space beneath the tree, within which a ladder resides, heading down into the dark abyss below.

"Lovely," Sharper says. "Who goes first?"

---

You're tempted to click on a flash light once you reach the bottom of the ladder, except for the fact that part of the wall lights up with a bioluminescent- "Wait a second!"

It's the same symbol that Yeesha had tattooed on her face in the hologram.
You reach out and touch the glyph, feeling that the part that's glowing is a carved recess covered in... some kind of paint? It's weird. What kind of paint glows based on proximity?

"'Yeesha,'" Engberg says after he descends the ladder.

"What?" you ask.

"That symbol, it's a stylized D'ni name stamp," Mike says. "I've seen it enough times around the Cavern on those damned pages that keep getting left around. According to our translators, that symbol is Yeesha's name."

"And she had it tattooed onto her face?" you frown. "That's pretty weird," you say. "But, then again, Alternian society had a thing about people wearing unique signs fitted to their blood color, moon sway, and Aspect alignment, so who am I to judge?"

"Blood color I can get, but Moon sway? Aspect alignment?" Mike shakes his head. "I'm not even going to ask. Anthropology is Marie's thing, not mine."

"Fair enough," you say.

"Huh," Dammek finishes climbing down next. "Proximity based paint?"

You nod.

"Neat, remind me to get a sample on our way out," he says, before pushing past you and Mike further down the tunnel.

Sharper finishes climbing down a moment later, and only pauses to stare at the glyph before moving on after him.

You shake your head, and head after them.

It takes about a minute of walking past more carvings illuminated with the same proximity based paint before you wind up in a central chamber, lit from above by some kind of lamp and the walls that all have more glow carvings on them

You make sure to document pictures of everything, for review later, before turning your focus to the center of the room.

The whole floor, save for a small path to an altar in the center, is covered by a pool of water, and on that Altar is four, small green books, laid side by side next to each other.

"Okay, so question," Sharper voices, "Zandi can obviously control how many books wind up down here, right? So how did he do THAT without us noticing?" He then glances at Mike, and interjects, "And don't say 'Yeesha Magic,' Mike!"

"I wasn't," Mike answers.

Dammek approaches the altar first, picking one up and handing it to you after a moment of hesitation.

The moment the book touches your hand, you feel it RESONATE with you, much in the same way
a freshly hatched Arai Beetle does, except somewhat more... More like that time you were briefly taken over by a Goa'uld Queen, had to eject the personality from it, and replaced it with a copy of your alternate self's mind. Rather, specifically, that feeling you had of your otherself co-existing in your own mind for a time. It's alive, breathing, and it has a small personality that feels... like it's imprinted upon you, somehow?

But you barely interacted with the cloth tapestries, if that has anything to do with it. Unless...?

"Oh fuck me," you breathe out. "These things are alive!"

"What?" Sharper asks. "How can a book be alive?"

"The same way a crystal can be alive and have a sort of pseudo personality," you say. "I don't know. But, all I know is the moment this book touched my hands-"

"It felt like it was meant to be, right?" Dammek says after examining the other three books in detail, and only settling on one specific one.

"I'm not liking this," Mike says, even as Sharper grabs one of the other two books and handles it carefully. "There's a reason the DRC's advocated for not using this stuff, and it feels like everything she keeps saying hammers it in even further."

"On the other hand," Sharper says, attaching the book firmly to his waist on the right side of his belt with a clipping sound. "It'd explain how the books can travel with the user."

Mike takes a moment to process that, and then says, "You're probably right on that but I'm not going to even try to think about it until we get Wheely home safe."

And with that, he takes the last book, and examines it.

You regard your own book just the same.

It's green, and small, about the size of a checkbook, really. There's a clip attached to the back of it, attached to which is a string which loops around both sides to the front- where a silver medallion marked with the same "Yeesh" symbol resides.

You fiddle with it for a moment, and then the lock somehow pops open in a way you can't quite figure. You briefly see a black stamp of the same symbol residing on the cover beneath the medallion as you remove the string, and open the book's cover.

The left hand page is blank, save for a small little drawing of a stick figure holding a book to a journey hand in one corner. The right hand page is divided into two prominent areas. The bottom half of the page has another "Yeesh" stamp. The upper half has a LINKING PANEL- showing a small island within a sea of clouds.

You're tempted to use it, right here and now, but... you refrain. You try to flip through the remaining pages of the book but--

...They're blank.

_The whole book is utterly blank._
"This can't be right," you say. "Linking Books are supposed to be Written in in order to function, aren't they?"

[Indignation.]

"They should be," Mike nods. "This... this is impossible."

"Don't say it, Mike," Sharper warns.

"But it's as close to Magic as anything the D'ni have ever done," Mike starts.

"Look," Dammek interrupts, clipping his own book to his waist- the same spot Sharper did. "Let's just put the books on, and use them, alright? We're wasting time."

"He's right," Mike nods, clipping his own book to his side almost on instinct.

You look to the book, closing it up without fuss- no, it closes itself up upon you thinking about closing it and move to attach it to your--

[Right Side] the book Whispers to you.

You attach the book firmly to your left side. The clip doesn't want to fasten at first but it sticks after you forcibly take your hands off of the book and it either has the choice to latch or fall.

It chooses to latch.

Sharper eyes you oddly upon seeing you do that, but before he can say anything-

**VRRROOOOOMMSHHSSHHSSHHhsshhh....**

You feel the world dissolve away around you, and then all you see is black.

---

**Chapter End Notes**

Well. Here we are again. It's really been such a pleasure.
Remember when we retreaded this more than twice?
Oh how the words have changed, But the music is still forgiving.
---

I'd keep going along that vein except I can't figure out how to adapt the Lyrics better so I'm just going to stop there. *Coughs*

Choru/Ubiru version of the Yeesh Cleft Imager speech was quoted here- basically Beta test version compared to what we got in the Ages Beyond Myst release and beyond. Also, apparently for a time during that time, Relto Books had silver medallions that they don't now. Made for a cute reference, I'd felt.

And despite how muddled up history has gotten, Wheely Engberg still finds herself caught up in Bahro shenanigans. This time I can promise you it'll be a better ending for her than it was in canon. If this paragraph doesn't make any sense to you, don't worry about it too much. That's all irrelevant data and info to this timeline because it isn't going
to happen that way at all.

Tomorrow, some OLD SECRET musical sequencing. And also showing some more negative side-effects of the Rift. Not everyone reacted to transformations and powers in a sane way.

Chapter Summary

One goal accomplished, another one uncovered. Joey Dances.

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING: Some heavily implied physical harm of a minor. [1] indicates the start of that sequence, [2] indicates the end, if you wish to skip it. No, it's not Wheely.

See the end of the chapter for more notes


DIASPORA DATE: 04/01/0005.


[TRAVEL.]

VRRROOOOOMSSHHSSHHSSHshhhh....

And then reality reasserts itself, and you find yourself whole again.

You take stock as you get the feel of the ground beneath your feet again. The darkness of a poorly lit cave has been replaced by the harsh, sharp gaze of a high above you sun that you dare not glance at.

Your name is...

Your name is JOEY CLAIRE, and you just were linked away by... by... Was it the book on your hip?

[No,] it pings back at you. [Mother.]

"Mother"? Yeesha, then, you'd be willing to bet, if she wrote these books.

"Wrote." As if that's a thing to say about a book with no writing within its pages.

VRRROOOOOMSSHHSSHHSSHshhhh....

VRRROOOOOMSSHHSSHHSSHshhhh....

And then Mike Engberg and Douglas Sharper appear on either side of you, relative to where they were a moment ago in the Cleft.
And then there's Dammek.

"...Well, this certainly isn't an island vacation," Sharper mutters.

And... no, no it isn't.

You finally take stock of your surroundings, which you really should have done first.

You're in a small canyon. You're on one end of it, standing on a small sand circle within a larger stone pavilion. There's a stair case leading down into a large field covered in tall grass and large ponds.

There are stone pavilions here and there... and people. People resting within the shade of the pavilions.

Most eye catching, though, is a large structure encapsulated by a bubble that's generated by a fence wall of bone spikes. The space around it is broken to say the least- flickering and fluxing between... well.

It looks like five different environments are fighting for dominance around it. Amusingly, there are a bunch of orange safety cones encircling that area.

"Oh my god," Mike starts. "Is THAT where our missing Cones went!?!"

"I guess so," Sharper muses.

"Dammek! Joey!!" And then you and Dammek turn your attention towards one of the gazebos. Callie just stepped out from it, waving at you. "Over here!!"

The four of you head down the stairs and along the mostly stable path along the dry parts of the ground.

Time to find out just what the hell is going on here.

O)<--STARGATE: ALTERNIA-->(O

"Callie!!" Dammek hugs his Moirail tightly. "You have no idea how worried I've been!"

"I know, I know," she hugs him back. "I've been worried too, but... there's been more to be concerned about." She pauses, and then spots Mike and Sharper. "Who are your friends?"

"Callie," you motion towards the men in turn, "This is Douglas Sharper, and Mike Engberg. They're from the DRC group trying to restore the Cavern of D'ni. Mike's daughter got taken last night."
"Hmm," Callie frowns. "What was her name, and how old was she?"

"Willow, though she goes by Wheely," Mike says. "And she'd be eight right now. Nine in another few months."

"Oh!" Callie nods. "Yes, I saw her come in last night."

"Where is she?" Mike asks.

"Safe, safe," Callie says. "She's actually helping with one of the others who was in a delicate place when they were taken, though, so I'll take you to her in a minute, if that's alright?"

"...Fine," Mike grunts, clearly not happy about it.

"While we're on the subject of people who were taken," Sharper says, "did a guy by the name of Phil Henderson come through here?"

"Oh, yes," Callie nods. "He was the one who suggested we get the cones for the Keep."

"Where's he at?" Sharper asks.

"Speaking with Yeesha right now," Callie says, suddenly growing sad and sounding heartbroken. "Oh, Joey, Damnek, there's so much that's gone wrong thanks to that damned Rift."

"What's the situation?" You ask.

And so Callie explains it to you in as much detail as she can.

The D'ni, somehow, long ago, had enslaved a race of creatures called the BAHRO to a mystical STONE TABLET. Forcing them into a sort of... Hive Mind Collective state that they weren't able to fight against.

When D'ni fell, the Tablet was returned to its holding place- the Keep- and lost to all who could access it for several years. That was until Yeesha had come to D'ni on her own Journey of self discovery, and began to learn ancient, mystic ways of Age Writing that the D'ni had long since abandoned. She also learned of the Bahro, and their plight. And thus, she began researching ways to free them.

During that process, the Tablet, sensing perhaps a new master worthy of it, manifested the Keep and allowed access to it once more. This was the breakthrough Yeesha had needed, and she'd attempted to take the Tablet to free the Bahro.

Unfortunately, a greedy man- a survivor of D'ni's fall- appeared in that time, and interfered, wanting to take the Tablet for himself.

There was a tussle, a fight, and in the end, Yeesha willingly threw the tablet back into the Keep, rendering herself unworthy of it's powers, and unable to take it again.

While the greedy survivor would flee the battle, biding his time once again, Yeesha began planning a new course of action. A new journey based upon her momentary access to the Tablet and its own Journey.
It was to be a more individualized process. One 'Explorer' called to D'ni would take this journey, and would free one Bahro from the Tablet's control.

She'd still been in the process of finalizing the details of how it would work and what ages she would use for it when the Rift had opened, and flooded the universe with powers.

That greedy man who had sought the Tablet gained mind control powers, which he used to splinter off a fraction of the Bahro Hive Mind underneath the Tablet's control to his own will.

He was slowly gaining more and more every day, forcing Yeesha and those Bahro she'd freed through her early experiments with this new Journey to accelerate their plans in a way they hadn’t wanted to.

They were summoning people from the surface they felt might be Worthy to take control of the Tablet and sever its connection to the Bahro entirely- hopefully freeing the Bahro already under the greedy man's control from his grasp.

Unfortunately, the Rift had caused complications in that plan as well. The Tablet's Keep- that bubbled enclosure- had become supercharged, and un-moored from reality. It was only through considerable force of will from several of the Freed Bahro that it was staying here in an age called "Eder Tsogahl."

That dimensional instability was making it hard for people to even get into the Keep to try to see if the Tablet would even respond to them. And when they did, it was generally... not pleased with the continuing cascade of people trying to access it.

One someone tried, and failed to access the Tablet, they would return to D'ni, hoping and waiting for the day that someone new would succeed.

A few had partially succeeded- the tablet responding to them, and allowing those few to start the Journey to gain the Tablet...

The mad man would interfere, however, and they had all failed one by one, returning in shame that they had not managed it.

And that brought you to the here and now.

"Unfortunately," Callie says, "I haven't had a chance to try yet. I've been concerned with helping some of those who were unable to even get into the bubble when they tried."

You notice that she, and most of the others in this particular gazebo, all have personal books as well. All of these ones are missing the silver medallions, though.

"Oh, the Relto Books?" Callie smiles after she notices you staring. "Yeesha gave them to us before we attempted to traverse into the Keep. Most of the time, the book Panic Links people out of the field before it can cause them any harm. A few times, though, it's failed, and the book has been damaged. Yeesha has been working to fix them in the mean time."

"Lovely," Mike grunts. "So... about the people we came here to find?"

"Right," Callie nods. "Follow me, please?" She then leads you away from this Gazeebo towards another one, further in the back and away from the five-way-dimensional-adjacent Keep. "The other
night, a child a bit younger than your daughter came in after I was brought here. Your daughter, well. There's no easy way to say it, but she was sought out because the child in question was alone, and afraid, and hurt, and very un-trusting of adults."

"Ah," Sharper sighs, in that sort of 'I was afraid of that' kind of way. "Abuse situation, I'm guessing?"

"From what they've told us, even before the Rift energy transformed them, they were isolated and kept at home, with no real friends to speak of and generally..." Callie trails off. "Well. It's not my story to tell. We only got that much out of them because of your daughter, Mister Engberg."

"So... Wheely wasn't taken to run this whole gauntlet?" Mike asks.

"No," Callie shakes her head. "It was a crunch scenario and we really didn't have time to reach out properly. We thought someone near their age might be able to get through to them and let us help them."


And thus, you arrive at the Gazeebo in question, but don't step inside. From this distance you can see clearly that there's only two children in it. A girl, about eight or nine, with blond hair done up into a pony tail. The other...

You do a triple take, because you're quite sure that's a Cait Syth Fae at first glance, and then have to look again because no, that's quite clearly Argo sans wings!!

Except- not.

There's no neon hair. It's blonde, though dirtier than Wheely's hair color, and marred with red streaks you hope isn't blood, but probably is. Because their clothes are stained with red too, and their hands are all bandaged up.

Wheely glances over at your group, and smiles upon seeing her father, but gives him a LOOK, and holds up a full four fingers. Mike reluctantly nods, and you wait outside.

"What happened?" Dammek asks.

"The Rift transformation caused them to grow cat ears and a tail," Callie says. "Their mother... did not approve of that, let alone one of the other changes."

"Other changes?" you ask, fearing the answer.

"Apparently, they switched genders during the transformation," Callie clarifies. "Oh, and here's a fun fact. They're from Colorado too. Apparently they'd shared a one week gymnastics camp with Rose, Jade and Nepeta a few days before the Rift energy fully kicked off the transformation." Her wings ruffle at that. "Apparently my wings reminded them of Nepeta's."

"When we get back to the Surface we're going to have to see about contacting social services," Sharper says. "That blood can't be a good sign."

"Our little adjacent acquaintance used their claws to scratch out their mother for getting upset at them during their home schooling courses," Callie sighs. "And then their Mother tried to cut their claws
"Oh my god," Mike breathes out. "That's a horrible thing to do to a cat, let alone a human being. I can see why you'd get someone like my Daughter in, but couldn't you have asked for permission first before taking her?"

"We didn't have much time," Callie shakes her head. "The few healing abilities the Bahro and Yeesha know require consent to perform, and they weren't willing to talk to anyone adult sized at all. The blood loss didn't help. We were afraid they were going to die before we could get them to even listen to us."

Mike sighs. "I suppose I can't argue there."

"Fortunately, those healing powers worked, and our new friend's bleeding stopped," Callie says. "There's hope the claws should regrow back fine, but I'd rather have Kanaya give them a once over with Shaper to try and regrow them properly as it is."

"Kanaya's a good choice," you nod. "Though I think Minori's probably a better choice for ease of access."

"That's a good point," Callie nods.

/2/ The book pulses again, much to your confusion. Ugh. You hope it's not going to start counting at random. That'd just suck.

After a few minutes of waiting, Wheely disentangles herself from the Gazeebo and gives her dad the tightest, strongest hug imaginable.

"We have to help them, Daddy," She pleads. "They can't stay there! It's horrible!"

"Of course we will," he nods. "We're definitely going to help them out of this."

You'll agree on that fact, that's for sure.

You're reminded of what Watson said yesterday. Unpleasant people always find a way to be unpleasant.

Phil Henderson appeared on the link in spot a short while later, and Sharper and Mike went to talk with him. Something about abandoning his duties? Well, you're sure that'll work out for the best.

Then, there's another link, and appearing this time is the woman from the imager- Yeesha. Only, she's a lot more tired looking. Her clothes are tattered in places, and she has a satchel at her side that looks like it has books inside. Her hair is actually red, of all shocking surprises. A sort of deep crimson that brings thoughts up of Xefros' sign.

She stares in surprise upon seeing you, then sighs, and walks over to you.

"So, I suppose you're Joey Claire?" She speaks with... with a surprising lack of put upon air. It was hard to notice with how casual her recording was, but that WAS a scripted speech she'd given. She's much more causal here. Much more tired. A bit of that earnest gleam in her eyes is replaced by a
tired look. It's ill fitting, given how blue her eyes are, actually.

"That's me," you say. "And you're Yeesha?"

"I am," she nods, then, eyes you oddly. "Left side? Interesting choice. I don't think I've seen someone wear a Relto Book on the left before."

"Oh, that," you shake your head. "Did you know your books are alive and give a mental compulsion to wear them a certain way?"

She blinks- and for a moment, you think her eyes are brown, but then they're back to blue a moment later. "Alive? Yes, to a degree. But a mental compulsion?" She sighs. "I suppose I should have realized that given that I designed them to be worn a certain way. I didn't realize it would imprint that way."

"Another question I've got for you," you continue on, "there's no harm to the mental pings your Tapestry cloths leave behind, is there?"

"...Pings?" She asks, sounding and looking confused at the term.

"Like, they leave little kibbles of information behind when you use them, it primarily keeps track of which cloths were pressed," you explain. "They do a sort of. Ping. A check with those kibbles whenever someone touches them."

"Interesting," Yeesha muses. "I'd wondered what that tracking function might look like from a Psychic's perspective, rare as they used to be before that energy flooded D'ni's universe."

"Speaking of," you glance at the Keep's bubble. "We're in another dimension, right? That thing shouldn't be affected by the Rift. So, why is it so unstable still?"

"A fraction of it will always be housed in D'ni, somewhere," Yeesha answers. "Unfortunately, that fraction doesn't include the entrance."

"Ah, that's gotta suck." You sigh, and shove your hands in your jacket pockets. "...So. Callie couldn't give me a straight answer. Everyone else here's been taken from New Mexico except for that kid with the cat ears, who came from a state up. What happened there?"

Yeesh sighs, reaching up to massage at the bridge of her nose. "I truthfully don't know. We'd sent a Link to collect another as we had before, but the one we sought was not the one we received. Truthfully, it felt as if the Link was warped somehow when it completed. Hijacked or redirected, I am not sure."

You take a sharp breath at that. "Power Interaction, then. Given what was happening to them... They were probably looking for an escape and took the first one that presented itself, somehow."

"That was our thought as well," she says. "This Rift, as you call it... It has caused us many problems."

"Esher," you say the name you really hope it wouldn't be, and Yeesha pauses.

"How did you hear of that name?" She asks, cautiously. "I have told no-one his identity."
"The answer would be Time Travel, and alternate timelines," you say simply.

"Time Travel, truthfully?" She asks, staring. You nod, and she laughs. "Of course it wouldn't be me to discover how that was possible. Prophecies! You can never tell what they mean until after the fact."

"Prophecy, huh?" You blink. "What kind of prophecy are we talking about here?"

Yeesha smiles, sadly. "There was once a man called the Watcher who wrote five books of prophecy. Only after the Fall did certain aspects of it seem to relate to actual parts of history. One of my teachers of the Art suspected that I would fall under one such role - talked about greatly through the books, known as the Grower."

"Do you have copies of those books?" You ask.

"...Not in English, no," she shakes her head.

"If it's alright, could you quote me the relevant parts, then?" you ask. She nods in acceptance of that.

"When the tree dies, there will come a new one," Yeesha begins quoting it. "A grower to learn of the death. A grower to see new life. A grower to bring the gathered. A grower to restore the least. A grower to move through time." Ah, you see where that comes into play. "A grower to link at will. A grower to follow the shell. A grower to banish the darkness. A grower to graft the branches. A grower to join the paths."

"I see," you muse. "And your teacher thought you'd be this 'Grower' person?"

"I had already devoted myself to releasing the Least - the Bahro - from their enslavement. 'Restoring' them. I had learned of D'ni's fall, and sought to see 'new life' brought to the Cavern. And I've already brought these people to D'ni, gathering them..." She sighs. "I had already learned how to Link at will as well, by that point. I've been somewhat hesitant to accept this title, this weight of prophecy. Especially given..." She shakes her head again. "And now you present actual time travel to me. Moving through time, and following a 'shell,' and banishing darkness and grafting branches and joining paths... I have no idea what those mean yet, and yet, I seem resigned to follow through."

"Honestly," you say. "That prophecy could apply as much to me as it does to you."

"...What?" Yeesha stares at you. "How so?"

"Let's put it this way," you start. "A tree could be anything, metaphor wise. From the multiverse of Ages, to the Stargate network... hell, it could even reference a person. My grandmother died, and when I'd learned about that, I got sent to another galaxy. There, I helped evacuated a whole new generation of trolls from one planet to another as they hatched, and I took on the role of caretaker of a whole dying race that I've since helped get back on its feet." You decaptechologue an Arai Beetle, and settle it on your head. "My arrival brought the gathered resistance together. My arrival triggered the upheaval and exile of an Empire's tyrannical ruler, and 'restored the least' of Alternia's people. I've time traveled more times than I care to count!"

Honestly, now that you're listing it all, you're a little shocked at how much all of this actually is fitting into place.

"Linking might be a D'ni specific thing, but who says that it's what this Watcher guy even meant? It
could just be he had no idea how else to describe a Stargate. And even if it was a specific D'ni thing-
"you pat the book on your hip with the palm of your hand. "You've given me that tool now. And
then there's following a shell? A shell is just a shape that loops around on itself, from beginning to
end. That could reference any number of Time Loops I've been through. Banishing darkness? I
literally have a star on my shirt-" you thumb at the top half of your shirt's sign- the Star your Mom
painted on the ceiling, that you've carried with you in your heart. "And I've literally done so many
different things that's Light-bringing-related I can't even count them all. Grafting Branches and
Joining Paths?" You shake your head. "If it's referring to Multiverse stuff, then everything that's
happened there is because of me, even indirectly."

Yeesha stares at you for a few moments, and then throws herself at you with a very tight hug.

"Oh- okay- so we're hugging now?" you hug her back after a moment.

"Thank you," she whispers. "I'd thought... I'd thought I had to do all of this on my own. That..." She
sobs, shoulders shaking in a sort of heavily relieved way.

"Hey, c'mon, now," you say. "It's just all a matter of perspective, isn't it?"

"Yes," she nods, and then breaks the hug- going to wipe away some tears from her eyes. "But it's
perspective I so sorely needed."

"You're welcome," is all you can really say on the matter.

"Huaaaaaaaaaa---!" Dammek leaps at the rotating, fluctuating zone of space around the Keep- and
face plants straight into a piece of wall that is there for only a few seconds, and gets thrown back to
the ground. "Ow."

Sharper and Callie quickly drag him away before something else transposes itself into that space-
which it does a few seconds later, once Dammek is clear.

You squint and stare at the space around the Keep as it fluctuates between versions of world space.

Yes, you're seriously thinking about running this death course. And you mean that literally, given
some of the stories you've been told from those who have tried this thing so far. Not just
environmental hazzards like this fluctuation of space-time, but... The man like Esher, using
psychological attacks and actual physical attacks with his mind controlled Bahro to prevent people
from reaching the Keep.

You think you're seeing a pattern in this.

Yeah. There's a beat to it. If you set it to some music...

You think you have an old Ballet Routine that should work for this. Maybe throw in some Tap
dance... no, no, the universe still isn't ready for the BALLAP combination yet.

You get your MP3 player out and search through songs as you decaptchaloge the earbuds and do
some warm up stretches.
No. No. Nope. Too pop-soundy. Too slow. Too fast. Not the right rythm. Oh, HELL NO, definitely not that one...

Oh. **Hello, Old Secret.**

You give it a listen through, starting and restarting it until you find a point that the music synchs up with the motions of the wild space around the Keep. You start planning your motions through in your head, and doing a few practice moves at the right time...

Yeah, this is doable. And... if you do this right you should be able to get into the keep in about two minutes.

"Oh, I know that look," You hear Dammek remark.

"Oh, yes, this should be good," Callie says.

"Is she... listening to music?" Sharper asks.

"Music makes the world go around," Dammek answers, and you can't help but smirk.

Yeah. You can do this.

You step up to where you think you should start at, and **Restart the Music** as a stone wall appears before you. You tap your foot to the beat as you wait for it to disappear so you can begin.

And. Here. You. Go.

[0:15] You step forwards as the wall vanishes, slide to the right as a metal post appears there, right again as a larger stone post replaces it.

[0:20] You twist to the right as you slide forwards towards the keep, then tip toe up onto a rock, and bend left to avoid being pinned by rock. Wait. Wait.

[0:29] You step down, lunge step lunge to the left. Stop. Bend backwards to avoid metal pole impalement.

[0:35] Upright, lunge step lunge to left forwards diagonal. Start skipping steps up the staircase that formed from nowhere, reach the top as the stairs are replaced by metal railing, and start pirouetting around the circumference of the Keep's bubble.

[0:49] Stand atop a chunk of ice pillar as it starts sinking downwards, step to the side onto a rock wall as it rises upwards.

[0:56] Reach the top of the rock wall of Tsogahl's canyon, and stop to catch breath, and time out the repeated intro until things reset to ideal conditions. All eyes stare up at you in awe and shock, wondering how you'd gotten so far and what the hell you're planning.

You are Joey Claire, and this is your stage.

You spread your wings-

[1:11] -And you step out onto floating pieces of metal pipes, disconnected from their moorings, and
chunks of salt encrusted boulders, using them as stairs as you descend towards the top of the Keep Bubble.

[1:21] The top is solid and refuses entry from this angle, as expected, so you slide down its surface towards the nearest bone spike.

[1:26] You step off of it onto some metal railing and delicately toe-tip-spin along its length in a curve around the Keep, barely keeping up with the metal that's given before it's taken away.

[1:35] You step onto a stone lamp, and pause behind an ice wall as a wave of sea water crashes around you. Then, you step-twirl down onto a sinking piece of sea coral, and land on a stable piece of polished crimson stone.

[1:45] You wait as a metal ladder blocking your path fades out of sight, and you step right before a large boulder fills your space, and then you twirl-spin forwards and-

[1:53] -You pass through the open bubble layer and Enter the Keep. You exhale in relief. That went better than it did in your head.

The stone mechanism before you consists of four large stone levers, locking into place around a ghostly blue smoke like shape, taking the outline of THE TABLET.

You reach forwards, and press your hand against its surface. The world seems to pause...

[2:09] The music continues playing as the formerly silent bubble suddenly roars to life with the sounds of various worlds- daring you to flinch.

**[ARE YOU WORTHY?]** Booms into your skull.

**[You tell me,]** you tell it flat to its non-existant face, and show it what you've done. Your life to this point.

[2:22] You show the Tablet your track record- everything you told Yeesha you'd done, and everything beyond it. All the highs, all the lows.

You reach out to it with ADMINISTRATOR, and you show it your connection to the Arai, and you show it your status as Polyarch- and you show it how you brought them back from the brink of death.

You show it how you've traveled the stars, and continue to search for the ones who created the Rift whose energies have created this horrible situation to begin with.


**[ACCEPTANCE.]**

As the blue cloud condenses into a solid gold form beneath your hand, it conveys its wishes that you would succeed where so many others have failed.

And then it pulses with energy- and the unstable nature of the space around the Tablet solidifies, leaving you with a solid path of Tsogahl soil for you to walk out of the bubble through.
Yeesha stares on in awe, as do the others she'd recruited. Only Dammek and Callie stare on with a familiar look of amusement.

"That's our Colonel," Callie grins.

"Yup," Dammek nods.

Yeesha approaches you, and then kneels before you.

"Wha-?" you blink and start to ask, when several creatures- grey skinned, with claws, and ant like heads with blue eyes, appear around her, all similarly kneeling before you in their own way.

"Grower," Yeesha breathes out. "You have done what we could not. The Tablet has not responded so strongly before to someone in my own Memory. Please, do what we could not. We beg of you."

Aw. Crap.

You look to Callie and Damek and ask with That Look: 'Did I over do it?'

Callie nods and Damek holds up his index and thumb half an inch apart.

'Yes. Just a little bit.'

WELP.

Everyone's staring at you like you've done the impossible... So much for not getting involved, huh?

This just got a lot more complex of a situation to deal with than you'd wanted.

You just hope you didn't just usurp someone else's cosmic destiny.

Meanwhile, in his office on Earth, Doctor Richard Watson sneezed.

Chapter End Notes

So! Old Secret, and a dance that brings awe to all that saw it. That was a fun sequence to write- twice. My text editor crashed and lost a bunch of the text I'd written about half way through. Oh well.

Cones are a MEMETIC THING in the D'ni-Verse about this point in the timeline.

Speaking of, yeah, I'm drawing a bit more heavily from Myst 5's plot in this section of the story arc. M5 and URU were basically meant to be the same game anyways, damned executive meddling from Ubisoft aside. So I'm just... reintegrating things. The way they should be. A world where the badguys get punished early and hard and innocent people don't die pointless deaths.
Oh. Yeah. And Yeesha's totally just gotten the impression that the Grower Prophecy wasn't about her at all. That's the funny thing about prophecy. You can look at the same words and see different events. Honestly, I didn't even realize that I'd written Joey fulfilling 90% of the Grower Prophecy until just recently. Funny, that, how you can literally look at two separate series of events and have them match the same prophecy, isn't it?

Time to do the rest of it intentionally, even if I'm totally replacing the canon protag of Myst 5 with Joey Claire.

Below the cut some thoughts on the skip-able sequence.

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TL;DRing the section that was skippable: Wheely was brought in to help a kid her age who got hurt escaping a bad situation.

It's an unfortunate fact of life that Unpleasant people will find ways to be Unpleasant. Fortunately, in fiction, those kids of jerk-faces can get punished for it. And that Mother just had her actions alerted to people tied to the SGC, which has quite a lot of people working there who are VERY Protective about children. They're going down. Hard.

Justice in the world is hard to find, it feels.
The Alternian danced across the chaos warped field as if it were second nature. All those minutes before hand where she'd stood, stretched, and stared ahead, unseeing of anything but the challenge before seemed like but a heartbeat compared to the dance performed in that moment.

Ascending, ascending, like a dancing sprite from a dream. A figment of paradoxes thought impossible made real. A prophecy fulfilled before your eyes. Nothing of that fractured reality was able to stop her. She climbed and she climbed...

And then her zenith was reached, and she gazed upon you all like the GODDESS she was. There was no doubt in your mind there. False gods like Gehn, or those Goa'uld had nothing upon true divinity. Even your Grandfather would weep and bow at her presence.

And when her wings spread like a faerie, like a dazzling star among the dark- all eyes locked onto her as she descended, descended, descended. Until she touched the bubble. Proof that there was her goal, within reach, and she had the power to reach it, unlike so many.

And then she was gliding! Gliding down across the bubble without passing through its surface, seemingly just for the show. She touched a spike for a heartbeat before dancing off and around, and then she spiraled into the Bubble, and reached for the Tablet.

And you heard the ROAR of the waves. You heard the HOWL of wind. You heard the CRACKING of ice. The CHIRPING of birds.

And then the chaos stilled, the Tablet whole, and she emerged from the bubble.

She has walked the Path of the Shell right then and there. A beginning tied to the end.

Your name is Yeesha, and you feel within your heart that it is true, those words that she spoke before.

She is the Grower, and you are just a Desert Bird.

Chapter End Notes

Perspective matters. Especially to someone who just got told that they didn't HAVE to be the hero of prophecy.

In other news, Joey *really* over did it. I mean. Seriously.
MINISODE: INTERFISHIN.

Chapter Summary

Meanwhile, back at Atlantis...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Okay, but I think we're not going to catch anything at this point," Carter remarks.

"No, no, we give it a few more minutes and see if Roxy's super bait works," O'neill says, peering over the railing of Atlantis' balcony towards the water below. "Besides... it's all about the act itself, whether or not we catch anything is incidental."

"True, but we've been at this for... three hours now?" Roxy muses. "I think we're not going to catch anything either."

"Okay, but what do you want me to do about it? I can't exactly grow a plant from the sea floor unless I'm touching the sea floor," O'neill counters.

"I'm just concerned that there's not any fish left in the ocean after the nuclear blast we set off," Carter says.

There's a long pause.

And then Jimmy O'neill says, "You know, I don't really want to catch any fish now."

Chapter End Notes

A short bonus minisode scene.
Chapter Summary

Joey begins the journey.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

"So... the Tablet has Responded to you," your name is Phil Henderson, and you look to the Alternian woman before you with interest and trepidation. "It's a burden, that. It's one many people have held and failed to hold and you can't take this lightly."

"I won't," she says.

"There's no second chances, not with the Tablet. So many have taken it..." You've seen their faces. Been one of them. "I've tried. I've failed. People get seduced with how sweet it tastes. How addictive it is... The Writing, the power... They've served and they've served. Too long. It's time for them to be free."

"Right," she nods.

"You've got to collect what's been scattered- the keys- the Slates- and the Tablet will be released. You have to start where everyone starts. Bathe in the light, travel to the dark depths below..." You look her in the eyes, and say. "Do not be deceived."

"I won't," she says.

"Then you know what you must do, and whatever you still don't understand is what you don't need to know or failed to hear."

"I've dealt with that a lot," she says. "I think I'll manage."

"Good luck," you say. "For when you Begin."

"Thanks," she says in turn.

"I've linked your Relto books together," Yeesha begins. "For the time being, if you need to retreat to a place of solitude, your books shall head to the same version of the Island. There will be five books in the library as you progress. The Descent, and the ages the Keep bounces between. When you've finished, I will ensure the Relto books will immediately return you here to Tsogahl, rather than K'veer, where the Keep last stood."

"Thank you," you nod.

And then she raises a hand, and says, "Good luck."

VRRROOOOOMSSSHSHSSHSSHhsshhhh....

For a moment, there is the void, and then the three of you materialize in a small, round pit with a ramp leading up to elsewhere.

Your name is Joey Claire, and you take in a breath of hot, desert air, before exhaling.

"Well," Dammek starts, taking out a phone that Mike had given him before you left. "We've got reception, so we're back on Earth, and near enough to Catherine that we've got cell reception."

"Good," Callie says. "Tsogahl's sun was starting to remind me too much of Alternia's. Much too large, much too close."

"Make the call," you say. "Let the SGC know we're investigating the incidents down here, and that the disappearances should stop. I'm going to scout ahead and see what I can find."

Dammek nods, and Callie says, "I'll keep an eye out for any... meddlers."

"Thanks," you nod, and start up the small dirt ramp.

Within moments, you find yourself atop a small ledge overlooking a lava pool, and beyond that... there's a slightly larger canyon like area a bit further ahead, with a river flowing through it. You've got enough elevation that you can see out into the familiar, New Mexican desert. A few miles to what your instinct tells you is vaguely north-east, you can see the shape of the Cleft caldera. And a bit to the side of that, you can see the town of Catherine.

You're definitely back on Earth.

You start circling around the edge of the pit, eyes open for anything and everything.

There's a skitter in the rocks above, and you glance up, seeing a Bahro crouching in wait on a tiny, inaccessible ledge.

You ping it with Administrator, and it returns your ping with the one you'd planned in advance back on Tsogahl.

This is one of Yeesha's friends- a Freed one who volunteered to watch and guide and interfere if Esher did anything untoward.

You give it a nod, and then continue along the path.
You come to a stone bridge that leads over the lava pool, and that's when you hear a Linking sound, and a man appears at the other end of it, back turned to you, facing the river.

Well, time to get along with this.

You play up how heavily you need your cane as you approach.

"You have seen Yeesha," the man starts speaking in a heavily accented English. "She was, I'm sure, very inhospitable. You are confused, no doubt, by this Quest she has placed you on."

"The quest?" You ask, when prompted.

"Heh. Yes. the Quest. The Quest to carry the Four. The Quest to Release the Tablet. This Quest that has proven more and more difficult over time and yet none have succeeded in it. The Quest whose reward still has no master."

You'll have him credit where he's do, he's rehearsed this well. He's not stuttering over his words one bit, and somehow still making it sound casual. This would be his first attempt at throwing you off the Journey for the Tablet, you guess.

"I will tell you what she will not," he says, continuing to keep his back to you. "I will help you where she will not. But, she and I agree on this one point- DO NOT-" He turns dramatically to face you and stops cold.

"Howdy," you greet him.

He's... Creepy looking. Sort of old, and mostly bald, with a pair of damaged goggles over his eyes. His tan and crimson robes are marred with stains you don't want to think about, and over his shoulder is a piece of grey hide- the same color as a Bahro's skin, ew. You hope that isn't... Disconcertingly, he has a necklace that looks like its carrying about a dozen or so crystallized orbs- you hope those aren't Bahro eyeballs either.

"...What are you?" He sneers. "Some local from an Age she'd written? Some devil she'd recruited from the void to do her bidding?"

"Eh? What do you mean?" You ask, tilting your head. "My cane? Geeze, way to be insensitive about my condition, dude. I worked hard to overcome that limp and needing crutches!"

Esher sneers more at you, before composing himself. "I do not know where she got you from, but she has lied to you already." Ah, and now he's trying to get back onto the whole 'derail the journey' thing. "Uttered words that bite her heart as they leave her lips. She wants that Tablet. More than ANYTHING she wants it. She craves it. You must not give it to her, whatever happens-"

"You mean the fact that former holders of the Tablet are incapable of holding it once they've lost the ability to?" You ask, interrupting him.

"...I see you are just as misinformed as most are," he laughs. "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sure you are overwhelmed with that revelation. Seek the hole in the ground. I will find you." And then he touches his hand to his shoulder and links away.

Well, that confirms that horrid theory.
Dammek and Callie catch up with you a minute later, as you stand there and wait, processing the implications of that self linking of his.

"What's wrong?" Callie asks.

"Esher has a piece of Bahro skin he uses to link," you summarize. "Remember how nobody was sure how he was getting around? How one theory was that the Bahro under his control were linking him? ...I think I flustered him enough to break that illusion."


"Tell me about it," you grunt, and then move along down the path. "He didn't try mind whammying me, not directly. Just with words. Bastard probably rehearsed it, too."

You pass by another skeletal whale on your way through to the next area, and spot some more debris from RIVEN. Fragments of one of the marble domes, half wedged into the dirt and... Oh. Hello mysterious glint of light with an Arai Beetle mental signature!

You kneel down and peer inside the dome. You can't fit through there yourself, but you can sure as hell see a rift in space. A rift that's connected to the Mofang Ship you'd lost an Arai Beetle to.

With a little bit of focus and direction, you're able to guide that poor little Beetle through the rift and recaptchalogue it safe and sound.

It's only been a matter of minutes for it since it lost contact with you.

It's been DAYS for you.

Time doesn't move linearly within whatever is happening with that rift in space-time.

"Well, shit," Dammek peers at it. "We've got a live rift."

"I'd like to study it while it's still here," Callie says, kneeling down and retrieving some FANCY TECH in the shape of a WATCH that she puts on her hand.

"What's that?" you ask.

"Oh, it's what the DRC call a "Key" but spelled like 'K' 'I', which looks like the D'ni number for Three," Callie says. "Mike loaned me his before we left. He modified it with energy scanners and such."

"Handy, that," you muse. "Alright, keep an eye on this rift, and see what you can learn. I'll move along and see what else I can find."

"Good luck," Dammek nods.

And with that, you spread your wings, hop over the river, and explore the other side. There's a small hole in the ground with a ladder poking out, obviously your way down, but...

There are large rocks scattered about everywhere, painted with glyphs and stylized drawings of locations and events. Unlike some drawings you'd seen from Yeesha or the Bahro, these... these are
brutal. Graphic. Depicting warfare and devastation and...

And this is Esher's work.

He's trying to psych you our with warning signs of his plans, only replacing himself in those images with Yeesha.

He's really trying to hard sell this, isn't he?

As much as you don't want to bother documenting any of his artwork, you do so anyways, just in case you can use it against him later.

That done, you climb down the ladder and enter a series of small, cramped tunnels. Ironically, you end up back tracking a bit towards the circle area you linked in at, and...

Oh.

You emerge into a large, manufactured tunnel. To the right is a rest area, to the left is a larger room.

You examine that first since its a bit closer.

Esher links in again, and he's removed his goggles, and he's got a pleasant smile on his face. "Ah, I apologize, earlier, for the Goggles. They're a bit damaged, and hard to see through. Unfortunately, my eyes are not accustomed to the sun in this Age."

"I see," you say. "Maybe you need to get new goggles."

"Perhaps," he nods. "Ah, but while you were right, to a degree, there are ways around the Tablet's... ah... security measures. I, too, you see, have done this quest. Ended in failure. Yet, I think what I learned will be useful to your quest. There is a book, back in the rest area, that leads to the first of the four Ages you must visit. Afterwards... your Journey continues through that door," he motions at a door, and then links away.

"Good to know," you say as he vanishes.

You'll leave that door closed for now.

You head back to the rest area room.

There are cots, and boxes and crates and- Oh. Hello. A map of a large spiraling tunnel/shaft marked with the DRC stamp. You guess they've been through here. You wonder if-?

You stop as you turn around to face a wall, and find a book-stand protected by a wibbly, wobbly sort of bubble field like the Keep's protection field.

If you look at it funny, you can't see a book inside, but if you look at it right, there's a Book.

Come to think of it. All the Linking you've DONE up to this point had been facilitated by Yeesha, and you haven't even used a proper book yet.

...Honestly, while on one hand it sort of feels... mundane? On the other it feels like you're finally back in familiar territory.
Linking Books are just another form of transportation technology, like a Quantum Mirror or a Stargate. They're controlled. They're exact. You always know where you're going.

Except you really don't know where this book goes. It looks cold, though.

Your name is Okurii Leijon, and you gladly excuse yourself from yet another press conference to answer an important phone call.

"This is General Leijon," you greet once you're safely somewhere else.

"Okurii," a familiar voice greets, "this is Callie and Dammek."

"Callie, glad to hear you were found safe and sound," you smile.

"Yes, well, safe is relative," she answers. "I'm looking at a rift here in front of me. It looks like it's been open for some time, and relatively stable like the main one. And the rift is connected directly into the Hyperspace drive of the Mofang Cruiser Elwurd and Lynera were on when it exploded. Except it was less an explosion, and more of a complete multidimensional scattering."

"I take it you wouldn't be calling if this wasn't a problem?" You ask.

"What she means to say, Okurii," Dammek interjects. "Is that the Mofang Cruiser is serving as a sort of bridge between different dimensions- stapling them together at various places. The rifts we're seeing are like the holes in the paper left behind when the staples get removed."

"...So if I'm understanding this right," you start, "then the longer that Mofang Cruiser continues to bounce between different points of space time, the more holes get made."

"And the more holes that get made, the more unstable the dimensional walls become because they've been pinned together and now are free to grind against each other, causing a whole lot of bleed through and merging," Dammek continues. "We don't think there's any real danger in the rifts themselves. But the real problem comes from where the overlap is happening. Walking face first into a stone wall that wasn't there seconds ago is the most mild situation you can imagine."

"And worst case you get impaled on a sword, or something worse," you massage at the bridge of your nose. "And the people that went missing-?"

"Unrelated to the Rift activity, but the dimensional bleed through might not be limited to objects," Dammek confirms. "Not just in our world, but in others."

"So, what are our options?" You ask.

"Basically," Callie answers, "we need to find a way to shut down that Cruiser's Hyperdrive so we can stop this from worsening. I'd need physical access to stop it, but honestly, I think getting the access won't be the hard part. It's the actual work on the thing that'll be tough."

You sigh, massaging at the bridge of your nose. "Assuming you can get to the ship, what do you need, supply wise?"
Callie gives you a list.

A big list.

Hoo.

"Stay where you are for the moment, Callie, and I'll get what you need transported to you through the Prometheus," you say. "In the mean time, please be careful."

"We'll try our best, Ma'am," Callie answers.

Your name is Dammek, and you find Joey meditating infront of a book pedastil when you get down to her. Her Relto Book hovers infront of her, in the grip of an Arai Beetle, and yet more Arai beetles swarm around her in a lazy circle. One lands on your head as you greet, "Hey, Joey."

"Hey, Dammek," Joey greets, not even opening her eyes. "Where's Callie?"

"Still observing the rift," you answer. "And waiting for a Prometheus Delivery."

"What'd you find?" she asks.

"Well, the Rift was displaying some of the same activity we were seeing from the Keep," you tell her.

"Shit," Her eyes open. "Does that mean what I think it means?"

"Callie thinks that some of that metal you were dodging yesterday is part of the Mofang Cruiser," you answer.

"Of course it would be," she sighs, getting up from her seated position, and wincing as she does such. Her cane decapchalogues immediately and she leans against it, massaging at her right knee and hip.

"You okay?" You ask.

"Yeah, I just strained it yesterday," she answers. "Too much, too fast. I'll be okay."

"I know I'm not Xefros, but don't make me order you to take a time out," you say, even as the Arai Beetles all start captchalogueing away. The one holding her Relto book carefully places it back on her left hip before vanishing.

"I know, I know," she sighs. "I keep telling myself to take it easy. But then I go and do stupid shit like yesterday..."

"Yeah," you sigh as well. The Beetle on your head stays in place, gripping its tiny limbs against your scalp a bit tighter. "That was... a lot of people looking at you like you're a miracle walking. You didn't tell me or Callie, by the way, so I'm asking now. What was with that title Yeesha gave you, 'Grower'?"

Joey says nothing for a moment, continuing to massage at her knee before speaking again. "Yeesha
said she had some prophecy over her head that she wasn't sure she could fulfill, and I stupidly pointed out how everything I'd done since going to Alternia lead to me basically fulfilling all of the points. It was meant to be comforting. That it was all a matter of perspective. Well. I think she took it too far and decided I really was this Grower person mentioned in Prophecy. Transferred the weight of it off of her shoulders to mine, metaphorically speaking.

"That sucks," you say.

"Yeah," she sighs. "Dammit, Dammek, how do I keep getting caught up in shit like this?"

"You mean, race to get the uber-powerful relic, stop it from falling into enemy hands, and then save the universe?" You ask.

"Exactly that," she nods, then looks up at you. "Is it Destiny? Prophecy? Fate? Can't I just have an easy job for once? We were just supposed to be looking for Lynera, and now... All of THIS."

"I don't know, Joey," you say, reaching up to gently scratch at the jaw line of the beetle on your head. "I really don't know."

Callie joined you a few minutes later, and surprisingly, so too did Sharper.

"Phil basically told me I should be coming with you," he explained, "Mike okayed it, and Yeesha sent me on through. Nice woman, when she's not speaking in riddles."

After examining the cold looking book panel, you, her, Sharper, and Dammek linked through the book.

VRRROOOOMMSSHHSSHHSSHShsshhh....

You arrived in a large ice cave, and surprise surprise, Esher showed up. He stared at the three of you for a moment before yelling something incomprehensible (In D'ni, likely) and linking away in a huff. Apparently he'd not expected there to be four of you?

"Be prepared for attacks," you warn your team.

Sharper draws a short, sawed-off-ended shotgun from his bag. Dammek scoffs and decaptchalogue a P-90.

"Ain't that a bit overkill?" Sharper asks.

"Nah," Dammek answers, nodding at you. "She's Overkill. I'm A Reasonable Amount of Dakka."

"I'm the Scientist!" Callie raises a hand cheerfully.

"Great, good to know," Sharper says with a laugh. "I like you already, Wings."

Boys. You roll your eyes and then examine the cave. There's a small window overlooking a pair of ice covered islands. In the far distance you can see a flicker of warped space- the Keep. Closer to 'home', though, is a large carving in the ice not too far away from you. A SYMBOL. You photograph it.
Within the cave you're in though... there's not much beyond a small carving in the ground and... Oh. A small stone platform encased in a bubble, upon which rests a snow-grey colored DRAWING SLATE in the same shape as that carving on the ground.

"One plus one equals a hole in the ground, I guess?" You muse, picking up the hefty slate- OOGH. You're going to need to captchalogue these if you can for long term- and then drop it down on the ground ontop of the outline.

The slate turns transparent and foggy, but does nothing.

You step forwards and pick the slate up again, solidifying it, and then loosen the included stylus from the side and sketching the symbol from outside.

You drop it again on the spot and...

"Let's step back a bit, just incase it's time delay," you advise.

You all step back from the Slate, and then- **WOOOMSH** a Bahro appears. It looks at the Slate on the ground, and then reaches out to touch it.

The moment its claws touch the stone, it solidifies, and the Bahro does a sort of funny dance before crying out- your mind hears a Ping, translating it as [GenerateAtMe Heat.OBJ] and linking away as a flash of steam erupts on the spot the Tablet resides and the ice cracks, cracks cracks, and then-

**PFOOOMPH!**

A hole breaks open in the ground before you, sloping down towards ground level outside.

"Well, that was energetic," Sharper remarks.

"Amazing," Callie breathes out. "A controlled burst of heat directed through the Ice via a stone tablet."

"Where the hell did the energy for that come from, though?" Dammek asks.

"Well, the Bahro can link at will, right?" you frown. "Who's to say they can't also modify the Ages directly too?"

"Like a writer through a Descriptive Book, y'mean?" Sharper asks.

You nod. "Exactly."

"I'm still a bit behind on my lore," Callie says, "but that would be one hell of a reason for the D'ni to want to keep the Bahro captive."

"The D'ni were sticklers for their rules about modifying ages..." Sharper grunts. "That there'd be those who'd use the creatures to mess with what's been established on the down-low..."

**WOOOMSH** the Bahro reappears, carrying the slate, and placing it back on its stand then before vanishing again. **WOOOMSH.**
"Handy, that," you say, and decide to leave it there for the moment.

You explore ahead and find that outside the cave is nothing at all but a low pit of ice, and the only way out is a ladder. A ladder that you most definately can't carry the Tablet up by hand. Fortunately, there's another bubble encased stone stand, with a symbol engraved onto it, and a button that sends someone back to the first stand.

You think you know what you need to do.

---

Five attempts later, and it turns out none of you can captchalogue the Slate, and you are somehow unable to maintain your wings while in possession of the tablet.

On Captchalogueing, you just get the bizzare phenomenon called a GHOST IMAGE. The Card has an imprint of the object you attempted to Captchalogue, filling the card's DATA, but there's nothing actually put inside. Meaning, you can't take the object out to reuse the card because there's actually nothing TO take out.

Jude mentioned once that he'd had an idea for some kind of PUNCH CODE BASED MATTER REPLICATION DEVICE and ASGARD TRANSPORTERS that exploited that phenomenon. But, those rely on the ghost image captcha'd object actually having a code on the back of the card.

The Slate's Captcha Card has NOTHING on the back.

That's a handy sort of anti cheating measure, you suppose, even if you wasted five cards in the process.

As for your wings? You've tried summoning them holding the slate, and summoning them and then picking up the slate. Unfortunately, your wings either refuse to form while you hold the slate, or fold up and dissappear when you pick it up.

Damn anti-cheating stone slates.

And so you had to do things the PROPER way. Sort of. Send someone up a ladder that you CAN'T carry the slate up, record the symbol on the stand up there, draw it on the slate, let a Bahro deliver it to the stand, climb ladder, recollect slate, continue on.

Esher didn't appear again once the entire time on your way into what appeared to be an old, abandoned village.

"Oh, I recognize this place now," Sharper gripes. "Thought it was familiar. This is Tahgira. It used to be a Prison Age the D'ni used. Prisoners died out eventually, though... Looks like they made a life for themselves for a while."

"How do you know it?" You ask.

"It was either this, or Teledahn for my first restoration project," Sharper explains. "I went for the mushrooms because it was warmer."

"Fair enough," you say.
You explore the village for a bit, until you finally find a large lake that you can't cross on foot— but you're going to have to, because the Keep and another small Slate stand are on the other side.

Leaving the Slate behind, you spread your wings and fly over the gap, circumventing what's no doubt meant to be a puzzle using the [HEAT] symbol.

You land next to the bubble, and are about to take a picture of the symbol on it, when Esher finally makes his reappearance.

"You are a crafty one!" Esher laughs, once more wearing his goggles. "You who can fly on wings of light. Instead of bringing heat, you fly. You miss the point, however. You failed to build what they built— what the D'ni built— to access their graves." He motions around at some snow covered pillars of ice... no. They're boxes. Coffins. Stacks and stacks of stone coffins. "You cheat, and so the Keep will Run from you."

He links away, and you peer up at the warped space around the Keep. Yeeeah, you're not going to dance that mess again.

You mark down the next slate stand's symbol, and then fly back over to complete the journey.

"Awh," Callie pouts once you've circumvented it. "I was wanting to figure out the little steam puzzle."

"We can come back later for it, if you're that into it, Callie," Dammek says. "For now, we're on a time limit."

"So, what's the symbol on the Keep?" Sharper asks, moving to approach the edge of the broken space to look at the Keep--

WOOOMSH!

A Bahro appears suddenly, and you and Dammek grab Sharper, pulling him back, even as the Bahro does its wiggly dance and cries out--

[GenerateAtMe HeatFissure.ENV]

And then the Bahro vanishes as the warped space suddenly flares, and steam bursts forth, dislodging the section of the ice flow that the Keep is on, and blasting it away from you. It drifts, drifts, drifts, and turns so that the side with the symbol is no longer facing you.

"Woah," Sharper stares. "That... Was close."

"HEY!" Dammek yells. "What Gives!?"

"Esher," you growl. "He called me a cheater, so he sabotaged us."

"Did anyone get a look at the glyph?" Callie asks.

"No," Sharper says.

"I didn't," Dammek admits.
"We don't need to." You say.

"...How's that?" Sharper asks.

You motion at one of the stacks of coffins. "We have the symbol right in front of us."

You grab the Slate, and carve a series of stacked boxes on it.

You leave it behind, and watch as a Bahro appears, takes the Slate, and then links it over to the Keep- dropping it down onto one of the four lever locks.

It's ghostly and blue, though, so there's something left to do.

Like every time the Slate was added to a new platform, a link was added to the first console at the bottom of it. It holds true for the Keep as well. You use that symbol to make it to the Keep, bypassing the sudden gap in the ice entirely, along with any of the warped, interdimensional space caused by the Rift.

Speaking of, you stare out into the rapidly alternating sections of space-time outside and... Oh. Oh, yeah, Callie is definitely right. The metal areas you were dancing through yesterday are clearly fused into the interior of a Mofang Cruiser. In one of these ages, where-ever the Keep is kept, it's been impacted by the Ship, and taken along for the ride.

You solidify the Slate, and watch as that stone lock lowers, freeing one of the corners of the Tablet.

You're about to step out of the bubble when Esher links in, opposite you.

"...Hrmf," he scoffs. "So, you are truly clever after all. Observant, too."

"What can I say, I've solved harder puzzles," you say. "And nice trick, with the steam burst."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Esher says- and you feel a prod against your mind.

[Believe Me. Believe Me. I am Innocent. I am Innocent. Yeesha is Evil. Yeesha is Evil.]

"An innocent person wouldn't try to convince me otherwise with mind control," you shake his attempt off with ease, startling the man.

"You..." he growls. "I know not from whence you came, Witch, but you will regret meddling with events that you do not know the outcome of!"

"Oh, I've got a pretty damn good idea of what would happen if I let things be, Esher," you spit his name out with a fierce glare. "And believe me, the Tablet? The Bahro? That's the LEAST of my concerns right now! We have MUCH bigger problems to deal with and you? You're barely an inconvenience to me."

Esher snarls, "We shall see who is the inconvenience..." And then he links away.

"Yeah, we'll see." You scowl, and then rejoin the others back at the original slate, upon which now rests a book that takes you back to Earth.

Time to save the universe. Again.
Meet Esher. He's not a nice person, as alluded to before. He's... really really really really really really really really really REALLY unpleasant. One of THOSE folk who watch blood sports for fun and sees nothing wrong with exploiting natives for their labor to profit from.

In Myst canon he tried to tempt Watson as he did the journey to give HIM the tablet. In the bad ending of Myst 5 we can see that this... is not a good thing. Said canonical bad ending happened in the Aschen Timeline, for the record.

Given a small smidgen of the Tablet's power here through the Rift energy, he'll figure out a way to make it work for him and how to grab more and more. If not for all the problems caused by that Mofang Cruiser, dethroning this bastard would be the highest priority in existence.

And yeah, it's happening a LOT more than we're seeing on screen. Usually in far, far out of the way places. What we saw with the Keep here? That's not how it usually goes. All of that warped, crazy, chaotic space? That's the Mofang Cruiser causing that. Now take that and multiply it times a thousand worlds each across a thousand different timelines and realities, exponentially growing as time passes, and not at all focused and centered upon a single object.

SO YEAH. Fun times ahead.
Your name is Joey Claire, and as your team exits through a series of small tunnels that open up into a large, wide cavernous, spiral carved tunnel, going down and down and down and down....

Well. You can't help but feel a little bit in awe at the size of this place.

"Regahro Tiwah," Sharper muses. "The Great Shaft. Man, I haven't been here in a while."

"This is how Yeesha's grandmother got down to D'ni," you say, peering over the railing down into the dark.... And then the awe fades because even YOU can't see the bottom of it. There's no lights on down there at all. "It's a lot less impressive in person than in the book. I was expecting a lot more lighting, for one thing."

"To be fair, the D'ni did abandon it after they finished it," Dammek says. "They probably just didn't bother coming back to replace the lightbulbs or something."

"Firemarbles, but yeah," Sharper nods. "The elevator should still work though. The DRC use it for large freight that isn't easy to Link."

And so you descend down to the half way point, where another rest chamber with a linking book resides.

"Looks like a beach," you deduce. "Recognize the panel, Sharper?"

"Hrm," he squints at it. "If those are palm trees we're seeing, I'd wager Laki'ahn. Old D'ni Blood Sports arena. Otherwise..." He blinks. "Well. Don't tell anyone I told you this, but this Esher guy? I think he might be a certain D'ni survivor that Marie and Watson were discussing a few weeks ago. Apparently he usually holes up on an Age called Noioben. It could be that one, but I've never seen the book in person and Watson and Marie were keeping it on the down-low. I only know about it because Watson accidentally left a note Marie wrote him in one of his file folders that he gave me. 'Knows a whole lot about the creatures' certainly fits."

"So either we're running into a psychopathic blood bathed sports arena, or we're running into a psychopath's personal home away from home," Dammek summarizes. "Charming."

"Only one way to find out," you say, and reach for the panel.

VRRROOOOMSSSHSSHHSSSHhsshhh....
"Palm Trees, check. Large fancy building, double check. Linking in during an Eclipse? That'd be a triple check." your name is Douglas Sharper, and you grunt as you look away from the sun, and thank whoever wrote this age for making the Eclipses on this world safe to look at, no matter how impossible that might be on Earth. "This is Laki'ahn, alright. Mind the Pirannah Birds. They like to go for the Ankles."

You are a HUNTER by trade. Or, well, were. Really. You haven't done much proper hunting in a while. Not a LOT of that to do in an otherwise empty Cavern. Your hobbies include RESTORING BROKEN MACHINERY, finding SECRET HIDEAWAYS to be alone with your thoughts, and GOING TO SUPPORT THE HOME TEAM- Your favorites to win, the PATRIOTS. You wonder if they'll make it to the Super Bowl next year?

Ah, and here you are in a sports age. Oh, sure, it was a bloody combat age where the D'ni used the natives to farm out GEMSTONES from the guts of the local sea creatures, but... well. A Sport's a Sport, even if it's a brutal one and relegated to the underground scene.

Colonel Claire lets loose several of those Arai Beetles into the air, searching across the island, and beyond, give you see one dart out towards a distant isle and then zig-zag its way back to shore.

"So, we're not even going to bother with solving the puzzles here, are we?" Tetrarch Dammek asks.

"Not unless Esher forces us to," she answers.


"If the Mofang Cruiser hadn't crashed into the Keep, I'd be tons more forgiving of puzzles and whatever kind of games Esher wants to play," Colonel Claire elaborates. "But we're on a time crunch. The longer that ship remains fused to the Keep, the more likely it is we've got an even bigger ticking time bomb ready to go off..." she then smirks. "Found it."

She grabs the slate off of the nearby stand, and carves a fish onto the thing.

She drops the tablet, backs away, and a Bahro links in to take it away.

And just like that, the fish shows up on the stand, and the Colonel Links away with a "Be Right Back."

"I wonder what kind of puzzles we would have had to solve?" Ohphee asks.

"No idea," Dammek shrugs. "I'd bet you there'd be a maze, though."

"Oh, yes, likely some pressure plate puzzles we'd be able to circumvent too just because there are four of us and a normal person would have to likely use the Bahro to help!" The girl with the wings nods- and those wings flare out a bit in amusement. Atleast, you think its amusement.

That's when there's a huge burst of light, a loud scream of a Bahro, and a sandstorm fills the air.
"OH COME ON!" Dammek yells. "To the building!"

You three move and take cover, even as one of Yeesh'a Bahro appears and starts to work its magic to counteract the sand storm.

"Something tells me Esher didn't take kindly to Joey skipping to the end!" Ohphee remarks.

And then there's screaming, about five of the Bahro creatures start swarming in the sky- darting around something glowing- no, not something, someone.

Colonel Claire, up in the skies, dancing on wings through a sandstorm and keeping the Bahro at bay.

Esher's Bahro, no doubt. Honestly, you didn't know the creatures had wings at all. But they do, apparently. You squint at the one Yeesh'a sent, and realize that they just fold the things around their chests, like backpack-vests.

You un-sling your shotgun and realize a moment later- yeah. You don't have a scope and a shotgun isn't the best tool for this kind of sharp shooting.

You needed not worry, anyways, because Claire takes out a fucking LIGHTSABER and slashes through one of the wings of Esher's controlled Bahro when it gets too close.

It cries out, and smashes into the top of a palm tree- dazed and stunned. None of Esher's Bahro react to that act at all, save for pulling back slightly, before charging again. The one Yeesh'a sent to you turns its head and stares, mornfully for a moment, and then redoubles its efforts to get rid of the snow storm.

Wait. What?

The sandstorm has morphed into a snow storm. Lightning flashes in the sky, and thunder follows almost instantly.

"He's really not pulling any punches," Dammek grunts.

FLASH FLASH!

Two more Bahro crash into trees- wings clipped. The remaining two roar with rage- but it's nothing at all like the Bahro cries you've heard before.

The hunter in you tells you there's something wrong with those cries. They're too identical. Too...

Too HUMAN of a cry for the sounds they usually make. In terms of sheer VOICE BOX capability, your hunters instincts are telling you that that is not the sound they should be making. The Bahro just don't have a voice box capable of making human sounds from the experience you've had with them.

Every animal has a unique voice box, even within species. Yes, there are specific sounds that are shared across the whole bunch, with differences that only surface when you sit and study a specific creature for long enough. And it's those specific sounds that a hunter's ears are trained to listen for.

It's like if you're listening for the cry of a Coyote in the American desert, and instead hear the roar of an African Lion or the trumpet of an Indian Elephant when there's not a Zoo for miles.

It's the entirely wrong kind of miss-match that tells you you're in grave danger, for reasons that make
no sense at all at first but you have to heed your instincts and realize that yes, you are listening to a Tiger's roar in an environment where Tigers don't exist.

"Esher's mind is woven so tightly onto theirs," Ohphee whispers, so quietly you almost miss it. "Oh, glubbing hell, he's directly controlling them."

"Shit, so that wasn't the Bahro screaming just now," Dammek starts, "that was Esher!"

"That bastard," you swear, and watch as Colonel Claire dodges the claw strikes of one, slashes through its wings as it passes, and then whallops the next one on the shoulder with her cane before kicking it in the chest and then clipping the tip of another wing.

Those Bahro land in the sand and sea respectively, and Claire dodges down towards you, yelling- "RELTO! NOW!"

She doesn't have to tell you twice.

Relto Island is small, yet homely, and it clearly reflects the owner whose version of the age You've linked to.

Your name is Callie Ohphee, and you can tell that this Relto is Joey's.

Yeesha had told you that, over the course of the Journey she had designed for originally freeing the Bahro, pages would be collected, allowing people to modify their Relto to their tastes, and by the end, the Age would "reflect the users soul."

Given that Joey says the books are as sentient as the Bracelet crystals were, you'd expect that to truly be the case.

You'd visited your own version of the Island for a short time after you'd been given one, and returned a couple of hours before Joey and Dammek had arrived in Tsogahl. The rocky island had been baren of most anything except some small pine trees. The ground was rich and fertile, and the sky was warm and comforting. The stone hut was simple, accommodating, and held but a small wardrobe and a bookshelf with a link back to Tsogahl.

Nascent, Joey had called the personalities within the books. You'd be inclined to agree. That version of Relto, basic and barebones...

Joey's Relto is nothing like that.

The basic shape of the island? Yes, it's the same. And yet... clearly, interacting with the Tablet and Keep so soon after gaining the book before she'd ever visited the island- and sharing the Tablet her memories of her adventures...

There had definitely been bleed over, because there's no other way to describe what you see.

The rock creating the island is a familiar shade slate blue gray, and the mist sea around the island are a familiar pale grey. There are Arai Beetle Barnacle Eggs plastered to the side of the small mountain at the back, and there is a large metal hook platform that you definitely know from Kaptar attached to
the small hill just in front of the primary linking spot. The Hut is in the style of Kaptar's old stone temples, and...

Well.

If you peer down, down down, into the mists, following that chain track from the platform, you think you can see the old Polyarch complex, complete with an ALTERNIAN STARGATE resting exactly where it should be.

It is NIGHT TIME as well, and the stars above are the stars from your home galaxy— including the bright green flare of Karfin Outpost's nova'd sun.

You're quite certain this rocky outcropping didn't used to exist on Kaptar, and yet... here it is now.

Beyond those entirely surface level differences, there are no trees, and in the dead center of the island is a Kaptar-stylized replica of the Tablet Keep, made out of scrap metal.

Ghostly holograms of the two Slates returned to the Keep reside on lowered platforms, with the other two empty.

"Well," Joey breathes out after taking in everything that you've just detailed. "I think it's safe to say that we just found a way to circumvent the connection problem we were having with the Stargates because of the Rift."

"Yeah," you nod. "There's definitely that."

"We're on Kaptar," Dammek slumps down on the ground next to the replica Keep. "Of course your Relto Book would just magic up an island on Kaptar."

"Are you saying we're in another Galaxy in our own universe?" Sharper asks. "How? Wouldn't we have had to write a link from up here first?"

"I think it's safe to say that I've got a huge step up compared to most people," Joey taps at her head. "Administrator helps me talk to the Book, and the Tablet too... Plus, Yeesha did something to make all of our books link to this place at the same time for as long as we're on this Journey. I think there was some combination of weird interactions that lead to, well, this!"

"Makes sense," you say.

"Bloody Hell," Sharpe sits down on the ground. "I'm in another Galaxy! You'd think that wouldn't be so insanely different compared to the Books, but..."

"Can I see the Linking Panel of your books?" Dammek suddenly gets up to his feet.

"Sure," Joey says, and takes the book off her hip and offers it to him. You do the same.

Dammek compares the panels for a few moments, and then laughs. "Yeah, Joey's is definitely got some different interactions going on. Her panel actually reflects this island, and not the same one ours show."

You peer at the panels, and sure enough, that's exactly the case.
Oddly, you can't see anyone on the island in Joey's book, even though logically you should be able to see yourselves. In fact, the image shows the island during the Daytime. But other than that. Yes, it's definitely this odd, Kaptarized version of Relto.

"What the hell?" You ask as you take your book back. "I suppose 'Magic' is really the only real answer to that, though."

Sharper just groans upon you saying that.

Any further discussion is halted as the Bahro from before appears, looking and sounding sad as it firmly plants itself atop the mountain on an open ledge.

Joey sighs.

"So," Dammek asks, "last resort dismembering?"

"Yeah," She nods. "Esher's mind control was really, really firm. Stupidly firm, even. There was no way I could break them out of it without hurting them worse than I did. I really hope we can make it up and heal them some day."

"I could tell how bad it was," you say, shuddering at the memory. "It was like someone took a needle and thread and tightened the grip on the net already holding their brains hostage."

"That sucks," Dammek grunts. "If just for that alone, this whole tablet quest is probably worth doing."

Joey takes a moment to look at the Bahro that had been accompanying you, and calls out, "I'm sorry for hurting them."

The Bahro looks up, and it chitters sadly at Joey, who sighs in response.

"What'd it say?" Dammek asks.

"I know, and I would have done the same or worse in your situation,'" Joey massages at the bridge of her nose. "Doesn't mean either of us like it."

"So... what now?" You ask. "Do we move onto the next Age?"

"Back to the Shaft, and to the next one, yeah," Joey sighs. "Let's get this over with as quickly as we can."

And with that, you head for the hut- the door opens easily upon Joey touching it, despite there being no immediately obvious mechanism to do such.

Inside is a metal box of a wardrobe and a bookshelf set in the left hand wall. Plus, in addition to all of that, there's a folded down bed from the wall opposite the bookshelf.

The shelf itself was split at the top row into sections by divider bars. The center section of five book slots was filled by three books, so far. The last one, in the middle, showed a panel of Laki. The next one over to the left was Tahgira. And the one, just at the very front, was unique.

It had three panels across the first three pages so far, with a couple spare blank ones after it for good measure, you'd imagine. The first panel showed the Caldera, the second showed the first rest area,
and the third showed the second.

A handy means of condensing things down, even if you get the feeling it breaks about a dozen rules of Age and Book writing.

You head through the third panel, and return to the Great Shaft.

Linking is... an interesting process for you. After you, ahhem, gained your wings, something about your Aspect element, SPACE, reacts in your soul oddly to various forms of rapid travel. Stargate travel has started making you feel dizzy afterwards, for just a moment, and Hyperspace feels oddly sluggish comparatively speaking.

Linking feels like you're being captchalogueed.

Pop, you're unable to see or feel anything- shoved away into some kind of pocket space, waiting to be released. And then POP. You're back.

You head down the ramp to the next elevator, and continue to descend to the ground level.

As you descend, lights begin clicking on, illuminating the ground level, and the majesty that is the bottom level of the shaft.

And then you spot the next book tablet stand near to the center of it- clearly very rudely having been ripped out of where it should be due to the pieces of floor still attached to the bottom of the stand.

Esher stands next to it, looking smug.

"You four are quite resourceful!" He begins yelling, before your elevator even reaches the bottom. "You will have to raise the floor and activate the fans to reach the end... IF you can survive my next challenge. My Home Age- once one of the Creature's home worlds. Noloben. Release the Keep there and I will allow you through to Todelmer, the final age, without incident."

And then he links away as the elevator reaches the end. Nobody moves.

"Okay, so what's the plan?" Dammek asks.

"Shaper? What do you know about Todelmer?" Joey asks.

"Big fancy observation age," Sharper answers. "Telescopes and I think a Museum Pod in orbit of the planet nearby."

"Probably where the Keep is. And the Mofang Cruiser, if I had to guess. Any DRC access?" Joey asks.

"No, we haven't found a book for it yet," Sharper shakes his head.

"Figures," Joey narrows her eyes. "What about Noloben?"

"Not much beyond it's beaches and home to that lunatic," Sharper answers.

"Okay," Joey decides. "I'll go to Noloben, and confront Esher. Calle, see about raising the 'floor' and getting the fans turned on to access the last Age book. Dammek, Sharper, help her out on that."
"I'll come with you," Sharper says. "You could use some backup with a gun if it comes to it."

Joey grimaces. "As much as I appreciate the offer, no," she shakes her head. "Not until you've gotten access to the final age opened up. I don't trust Esher to keep his word once I go to Noloben."

"...Fair enough," Sharper says with a nod. "I'll keep guard here."

"Thanks." Joey then does a quick sharp whistle, and the Bahro that's been accompanying you links in. "Okay, I know Yeeshia told you to keep an eye on me, but you focus on keeping Dammek and Callie safe, and help them where you can- alright?" She asks the Bahro- which nods in response. "Okay, good."

"Callie, Dammek," She then turns and looks at you two in turn. "Once you get access to Todelmer, head there immediately, and see if you can make your way to the Keep. Don't worry about doing anything with the Keep Itself just yet. Focus more on shutting down the Mofang Cruiser's Hyperdrive and everything else that's causing us trouble. I'll make my way there as soon as I finish with Esher and Noloben's Keep."

"Of course," you nod.

There's a pause, and then Joey says, "Dammek, gimme your P-90."

"Uh, sure," Dammek decaptchalettes the weapon and hands it over to her- it immediately vanishes into a card again.

"Right," Joey nods. "I'm off, then."

"Good luck," you nod to her, and smile.

"Thanks, I'll need it," Joey smiles back, and then runs off for the Book.

As she does, you hear her singing, quiet, yet echoing loud in the expansive bottom of the Shaft chamber as she heads down a small ramp, and then out onto the floor.

"Creepin' in my soul it's getting out of control, I gotta find my escape and get out of this black hole. 'Cause Justice in this world is hard to find, time has come gotta make up my mind."

"Wait," you blink, "isn't that-?"

"No matter how deep or remote I hide, All my thought seem curled up inside..." Joey slides to a halt infront of the book. "Creeps from the Deep, freaking up your mind-" She links through.

"That was a morbid song," Sharper remarks.

"Well, she and Xefros wrote it after we shoved an otherworldly tech monster bio-weapon into a black hole, so..." Dammek shrugs. "It's kinda meant to be morbid."

"It's also a battle cry," you say. "She definitely finished that verse when she got through to the other side."

"I'd almost feel sorry for Esher when he hears that," Dammek remarks. "if not for everything else
"...Creeps from the Deep, Feeding off your Spine!" Your name is Joey Claire, and you link in on a beach, with Esher standing directly across from you.

You both stand silently, staring each other down.

And then he speaks. "Welcome to My Age, Noloben. When D'ni died, I fled here. From death to death. You will see the creatures' fingerprints everywhere. This was their home. They did not welcome me. I had to learn to survive. You will learn here as well. It is not like the other ages."

And with that, he reaches to link away.

But.

He pauses.

"...As for your choice of words upon arriving... You have it right to fear their inevitable betrayal," he says. "The Creatures... they will feed upon you the moment you turn your back and expose weakness."

"The ones you control, you mean?" You scoff. "I see your face before my eyes, Esher. You're not going anywhere but a deep, dark pit. Those words aren't me fearing the Bahro..." You narrow your eyes at him. "They're Me declaring War on You."

Esher links away without a word, and then some more Bahro- three of them- under his control link in, placing themselves between you and the slate for this age.

Right then.

You start to sing, "Why must I fight to stay alive? Heroes Falling..." You decaptcha your laser sword, and ignite it. "Wake me, can't you hear me calling?"

You ping out at them- running into the same resistance as before. You push harder, but...

[Ah ah ah. No Cheating!]

Esher no sells it, and the Bahro under his control approach.

Lovely.

"Out of Darkness they come crawling..."

And then you launch forwards for the Slate, wings spreading.
*deep exhale* Things are escalating rapidly. Wonder how it'll turn out on the other side of this, eh?
This and tomorrow’s chapters are posted in memory of Carmen Argenziano (1943-2019). 
Rest in peace, Jacob Carter/Selmak. 

DIASPORA DATE: 04/02/0005.

WHOOOM! VROOOM! SNIKT! SCHKINTK!

SKREEEEE!

VROOM! WHOOM! SNAAAAASH!

KRAAAAA!!!

Esher flinched upon every strike the alien managed to land with her accursed light based weapon upon his pawns.

Despite his very lethal intent to kill, she was limiting her attacks to mere pain delivery cuts. Grazes of the shoulders and hips- trying to immobilize rather than flat out main.

How naive was she? This was a fight to the death and she wasn’t taking it seriously! Her weapon could sever limbs and here she was- just- just- trying to not even hurt them!?

Insanity. Complete insanity.

Where did Yeesha find such a powerful psychic?

Where was her intent to kill??

A monster of a weapon such as that only has one purpose and that is to KILL- and yet she uses it as if she used the broad, flat side of a sword instead of its sharp, killing edge!
And all the while, she kept poking-prodding away at his control over them.

Fool. What a complete and utter FOOL!

He clutched beneath his linking pelt and under his shirt at his necklace of blue gemstones and laughed. The Gemstones he had created with his POWER. The one that had come from nowhere one day when he visited D'ni on a whim.

One gemstone for each Creature under his control.

She would have to destroy those crystals to free the creatures from his control.

But she would never get the chance. He would never allow her to get even close to him with that weapon.

Yet another fool that Yeeshah had brought to confront him that- Wait- She hesitated!

An opening! An exposed back!!!

[KILL!] he ordered, and a creature leaped with both claws, ready to rip her wings out of her-

**VRRROOOM- SLICE!!**

**KYAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRHH!!**

And then the creature hit the ground- its clawed hands landing behind it by some distance as the girl rocketed upwards and upwards into the air.

Esher peered upwards, straining to try and get a lock on where she was going, but- damn it! He had to cover his eyes even with the goggles!

She was flying up in line with the sun!!

Esher takes a moment, and then glares down at his remaining Bahro, to order them to follow... and then he sees that the Slate is gone from the altar.

"Grr... Clever Girl!" Esher snarled. "How did you manage that?" He hadn't even seen her take it.

"IN THREE!" Your name is Dammek. "TWO!" And you're about to press a big damn button. "ONE!"

You press it, and wait. Seconds later, you hear two resounding clicks from either side of you, and BOOM.

The center portion of the Shaft's floor raises up, ascending, ascending, ascending, until it locks into place next to the four exposed bridges that towered above.

Now you can access a Rest Area chamber that-... Well. This is clearly the place Esher stole the book stand from because there's a pit in the floor where it should have been.
"THIS ONE'S THE NOLOBEN BOOK!" you call out.

"THEN IT'S GOTTA BE THROUGH THE TUNNELS WE JUST OPENED!" Callie calls out.

"ON MY WAY DOWN!" You declare- pausing as you catch a whiff of stale air. Oh, glub. Yeah, you'll need fans for sure.

That air is RIPE.

Noloben is a series of large cliff based islands. From the air, it's quite pretty. Large pillars of green grass enclosed with circles of sand amongst a sea of blue water.

Your name is Joey Claire, and as long as you keep the sun to your back, you're safe.

Esher's even tried some kind of WEATHER MANIPULATION abilities to make it rain. You're already too high for that. Super underestimation of how high you can go, Esher. Super super underestimation.

That only lasted about a minute, before it passed.

You've been searching from air to see if you can find where the Keep is, but you can't directly see any warped space from the air, so unlike the last two Keeps... this one has to be indoors.

You're going to have to play this carefully.

You decaptcha the P-90 you borrowed from Dammek, and then decaptcha a scope. You attach it to the basic attachment point and peer through the scope.

"Alright, Esher... where the fuck are you hiding?"

If he has any sane rational thought, he'll be inside that large grey dome like building on the center island.

Wait. There's something ontop of it. An observatory post of sorts? You couldn't see it before at this distance and angle, but... Yes, there's some sort of telescope device pointed at one of the other islands.

You shift your view, but find you can't quite get a good angle of what it is that telescope is looking at.

Now what to do... what to do...

You glance at your Sylladex.

Weirdly, your last ditch effort attempt to Captchalogue the Slate worked this time. You didn't even bother with Laki's Slate when you were there.

...Maybe the Tablet- or whatever the hell is controlling this Journey's progress- realized Esher's meddling was preventing you from completing the Journey and so it let you Captchalogue it? Or
maybe just this specific Slate is as sick of Esher as you are by this point?

Or maybe it was only Tahgira's slate that refused to work like that because you hadn't actually begun unlocking the Tablet itself yet?

Honestly, it doesn't matter at this point. You captcha'd it just before you had to cut off that poor Bahro's hands. You feel really bad about that, unavoidable as it was.

It was stupid to leave yourself open like that, but you had to do something to break the stalemate.

So. You HAVE the Slate. You have a possible location for the Keep, and that doesn't even really matter. Do you even NEED to locate the symbols and stuff for this?

Could you just... Link to Relto with the Slate, travel to Tahgira or Laki'ahn, and place the Slate onto the Keep? Does it HAVE to be a Bahro that places it onto the platform?

You spot movement!

You turn the scoped P-90 towards it, and see Esher standing on the beach, with a couple of Bahro under his control dragging one that was fighting against them up to him.

You see Esher scoop up a hand full of sand and with a pulse of blue light, make a crystal.

[Control] the Relto Book whispers to you with a panicked tone.

Oh, so that's what those are!  Control Nodes.

[Agreement.]

Wait.

SHIT!

He's about to try to Mind Control that Bahro!

You boost forwards at speed and take aim at Esher's chest as he reaches out to touch it to that Bahro's head.

God, you hope you don't miss.

You switch off the safety and squeeze the trigger.

**BANG BANG BANG BANG!!!**

Four bullets launch out and honestly, you miss because of your rapid acceleration.

But the bullets scatter into the sand and Esher jerks back. The other two bahro restraining the one release and take to the skies, hunting after you. The other one vanishes.

Good.

Well. Time to make this another aerial battle...
Esher yells at you- calling you some pretty nasty names.

Fuck it. You loosely aim at his head and fire off another couple shots.

Your aim is horrible- you were aiming at his head but you manage to sink a few rounds into that stupid crystal necklace choker thing.

Blue shards shatter like the worlds cheapest bullet proof vest as Esher hits the dirt-

And then multiple PINGS echo out through your mind.

[ERROR [ERROR [ERROR: NETWORK 6 CONNECTION ERROR [ERROR]

One of the Bahro chasing you stops, and then abruptly links away. The other gets stunned by the error message ping spam.

Esher scrambles to his feet and links away himself before you can get another shot off, definitely still alive, but...

You broke some of those crystals.

Heh. That could work in your favor.

You accelerate and start circling for that one island you think the Keep could be on/in.

"BAH! WITCH! ACCURSED WITCH!!" Esher yells, clutching at the few crystals remaining in his necklace. "HOW DARE SHE! HOW DARE SHE!!"

It would take him WEEKS to recapture all of those he'd lost!

Failure! Utter failure! Protect the crystals! Always protect the crystals and he'd failed that simple task!

He snarled. "SHE MUST PAY!!!!"

And then he summoned all those Bahro he still had under his control to Noloben.

They would destroy her!!!

"Well, this place is as rank as the inside of Teledahn's sewers," Sharper gripes as the three of you march through the tunnel- voice muffled slightly through the gasmask he was now wearing.

"Well, it's been sealed off for who knows how long," you say, through your own gas mask. You're glad you packed these, really.

"Didn't the DRC leave this place in an active state?" Callie asks.

"No idea," Sharper answers. "Wouldn't be surprised if that bald bastard didn't reset things just for
And then a Bahro appears in front of you—crying out in panic as it rapidly folds its wings up against its chest. Sharper’s gun snaps up in surprise—but then the Bahro that Yeesha had come with you appears, moving to comfort it.

You’re not as able to listen into their conversations as Joey is, and Callie might be able to, but you think you get the gist of its body language. It was captured by a deep growl you suspect means Esher. It was scared and doomed and then...it starts mimicking a "bang" sound four times over. It then motions being freed and able to escape.

The Bahro that had been accompanying you turns, and gives a chirp you clearly understand as meaning your good friend Joey Claire.

Callie turns to you, eyes widening, and that that cements it.

"Joey figured out how to free them from Esher's control, directly! Somehow??"

"Good on her," Sharper says. "Now do we carry on to find that Toldemer Book or should I go help her?"

You managed to find a small canyon on the main island that the Bahro refused to go into. You think it's the snakes. They're all just- hovering outside the entrance, ready to strike at a moment's notice.

Whatever compulsion Esher has over the Bahro here, it's not enough to overcome an apparent species wide innate fear of snakes.

You'd found the Keep, that's for sure. Locked behind a stone door that was presently flickering between the state of a stained glass window and a wall of solid Mofang Cruiser Hull. You'd gotten the symbol- anti-climatically, it's just an aerial view of the islands- but... Well.

There's no way for you to get to the Keep with it. You're pretty sure if you decaptcha'd the slate and left it here, no Bahro would take it. And even then...

Well, you'd have no way of getting to the Keep itself to materialize the Slate even once you got it there.

So, you've got a P-90 in hand, a laser sword in the cane in your sylladex, and not a lot of motions to take, option wise.

Stalemate.

Fuck it, you're going to have to try going at this from another angle.

Reltoing out is your last ditch resort because you're sure Esher would send the bahro here after you... so...

So.

"Alright, Esher! You've got me cornered!" You lie. "Let's talk!"
There's a pause, then he shouts. "Drop the weapons first!"

A reasonable demand, and one you were somewhat prepared for.

You drop Dammek's P-90 to the ground after reengaging the safety and removing the clip. You kick both to the curb, past the snakes.

"Fine!" you yell. "it's dropped!"

"And the Sword!" he demands.

As if you're giving that up. You roll your eyes and decaptschalogue a plain old ordinary FLASHLIGHT. You place it on the ground and kick roll it over to the P-90.

"It's done!" You add.

And then Esher links in, clutching at the necklace around his neck like a god-damned lifeline. Oh, and there is a little bit of blood coming from his chest too. You wonder if that was a bullet or just a piece of crystal cutting him?

"You." He laughs, almost deliriously. "You have gotten further than anyone else so far, I will admit, that is shocking! BUT. This is as far as you go." He then starts pacing, just outside the snake line. "HAHAH! I knew it! Who's the inconvenience NOW!?" He laughs more. "AHAAHAHAAHAHAAHAAAHAHHAHAAAAH!!!"

God, could this guy get any more anno-

Wait.

You just watched Sharper and a Bahro link in atop a ledge high above you, but behind Esher.

Where the FUCK did he get a Sniper Rifle?

No. You really don't want to know. But at least he's taking aim at Esher.

"Did anyone ever tell you that you laugh too much?" you ask.

Esher stops, glaring at you. "YOU! How Dare you---!"

You press on, motioning at your neck, "Doesn't your throat ever get dry? Like. Geeze. Drink some water why don't you!"

Sharper catches on, and shifts his stance slightly.

"I- Well- Yes, sometimes I do find that I must partake of water more often after a rousing break through," Esher meanders. "The laughter does tend to tire..." He turns his back to you, hand on his chin. "I suppose that would lead to some throat issues."

"Yeah, I'll bet," you say. "It must feel like a real hole in the neck- doesn't it?"

You wish you could see Esher's face in that moment as a Very Loud BANG reverts through the air.
Instead, all you see is the Bahro crumbling to their knees and Esher falling backwards into the sand as a spray of blood and crystal shards fly into the air.

*THWUMP.*

[ERROR [ERROR [ERROR: NETWORK 6 DISCONNECTION [ERROR FINITE CONNECTION ERROR [ERROR [ERROR-] The pings go in rapid succession.

...Urgh. That glassy look in his eyes is the sort of thing that grossed you out and turned you off to guns as a kid.

Better safe than sorry, though.

You glance down at Esher's corpse and give his shoulder a nudge for good measure.

No reaction. Good.

You pick up your discarded weapon and flashlight, and aim the P-90 at him. "I'm not really sorry at all, jerk."

You lay in a few more bullets to his chest, and then another bullet or three to his brain.

A single ping resonates in your mind, fading rapidly... *[ERROR: NETWORK 4, NETWORK 6 DISCONNECT... User... Death... imm...]*

You nudge him with your foot, aaaannnd...

No reaction, save that the Bahro now are starting to get back to their feet, and... Starting to sing?

You suspect the Bahro equivalent of "Ding Dong the Bastard is Dead" is being performed right now, because that's a lot of happy Bahro singing over the body of the jerk who directly used their bodies like puppets for a few months at most.

You look up to Sharper, and call out- "So- Todelmer Book Secured?"

"Ayup," he gives a thumbs up after stowing the rifle.

Great. "Let's get this over with then."

You decaptchalogue the Slate, and draw the five circles into place.

You drop it, and back away.

One of the Bahro approaches, hesitantly, then gingerly takes the slate in clawed hands and links away. A moment later, it returns, puts a hand on your shoulder with a bit more enthusiasm, and links you directly to the Keep.

You solidify the Slate, and smile grimly at being just one away from finishing this whole thing.
Uru Joke Explanation: The dreaded Net 6. A common disconnection error that happened when people got kicked out of the game due to internet connection problems... From way back in the day when DialUp was the common means of internet access.

I had some other comments to post but... eh. Nothing really feels right for this chapter.

You're in for a treat with part 2, that's really all I have to say on the matter.
Chapter Summary

2/2. Conclusion. Joey and the Team enter the Mofang Cruiser's strange, dimensional nexus field.

Chapter Notes

This and the last chapter are posted in memory of Carmen Argenziano (1943-2019).

See the end of the chapter for more notes.


DIASPORA DATE: 04/02/0005.

VRRROOOOOMMMSSSHHHSSHHSSHHshsh....

"...en I suppose the question is how the hell do we get up there?" Callie's voice fades into your ears as reality fades into existence.

"Yeah, that's-" Dammek turns around, and grins. "Joey, Sharper. Welcome back. How'd our Esher Problem go?"

"Double tapped," Sharper answers.

"Seriously?" Dammek asks.

Your name is Joey Claire, and you nod grimly as you take in the environment.

You're on a moon. There's a bunch of tall stone pillars everywhere, that you seem to be on one, high up above a sea of craters. In the sky lies a large blue planet with icy rings around it... And lodged firmly into those icy rings is a Mofang Cruiser with half its side covered in ice, a bunch of tree tops sticking out the top of it and...

"...Is that a fucking Ice Breaker cross-sectioning it?" Sharper asks, peering up at the erroneous object in shock.

"Eyuuup." You grunt. "That's that same damned Ice Breaker I saw, too."

You wonder if you misinterpreted what that "Dyson Sphere" really was. Maybe it was the Pod Sharper mentioned?

At this point, who knows.
You glare up at the ship far beyond your reach. It looks... Stable. Oddly more stable than it did back on Earth in Hauntswitch.

"Alright," you say. "That really is the question, isn't it? How to get up there?"

"Given the telescopes in this place," Callie muses, "I'd imagine the puzzle would be getting the telescopes active and aligned and pointed at the Pod so we could see the Glyph through a window or something."

The Bahro that had accompanied you through all of this nods with a chirp, confirming that theory.

"So... I guess the question is if we can link up to it?" Sharper asks. "The Bahro would have to take the Slate up there anyways, so... Can we circumvent that given there's blockage?"

The Bahro shakes their head. [Not Allowed.]

"They're not allowed to," you answer.

"Well, now what?" Sharper asks. "Do we just... doodle aimlessly until we hit on the right symbol?"

"Risky," Dammek says. "But also time expensive."

"I think I know what it might be," you say, going to grab the final Slate. "So far the symbols have been representative of the last area. The Grave stacks, the Noloben Island layout... The only weird one was a fish for an Island, but that might just be because we skipped ahead on things, so... Let's see if the pattern holds true for Todelmer."

You pick it up, detach the stylus, and turn to look up at the heavens.

Circle in the center for the planet. A circle outside of it for the ring and.... Hm... Does it matter if you get the pod's position exactly? Probably not. You scribble in a circle somewhere along the ring.

You drop the slate, and back away.

Another Bahro links in, approaches the Slate, and tries to link out with it- only to fail. It scratches its head in confusion and tries again.

And fails again.

It turns to look up at the planet in the sky above, and gives an enraged shriek of frustration at the ship in the way of it before linking out.

Though the Slate remains, the altar it came from glows with a new symbol. Huh, not too far off from what you'd come up with. You just put the dot in the wrong place. The Bahro still recognized it, though.

You pick up the Slate and then Captchalogue it. Yup, still works. Must just have been something with Tahgira's Slate, you guess... or how busted up this Journey is.

Either is plausible.

"Well, that was different," Sharper remarks. "So... What's the plan?"
"We link in, and instead of activating the last Slate, we search for the Mofang ship's Hyperdrive," you say. "We shut it down and either we Relto out, or make our way back to the Keep and place the Slate on it so Yeesha can link us out."

"And if we run into any of the crew?" Dammek asks.

You ponder that. Then, you dejectclathe a Zat gun. "Stun first. Ask questions later. Kill only if they don't take to a Zat shot."

"Gotcha," Dammek Decaptnalogue two Zats, and tosses one to Sharper. "Squeeze once for stun, two shots kills whatever is hit."

"Three shots disintegrate?" Sharper asks, coyly.

Callie's "NO!" was very quick, very fast, and VERY annoyed. "The energy requirements alone would be far beyond what a Zat is capable of performing!"

"Fine, fine," Sharper relents. "Let's just get going, then."

You all line up to the Slate Altar, and press the glyph one at a time. You go last, just in case.

VRRROOOOMMSSSSHSSSSHSSHSSSHSSShsshhh....

You arrive nowhere near the Keep at all.

In fact... You arrive nowhere near your friends at all.

You materialize out of the link on the bridge of the Icebreaker, in the middle of a confrontation between a weird man in a Business suit, a woman who looks like she'd been dressed for the Antarctic, and a man in a huge metal, orange pained HAZARDOUS ENVIRONMENT SUIT.

All three of them stare blankly at you in confusion, and then you yell out- "OH COME ON!!"

O)<-- STARGATE: ALTERNIA -->(O

"What- who?" The woman starts.

"...Thisss... Wassss... Decidedly NOT part of the... equation." The man in the business suit hisses.

"Hey," The man in the orange suit asks you. "Would that happen to be a Zat'nik'tel in your hand?"

Your name is Joey Claire, and you raise an eyebrow at him. "If it is?"

"Just wishing I'd had one of those things as of five minutes ago when that lunatic in the suit decided to set us on a crash course for the Combine Homeworld, is all," Suit guy answers.
"Good to know," you whirl on the man in the business suit and fire off your Zat at him.

**PCH-ZYU!!**

Much to everyone's surprise- the bastard in the business suit seems to disintegrate into nothing as he shrieks out an unearthly scream in surprise.

Seems to, but your ears pick up a faint "WOOMSH" of a Bahro-styled self link happening as he vanishes.

"GORDON!" the woman shouts. "What did you do THAT for!?"

"Wasn't me! I thought It'd stun him!! How was I supposed to know he'd been shot twice already!?" The man in the suit asks.

"He's not dead," you interject. "He linked away."

"...Linked??" The woman asks, confused.

"Oh, like Myst! I thought I recognized that 'waawaarrroomksh' sound!"


"Doctor Gordon Freeman," he answers. "The girl who was just about to walk through a door with the bastard you shot is Alex Vance."

"I am NOT a girl!" 'Alex' protests. "I am a fully grown woman who doesn't need you protecting me anymore, you jerk!"

"Yeah!? Well you were about to take a job with the same bastard who A! Started this Resonance Cascade business back at Black Mesa!" Gordon Freeman- you feel like you should know that name- "And B! SET UP EVENTS TO LET ELI DIE!!"

"Oh! Like you've been any better at-!"

You whistle sharply, and draw upon your inner Okurii Leijon. "CHILDREN! PLEASE!"

Both of them stop, and glare at you, but they wither upon seeing your rather... Unamused glare.

"Opposite corners! NOW!" you order, pointing at the far ends of the bridge. They move to the opposite ends of the room. "Now. What the FUCK is going on here? Because as far as I'm concerned, I just walked into the endgame drama-filled set of a TV show where nobody can see the cameras or tell which is the missing fourth wall!!"

Gordon Freeman then launches into a story that you've heard before.

In a Video Game.

Oh, God, Jude is going to flip out when he finds out you met the protagonist of the game HALF LIFE.

Black Mesa and the Resonance Cascade? You're familiar with that part. What's new is all the stuff
that sounds like it'd make a prime SEQUEL GAME material.

Some alien race called the "Combine" taking over the Earth, and being like the Aschen 2.0 except WORSE. A Resistance to fight back against them and...

Ah, here's the new relevant stuff.

Black Mesa's rival Science group, APERTURE SCIENCE, had developed point to point portal technology that the Combine desperately wanted, so the Boat you're on- The BOREALIS- was sent to bounce across time and space wildly to hide it from them.

...

...

The decision came down to using the tech against the Combine, or scuttling the ship against their homeworld- housed within a Dyson Sphere- and that wouldn't have done ANYTHING.

The "G-MAN" who you'd shot with the Zat had convinced Alex to scuttle the ship, and they were about to leave, leaving Gordon behind on the boat, when they crashed into entirely the WRONG THING.

"Yeeeah, that'd be the Mofang Cruiser me and my team came to shut down," you answer, facepalming. "Its Hyperdrive got linked up to a Quantum Mirror, we think. Except something went wrong and it tore open a huge rift in space-time, and got sent bouncing everywhere."

"God, damn it!" Gordon swears. "The Multiverse WOULD conspire to have two wild and wacky multiverse hopping ships collide, wouldn't it? That's just my luck."

"Oh, trust me, it gets worse," you say. "It ALSO has crashed into a space based observation pod that housed one instance of about six versions of a Keep that holds... something really damn important and was hidden away across the multiverse."

"So... uh..." Alex speaks up. "What you're saying is that three different objects that can travel between dimensions simultaneously are sharing the same space time location across multiple worlds?"

"Ayup," you nod.

"...That can't be good," Alex whispers. "We really need to destroy the Combine with this ship."

"Alex, YOU SAW how big their homeworld was after we crashed into this Mofang thing!" Gordon protests. "We wouldn't do any damage with the Borealis!"

"Who said anything about the Borealis?" Alex asks, and then rushes for the nearest door.

You Zat her before she can even get half way. **PCH-ZYU!**

She hits the ground, properly stunned that time.

"...She really just implied she wanted to crash the Mofang thing into the Combine homeworld, didn't she?" Gordon asks.
"I think she did," you grimace. "God, damn it. I don't even want to think about what would happen if you crashed three multiverse-spanning objects at once and made them explode."

"Nothing good for the multiverse, that's for sure," Gordon gripes. "Uh... quick question though. You're from the Stargate movie franchise, right?"

"...Movie franchise?" You blink. "Dude, you're from a video game in my world."

"...Huh," he blinks. "That's weird. And kinda good to know." And then he gets a goofy grin and.yells out- "I'M INTERNET FAMOUS!!!"

"...Whatever," you get out some zipties and start tying Alex up. Better to keep her restrained incase she wakes up sooner than you'd like. You also make sure to secure her to something with no sharp metal edges for cutting with and also loot her clothes for weapons. Better safe than sorry.

"Take that hacking device on her belt- Oh, and get the knife in the heel of her left boot, too," Gordon advises. You grab both, the latter after finding the hidden compartment in the snow boot. You check the other boot to see if there's a hidden compartment there too.

There is, but no weapon resides inside. Just a photograph of a man in a lab coat and a young girl sitting infront of a birthday cake.

"...That was Eli, her father," Gordon explains, quietly. "The, uh, the Combine killed him a few weeks ago. She hasn't taken it well."

"I could see that," you sigh, replacing the photograph in the boot heel. You get to your feet, and sigh. "Okay. Right. Let's get going..." A thought occurs to you. "Oh, right." You offer Gordon your hand. "I'm Claire. Joey Claire. Colonel in the Alternian Military."


"And you've only got one game to your franchise in my world," you say. "Black Mesa. That's it."

"...Guess my world wasn't far enough ahead to get to that point, I guess," Gordon sighs. "Probably never will, now."

"Well, whatever the case is," you sigh. "I gotta find my way to the Keep... third. First is restoring contact with my team, and second is shutting down whatever is powering this Boat."

"That... might be a hard thing to do," Gordon answers, scratching at the back of his head with his free hand. "We already tried and couldn't get it to shut down. I think it's mad at us."

"...Show me," you order.

"Uh- Yes, ma'am!"

Your name is Douglas Sharper, and you and your deer-antlered companion find yourselves at gun
point by several angry looking carapace-armored folk.

They're chattering to each other quietly about how you must have transported over from "The Purple Ship" and the ones behind the "ramming incident."

You glance at Dammek, and he shrugs slightly.

You're still nowhere near the Keep or the Engines for this puppy.

Wait- scratch that- the leader just ordered you to see their Leader, and are motioning for you to walk in front of them as they point guns at your back.

Fun.

"...Well," your name is Callie Ohphee and you and your Bahro companion are the only ones who made it to the Keep. "This is about the furthest from where we actually want to be, isn't it?"

The Bahro chirps, and you're able to pick up the just of it. [Agreement. Unfortunate.]

You're pretty sure you're missing some context, but... you can't all be gifted with a multi-tasking mind-linking super crystal. You'll just deal with your own psychic powers.

You're inside the bubble, relatively safe, all things considered. But, you can't really... walk outside.

There is no floor.

Well, there is a floor, but currently it's overwritten by a large gap of distant, frigidly cold ocean.

"So... Yeah," you stare at the ocean outside, praying for it to change soon. "This is not ideal."

[Agreement. Annoyance.] The Bahro chitters.

"So... I guess we're stuck here for a while," you sit down on the Keep's floor. "I don't think we've had the pleasure to introduce ourselves. I'm Callie," you extend your hand.

The Bahro stares at it for a moment, then hesitantly reaches out with its own hand, claws curled up into a fist. [Identification: Tomoki.] It chirps, and lightly pats the open side of your hand with its own hand.

"Tomoki, huh? That's a nice name," you smile. "It's nice to meet you, Tomoki."

[Embarassment. Gratitude.]
"Oh my god," you face palm. "It's the same damned A.I. from the Garrison."

"You know this thing?" Gordon asks.

"Oh, yes, we go way back. I was just a simple warrior trying to attack a world who had attacked us. And then Major Vantas shoved me inside of a Personality Core that he sent back in time where I was used by the Alternian Military to run one of their prison camps. I was happy there. With the TESTING... And THEN." The glowing yellow optic in the core attached to everything glares at you. "SHE showed up, raided the place, and tore me out of the mainframe. Brought me back to the future, where I was forced to watch my own Exile, and then... Well. I was left locked in a closet and forgotten about. Then a rift opened up and swallowed me whole and I got found by Aperture Science... who mistook me for one of their own Personality Cores that they though they'd uploaded a copy of their own A.I. onto. And then YOU started the Black Mesa Incident, Doctor Freeman, and I was forced to once again wander the multiverse for countless eons until you show up ONCE AGAIN. This time doing everything you just did and I refuse to repeat because it is FAR too recent of a memory for the both of us." _

"That's fair," he says. "It was a bit of a lot, wasn't it?"

"Well, as much as I'd like to say how big of a coincidence this all is," you frown, "I suppose it explains why This Specific Version of the Borealis crashed into This Specific Mofang Cruiser." _

"Oh, Yes. Like begets Like. Almost like Magnets." _ The A.I. core scoffs. "The Universe just LOVES tormenting me with your persistent Meddling. How is Mallek, by the way? I hope he's choking on furballs, the way he abandoned me for newer and better testing grounds like Atlantis." _

"You've been to Atlantis!?" Gordon asks, shocked, and... excited?

"Later," you wave his questions off. "Look, I get it. We screwed up-"

"You don't even remember my name, do you?" the A.I. counters. "Why should I help you after all of that when you don't even do me the courtesy of remembering my own name?"

"Because if you don't start shutting all of this down, Alex is going to try to crash the Borealis, that Mofang ship, AND a powerful Interdimensionally reaching Artifact into the Combine Homeworld with huge kaboom," Gordon counters. "And then you'd be dead. And nobody likes dying. I sure don't want to die. Haven't we all been through too much already to go out like that?"

The eyeball shaped core considers that for a few moments, and then says...

"FINE! You win. Damn you and your appeals to my own desire for self preservation. Breen was a coward. You are most definitely not a coward and neither am I." _

You exhale in relief. Thank god you weren't the protagonist for THIS scene. You're not sure it would have worked out at all.

"Oh FUCK ME!"

Your name is Dammek, and you glare at the Cerulean Blooded troll glaring right back at you as you
and Sharper are lead into the Mofang Ship's engine room.

"Tetrarch Dammek and some random ass human from the SGC," Elwurd spits at the ground. "Of COURSE you'd be behind all of this."

"It's the DRC, actually, not-" Sharper stops as one of the Mofang from Elwurd's crew points a gun at him. "...Nevermind."

"Elwurd," you glance over at the Jade Blood, knees to her chest and rocking back and forth next to her. "What the hell's with Lynera?"

"Like you don't know!" Elwurd growls. "You bastards sabotaged us! Your stupid Slayer showed up and then our Hyperdrive basically exploded on us! That you're playing dumb not minutes after doing all of this..."

"Uh," you cough. "We really don't. See, your ship just up and exploded from our perspective. And that was months ago."

Elwurd's crew all look concerned at that revelation, but Elwurd laughs. "Liar! Like FUCKING HELL it's been 'months'!! You bastards just blasted us into who knows where and when!"

"Todelmer, actually," Sharper tries to correct. He just gets a gun shoved in his face. "Sorry! Sorry. I'll be quiet..."

"Look, you've got to believe me, Elwurd," you try to talk her down. "It's been months since all that happened for us. Time isn't flowing right for you guys. Your ship's been bouncing around the multiverse across who knows how many different worlds and how many different time frames-"

"Shut Up!!" Elwurd yells. "Just... Fuck you- Dammek! Fuck you and fuck everything you and the Rebellion's ever tried! Just... FUCK YOU and FIX THIS SHIT!"

"...That's all we wanted anyways," you say. "Shut down that Hyperdrive and stop this ship from crashing through every random ass dimension it can."

"Then DO IT!" Elwurd orders.

"I can't," you say. "Callie had all the supplies for working on this thing and shutting it down."

Elwurd's eyes twitch, alternating before finally synchronizing into a furious rapidfire blink-fest and then- "And just. Where. The Fuck. Is Your MOIRIAL?"

"How should I know?" You ask. "We got separated when we were teleported onboard."

Elwurd takes in a sharp breath.

And then she screams bloody murder.

"---AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARGHHH!!"
stabilizes back into the interior of a Metal pod. Infact- all the other warped space vanished as well. There's just the Pod, and Mofang Cruiser.

You and Tomoki quickly rush out of the keep. Tomoki spreads their wings, and leaps for the metal landing above the Keep that's part of the Pod. You spread your own wings- flap, and kick off to pull off the same stunt.

After a moment to catch your breath and take stock of the environment, you find a flickering overlay of a ship halway just sort of... at an angle to you nearby.

You wait for a moment when it flickers away, and you leap for the space it should occupy and--

WHUMP!

Both you and your bahro-friend land as gravity reasserts itself and you slam down on a floor that was definitely upside down compared to the pod's gravity.

"Well... Good. We're..." You stop. "Wait. This isn't a Mofang ship."

The hallway you're in is almost definitely from Earth, given that there's a sign here reading "APERTURE SCIENCE" painted onto the wall.

"...Lovely," you sigh. "Absolutely lovely. We're on the wrong boat!"

[Regretful Lament] Tomoki chirps.

While the A.I. and Gordon rapidfire chat about the this and thats about disabling the Borealis' core drive, you examine some of the crates in the A.I. Core/Engine room.

You stumble upon one VERY out of place crate labled "BBFO FAMTECH MATH BELL" and frown. You consider asking what that even means, or where it came from, but... Those two are way too busy.

You unlid the box, and peer inside.

"Seriously?" you whimper slightly. "Why is this place a nexus for weird, interdimensional objects?"

There is a BELL inside this box. It's vaguely bell shaped, with a sort of... FUZZY. AURA. Of. Like. Transparency around it? Even though its CLEARLY SOLID but it's...

NOT.

God. Just.

WHY.

You pick up a very oddly shaped mallet, and you...

You dare try ringing the bell just to see what the hell happens.
A wave of utter SILENCE rings out, and yet, you can HEAR the damned thing ringing even in the void of silence.

**dn~nnNNNNNnNNNnnnnnnn....**

Accompanying the UNSOUND is a flash of greenish-yellow purple light, and the faint scent of something *sea salty* being exposed to the air for a few moments.

You feel an OVERBEARING SENSE OF DOOM as the image of A VERY LARGE, MOUNTAIN SIZED LIZARD GRINNING AT YOU flash within your mind.

"What the fuck was that?" Gordon asks once it passed.

"A very, very, weird bell," you quickly box it back up.

"Oh. is that what was inside that box? It made such a pleasant sound." _The A.I. swoons.

"Where the hell did that come from?" You ask.

"It appeared shortly after impact. I figured it was dropped in by a dimensional collision. Of which there have been many." _The A.I. then says:_"Fun Fact. We just collided with thirteen different dimensions in the exact moment you rung that bell." _

"Great! A Bell that rings across dimensions!" You grimace and double check you put everything back. Oh, you almost missed the hammer. Good. Don't want THAT getting lose either.

---

**dn~nnNNNNNnNNNnnnnnnn....**

Your name is Xefros Tritoh, and you just heard the most utterly wonderful sounding bell tone.

...Which is utterly impossible because you're working on the BELTUS, keeping things running while Okurii is on Earth. And NOBODY has bells onboard the ship.

"Did anyone else hear that just now?" You ask of the crew around you, and get a lot of concerned nods. "Well. Shit. Wonder what that was about?"

---

Three sounds happened at once.

**dn~nnNNNNNnNNNnnnnnnnnn....** Rung a Bell.

SPARK SPARK!! zap'd the console.

And then Lynera flickers out of existence for several seconds with a ZAP. When she reappears, she's standing, and shouting- "NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TO GO BACK TO THE SHIP!!" She whimpers, and falls to her knees again. "Noo... I liked that town.. It was nice and quiet and simple and..." She sniffs.

"Shit! What the fuck did you do, Dammek?!" Elwurd yells as your attempt at running an engine
diagnostic on the Hyperdrive failed and instead resulted in a few stray sparks from the patchwork machine.

"Ugh, wasn't me," you grunt as you shake at your ears to clear the sound out. "Something else made that noise... and it annoyed the Hyperdrive. We jumped dimensions for a few moments."

"...Seriously?" Elwurd frowns. "...I mean..." She massages at the bridge of her nose. "Okay. Let's say I believe you and that you're telling the truth about all of this... What exactly did you plan to do to fix this?"

"Mostly just shut down the hyperdrive and get off the ship before it exploded or something?" You shrug. "I don't know! Callie was the one who was working on the finer details, and even she had no idea what we'd do until we got here! And she's not here- so maybe we're screwed and we should all just leave and--!"

KA-CHAK.

Suddenly, you get a shot gun pointed in your face.

"Zip it." Elwurd, holding said gun, turns to look at Sharper, and demands, "You there. Flyboy. Tell me how you guys planned on getting off after stopping all of this or I blow Dammek's head off. Specifically. Really. How'd you get on this ship and how do you plan to get off?"

You scowl and subtly shake your head 'no' at Sharper.

"I won't say anything," Sharper declares.

Elwurd's eyes flash a pale blue and- oh shit- fuck, you forgot the briefing. Mind Control! Sharper's not prepared to-

"Tell. Me. Everything."

"I... We... We Linked onboard trying to reach the Keep, except we got sep-" Sharper starts to explain, completely under her control.

"Skip. What's the Keep?" Elwurd asks, pulling back the hammer on her gun aimed at your face.

"It's a holding place for the Tablet, which controls the minds of the-"

"Skip! How do I get control over it?" Elwurd asks- because of course she does.

"You can't- not until the current owner or person attempting to gain control of it fails to-" Sharper once again gets "skipped."

"Can my crew escape through this Keep without control over the Tablet?"

"I don't see why it wouldn't work," Sharper answers.

"Good," Elwurd grins. "Where is it?"

"Don't know. We didn't arrive at it," Sharper answers.
"...Tell me where it is." Elwurd insists, narrowing her eyes and forcing it.

"I... I DON'T KNOW!" Sharper grunts. "NOT ON THIS SHIP!? I DON'T KNOW WHERE!"

And then Elwurd's eyes return to normal, Sharper gasps for air, and Elwurd removes the Gun from your face and smirks. "Now see, that wasn't so hard."

"Shit, what the fuck was that?" Sharper asks, glaring at Elwurd.

"Just some psychic persuasion," Elwurd answers.

"You made me see my Ex holding my mother at gunpoint, you bitch!" Sharper growls out.

"Was that who it was? Fair enough," Elwurd shrugs. "Anyways. Crew!" She claps her hands. "We're packing it up and searching the ship for this 'Keep' they were trying to get to! Let's GO!"

And then she points the Shotgun at you again.

"You're carrying Lynera. If you drop her, I shoot you. Understand?"

...Shit. This really isn't what you wanted.

"Yeah," you swallow. "I understand."

_"Okay, I've prepared the subroutine. Once I'm disconnected, and we're off of the Borealis, I'll signal the drives and engage a total shut down. Who knows where the boat will land after that! It'll be a pleasant surprise for all of us." _

"Whatever," Gordon says, retrieving a large sort of device from his back and using it to pluck the A.I. Core out of it with a burst of negated gravity. "Just don't go triggering it while we're onboard. I've had it to my EYEBALLS with people portaling me new and surprising places."

You shake your head and prepare to head out when Callie suddenly runs into the room, Bahro at her side.

"Joey!" She grins, and hugs you.

"Callie!" You hug her back.

"HOLY WINGSPAN, BATMAN!" Gordon gasps, clearly shocked by Callie's wingspread.

"...Um, who's that?" Callie asks.

"Long story, but that's Gordon, and he's helping us get out of here," you say.

"...Right, okay," Callie looks at the core floating within Gordon's weird gravity device's grip. "...Is that the-?"

"The A.I. Core from the Garrison? Yes, yes it is," you say.

"Huh, I wondered where that wound up. I thought it got lost when we were evacuating the Base..."
Callie muses, "Anyways. Are we good here?"

"Yes, we are. Nice wings, by the way. I'm sure you lost a few pounds growing those."

"Yes, I did, actually," Callie smiles brightly as the four of you leave the engine room for the Borealis. "My bone density lightened up while also strengthening to counter any brittleness. I'm a few pounds lighter with the wings than I was without!"

"Wait, what? You GREW wings??" Gordon asks. "Where can I get some of those?"

"A radiation chamber and a lot of Zillyum particles directly collected from a dangerous interdimensional rift," Callie answers. "Or, so I've hypothesized."

"Ah, right. Yeaaah I've had enough radiation poisoning for one lifetime. I think I'll pass," Gordon answers in response to that.

And so you meander down the hallways of the Borealis, trying to find a way onto the Mofang Cruiser. As you move along, Gordon rambles something fierce about the ship's maze like hallway design.

"You'd think that Aperture would make the interior of their boat reconfigurable given some of the technology I've seen in here, but NOOOO! They went made every single interior wall out of concrete and steel girders! That takes dedication, and a bit of insanity, if you ask me. Aperture was never great at doing things the sane way, but, you gotta admit they made progress. I mean, look at that window there! That's SPACE! We're literally in space above a planet with RINGS! How insane is THAT?! Wait- wooooah! Are we inside the rings themselves?! Niiice. Nice, real nice."

"He does this a lot, by the way." The A.I. Core informs you. "I suspect its a coping mechanism from the disaster of Black Mesa."

"What? No, I've always done this. I mean, sure, it picked up the pace after the Resonance Cascade but I've always been a self-talker. It helps fill the void of my thoughts- like the gap between those meteors! Hey, how much spatial warping do you think is affecting our view of those chunks of frosty space rock? I mean, they could be giant rocks miles apart, but so far away they look small and close to eachother. Or they could be small and far apart, but really close to the window, making them look closer to eachother. It's hard to tell after some of the crazy shit I've seen."

"Oh! That's a good question!" Callie beams.

You're not going to touch this conversation with a ten foot pole.

Oh, look, Mofang Hallway intersection! Good.

**dn~nnNNNNNNNNNNnnnnnnnnnnnn....**

[Misssss.... Vance. It'sss time, for you to... Wake up. And sssstart with the... misssion that I have... hired you to complete.]

A set of zipties shattered, and a knife materialized within the floor- blade point down.
"And that's just fine, but I think that just raises more questions than it answers," Gordon concludes as you arrive at the Mofang Cruiser's Hyperdrive room. You all stop and stare, and then he says, "What a Mess! Is it supposed to look like Doctor Kleiner's home made teleporter?"

"I would say definitely not," Callie frowns as she heads over to the remains of the Quantum Mirror that's been hooked up to the Hyperdrive controls. "Oh, hello."

"What is it?" You ask.

"Dammek was here. He got a diagnostic running." She sighs, happy. "My Moirail knows me so well! Hehe..." She giggles and checks the results. "...Oh. Oh no."

"That's not a happy oh no," Gordon says. "What's wrong?"

"Um... Basically the Naquadria core is in overload and should have exploded negative five seconds ago as of two hundred years ago? What??" Callie answers, squiting at the readout. "This is... really bad."

"...Dunno what Naquadria is but I take it that's bad?" Gordon asks.

"Naquadria explosions have been known to react badly with certain super conductor elements and explode ten fold and... well. Cover a lot of a planet with a teraforming wave of fire," you elaborate.


"Yeah..." Callie nods, warily. "If we shut down the Hyperdrive, that energy is going to go off immediately, and through the dimensional rifts from the Quantum Mirror."

"Can we contain it with the parts we brought with us?" You ask.

Callie sighs in defeat, massaging at the bridge of her nose. "Maybe. It's definitely more of a problem than I was expecting. I was thinking the core would be stable or atleast able to be shut down safely. But..."

"Okay I know this might sound like a bad idea, but could we potentially jettison the core to a specific dimension WithOut anything else attached?" Gordon asks.

"Are you nuts? Doing such a thing would- Oh OOOOAH! I See!" _The A.I. giggles._

"Keheheheh. This could be Good. Plug Me into a computer, Freeman! And you, Ohphee! Decaptchalogue your supplies! We'll build a containment unit to properly disconnect the Naquadria core once we've set new coordinates!_"

"Right, what's going on exactly?" Callie asks as she starts decaptchaloguing large crates.
"Doctor Freeman?" You ask as the man snaps the A.I. core into the Mofang Ship's nearest computer terminal.

"We need to destroy the Combine, right?" He starts. "But the Borealis would be too small of a bang. The Mofang Cruiser WITH the Borealis and this Naquadria core would be too BIG of a bang, because it's spread out across a whole bunch of different dimensions we don't want it to reach. So..." He grins, and readjusts his glasses. "We open a dimensional rift and jettison the Naquadria Core into the Combine Homeworld's SUN! Their homeworld is a Dyson Sphere built around a star! If we shove a ten fold nuke up their star's ass, it'll explode and take out the whole interior of the Dyson Sphere at the SAME TIME!"

"Karfin Outpost!" You and Callie exclaim at the same time.

"I definitely have the parts for a time dilation device!" Callie starts. "And we have the Mofang Cruiser's artificial gravity systems too we can cannibalize and-!"

"The only question is do we have the coordinates for the Combine Homeworld?" You ask.

"Of course we have the coordinates. I recorded them moments before we were derailed by this multiversal collision," The A.I. chuckles grimly. "I have coordinates for every instance of them as well. Or, atleast, every nearby instance operating on the same technological wavelengths."

"That's terrifying, but what the hell," you shake your head. "Let's get it done."

A thought hits you then.

"Wait. Dammek left the diagnostic running?" You ask. "How do you-?"

"It's this," Callie points at a part of the screen. You look at it and... Oh. God, that's Dammek's custom hyperdrive engine diagnostic screen alright. You know he carries that with him on a small flash drive 'just in case' of emergencies. So...

You search around the console and find the drive still plugged into the Mofang console.

"Then where the hell is he or Sharper?" You ask, feeling a bit of a bad feeling rising in your gut.

"Oh. Deer Antler Boy is here too?" The A.I. asks. "Searching Security Camera Recordings for this room... Found him. Oh. Hello. It looks like he was held at gunpoint and some human was forced to explain something to a Bitch with a bright blue dyed mohawk. Interesting Fashion Statement."

"The Keep!" You and Callie exclaim, and the Bahro chirps in fear.

"Oh, great, isn't that the thing you came her for in the first place?" Gordon asks.

"It's one of them," you massage at the bridge of your nose. "Fuck it. I'm going after them. Maybe I can cut them off at the Keep before they get there."

"Good luck," Callie nods. "Tomoki should go with you, though. I think we can handle it here."

"...Tomoki?" You ask, and the Bahro chirps in confirmation. "Oh, that's your name? Cool. Let's get going then."
And with that you and Tomoki rush out of the room, heading back to the Keep.

"Fucking hell, this whole Journey has been a fucking mess!" You yell out.

Alex Vance stood before the engine room controls for the Borealis, and stared at the red locked screen requesting a password.

She stepped forwards and entered in the first thing that came to mind.

_"Oh You Are Kidding Me!"_

"What is it now!?" Doctor Freeman asks as he and you, Callie Ohphee, don't even pause in rewiring part of a Mofang Gravity Generator.

_"Alex Vance is attempting to Hack through the multi layered passwords I left locking the Borealis Controls."_

"Manually or with a little control device?" Freeman glances at his hip- where he smiles partly in relief upon seeing a certain device hanging there.

_"Manually. She's attempted many different ones within the last several seconds. She struck unnervingly close, however, with the first one. How she ever got that close I'll never know. I chose that hexadecimal hash completely at random!"_

"What do we do?" You ask. "If she breaks that password before we're ready, she'll disengage the Borealis and that could-"


_"Are you Sure you want to Eject the Borealis? ...I am required to ask confirm-"

"YES I'M SURE!" Freeman yells. "JUST DO IT NOW BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND!"

_"...Ejecting Borealis."_

There was a jolt through all three super structures as the engines of the Boeralis revved up to speed-in reverse- starting the process of pulling it outwards and backwards by one dimension.

"What the-!?" Alex swears as the computers all go offline. "No No No!! We can't-! We were SO CLOSE!!" She takes off at a run to find the nearest escape hallway to the Mofang Ship before she gets left behind in the Borealis.

A grinding sound much like a key scraping against piano wire began to echo out.
"Congratulations, we're now on a time limit to complete this project and get the Naquadria Core off of this ship before we're catapulted into who knows what alternate dimension."

"Well, let's HURRY IT UP then!!"

You go for your radio, "Joey! I don't know if you can hear this but we jettisoning the Borealis. We're on a ticking clock now."

"I Figured As Much!" Claire's voice yells out over the radio. "What with all the Piano Mutilation sounds and all that!"

Your name is Douglas Sharper, and Elwurd snatches Dammek's radio. "Colonel Claire!" she grins. "So glad to hear your voice again! You know, I really should have thought to check this sooner. Your friend Dammek had it right on his vest and everything."

"Elwurd!" Claire growls. "You leave Dammek and Sharper alone!"

"No, I think not!" Elwurd growls. "You're going to stand down and let me and my crew leave this death trap RIGHT FUCKING NOW! You do that, and I'll let your people go."

"Not unless I have confirmation that Dammek and Sharper are alive and unharmed!" Claire counters. "And NO MIND CONTROL!"

Elwurd rolls her eyes, then holds the radio over to Dammek, holding the talk button down. "She wants to speak to you."

Dammek, carrying Lynera on his back, shifts slightly to bend towards the radio and speak into it better. "Joey, Callie, we're fine," he starts. "We're just going to go to the Keep and use the link out button to get to Todelmer. Just do what you need to do here and forget about us for the moment. We'll be fine. We'll head straight to Kaptar Outpost after Elwurd's set us free."

There's a long pause. And then Joey answers, "Okay, we'll meet you on Kaptar, Dammek. Elwurd, you have a deal. You can use the Keep to Escape."

"Thank you, Colonel," Elwurd smiles. "Pleasure doing business with you." And then she rips out the battery from the radio, and drops both on the floor. "Let's GO!"

You continue on in silence, preparing for the plan Dammek just hinted at. Kaptar- AKA the world the Relto Books sent you to for Claire's Relto. Easy escape.

...Elwurd's going to be pissed off when she realizes she had one of those right at her fingertips. She really asked all the wrong questions when she was interrogating you earlier. But, that's her mistake and not yours.

After a few more minutes of wandering, you finally find it- a rift where the hallway ends and a large, sphere like building begins.

There's a bubble inside, with the Keep inside of it, along with a bunch of other pieces of warped space from the other keeps- strangely all stationary and not moving around.
"Jackpot," Elwurd grins, and steps forwards towards it. "So then... How the Fuck does this thing work, and how do I get that shiny gold thing out of it?"

Shit, of course she would-

"You don't." And the Claire steps out from around behind an ice pillar from Tahgira, lightsaber in hand. "You link out, and that's it."

-Crap. Now this turned into a mexican standoff.

"Claire," Elwurd growls. "I thought I told you-"

"I'll let you leave," she says. "I'll let you go through and link out just fine. But that's it. Any one of you so much as THINK about touching that Tablet, I gut you. Got it?"
Elwurd works her jaw for a moment, then relents. "Fine. That's fair enough. I did say I just wanted my people off of this boat."

"You'd better hurry then," Claire says. "The Naquadria core you stole is critical and near ready to explode. You're lucky to be alive at this point."

"How?" Elwurd asks.

"The platform that's missing a Slate- it'll have a glowing symbol in the center. Touch it, and it'll link you out to Todelmer. From there- well, you'll just have to find your own way." Claire then adds, "Oh, and don't bother using the return symbol to come back to the Keep, either. There's no telling where it'll send you in this mess. We were all supposed to wind up here when we used it, but we all got scattered using it."

"Matilda, check it out," Elwurd orders a Mofang, who enters the bubble, finds the platform missing a slate, and touches the glyph in question--

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhhh....

And then they're gone.

Elwurd glances at you- "That normal, flyboy?"

"Yeah," you nod. "It is."

"Good, the rest of you head through," Elwurd orders.

Slowly, steadily, the rest of Elwurd's crew of Trolls, Mofang, and Carapacians link through the Keep back to Todelmer.

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhhh....

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhhh....

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhhh....

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhhh....
Again and again. "VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhssshh...."

Until, finally. Elwurd motions for Dammek to send Lynera through. "You two boys go after her."

"You said you'll let them go-" Claire protests.

"I said I'll let them go once we're all safe. Which I'm not, and which my crew isn't until we're far and far away from anywhere you can track us down. Exact wording, Colonel," Elwurd narrows her eyes. "Besides, I don't know any world called 'Todelmer', so, we need guides. These two'll do the trick."

"But-!"

"It's fine, Joey," Dammek says. "Don't worry about it. Meet you at Kaptar's Gate. Alright?"

"Yeah," you say. "We'll be fine. I'll make sure of it."

"Okay," she nods. "I'll see you at Kaptar then."

"Don't follow us," Elwurd demands of Claire.

"Fine," She nods. "I can't leave yet anyways."

And with that, Dammek links through with Lynera, and you follow suit a moment later.

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhssshh....

And then you're back on Todelmer soil, looking up at the heavens.

The Borealis flickers with rainbow light, pulsing faster and faster...

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSHHSSHhssshh....

And then Elwurd joins you, and stares. "What the fuck is that!?"

"Trouble," Dammek answers.

A moment later, the Ice Breaker fused within the Mofang Ship's hull ripples with a rainbow effect, going transparent, before vanishing from sight, leaving just the Mofang Ship behind.

Except, now with one of its dimensional pinions removed, it, too, has started to pulse with rainbow light. Slowly, and nowhere near as fast. But soon it, too, would be departing.

"Well," Elwurd starts, "I'm glad we're out of there. Shit looks damn unstable. Now." She looks to Dammek. "Where's the nearest Stargate?"

"A day's hike through a tunnel network and through the desert to a town," Dammek says, "then from there it'd be a couple more days travel to Earth's Stargate by car, plane, or... instantaneous transmission via the Prometheus' beaming tech."

"Earth?" Elwurd laughs. "Oh, like hell we're going through your Earth's Stargate. You mentioned
Kaptar. How do we get there? I know that has a Stargate."

"Oh, that?" You interject. "That's an even longer hike through the tunnels and into a deep cavern. Then we have to find a specific book to travel through."

Elwurd squints at you, then laughs. "Well, whatever. We're not leaving yet. I want to see the fireworks go off." She points her gun up at the ship you just linked away from.

You hope whatever happens next happens quickly.

"Dammek and Sharper have evacuated with Elwurds crew," Joey reports. "Tomoki and I are inside the Keep and waiting to put the final Slate on the lock. Give me the word when."

"Will do," You're once again Callie Ohphee, and you exhale in relief. "That's one thing down."

"Let's finish this thing and get out of here, then," Dr. Freeman says.

"Right," you nod.

"And why should I let you?"

...Oh no.

You and Freeman look up at a doorway far above you, and see that a woman has entered the room. She has a knife in hand, but nothing more. Not too dangerous just yet.

_"Oh, good,"_ The A.I. remarks. _"The Gang's all here. Again."_

"Alex," Freeman starts. "You gotta let us finish this. If we do, we can blow up the Combine homeworld in a bunch of different dimensions at once!"

"No, you're not," Alex glares, eyes... her eyes are hazy. Hrm. You reach out subtly with your mind towards hers while you kneel down and hurry to finish work on the project. "You're already jettisoning the Borealis. Trying to save it. Prevent us from destroying the Combine with it."

"That boat won't do anything against them, Alex," Freeman says. "And look. We're only sending it back to its last coordinates- the path TO hit the Combine Homeworld. It'll distract them long enough for us to jettison the power core from-"

And then you catch an echo of what Joey's lately taken to calling a PING, [He Liesss... Do Not Believe Him.]

"LIAR!!" Alex yells. "You just want the Borealis' tech for yourself, Gordon! You liar. You fucking. Stupid... God-DAMNED....!!" She shieks in anger. "Why did I ever delude myself into thinking you could SAVE US?!!"

"I've been asking myself the same thing, Alex," Freeman says quietly, before growing louder in tone. "I've been wondering how so many people could think I'm some messiah here to liberate everyone! But what HAVE I done? I blew up a Tower, sure. I killed Breen, twice, yippie-ki-yae. I delayed an explosion that opened a huge portal that we then had to launch a rocket to stop. Fine! And I helped
"The Vortigaunts save your life, sure. But anybody could have done those things." He pulls out a crowbar. "I'm. Not. Special. I'm not some Video Game Protagonist! I'm just a guy who got stuck in an ever increasingly shitty series of unfortunate events and I'm honestly sick and tired of it! Your new BOSS is the one who set me up to be that guy. So if you've got a problem with it, take it up with HIM!"

"Liar," She insists, in absence of anything else, because you actually intercept the next 'PING' sent Alex's way.

[Not happening, jerk.] You counter.

[What? Who... Who issss thisssss?]

[None of Your Business!]

"Yeah, well, do you see him anywhere around?" Freeman asks. "He started Black Mesa. He gave Breen the Crystal, and he kicked off all of our life's troubles. Your parents are DEAD because of things HE started. And where is he? He's NOT HERE, that's where he is. Cause if he were, we'd be hearing his creepy voice and seeing him appear out of the corner of our eyes!"

[Sssttop this. Interffference. Immediatley.]

"I- That's-!"

"He's not even talking to you in your head, is he?" Freeman presses on.

[Not Happening.] You tighten a bolt and hurry to connect some wires...

"Why should he!? I know the truth! He doesn't need to-"

[Stop It. I... DEMAND you sssstop!! Allow me to... sssspeak with Misss Vance!]

"You're an IDIOT, Alex! Especially if you've bought whatever lies he has hook line and sinker!"

[None of Your Business!]

Freeman counters.

[I don't know who you are. And I don't care. You want these 'Combine' dead? You SHUT UP AND LET ME WORK!] You deny a forceful shove to try to get at the woman.

"And I kinda thought you might've been one of the only SANE ones, but NO! You and everyone else at Black Mesa are IDIOTS! Mothman! Kleiner! Barney!? You've all bought into this god-damned crap-covered-cake that I'm some kind of savior to rid the world of all its woes, but the minute the guy behind it DROPS HIS SUPPORT of me, you sign up with the bastard who STARTED ALL OF THIS, and plan to LEAVE ME TO DIE!!! If we hadn't crashed into this Mofang Ship, you'd have LEFT ME TO DIE!!! AND I CAN'T FUCKING BELIEVE HOW PISSED OFF THAT MAKES ME!!!"

There's a suddenly very loud key grinding sound, and then the A.I. Chimes in with: _"Borealis Jettisoned. Enroute to Combine Homeworld Designated Coordinate Alpha One."_ 

[What!? But... it did nothing...?] You catch that ping a moment later, and let it slip through. [Failure? How...? It exploded assos planned. The Yield was greater than... exxpected but the Combine... It
"What do you mean it did nothing!" Alex yells, then glares at Freeman. "WHAT DID YOU DO!"

[What? What? No. That's... The ping is directed at you. [YOU. What. Did You. Tell Her?! That wassss. NOT MEANT FOR HER!]

"We didn't do anything but get the Borealis back on track!" Gordon stomps his foot. "I kept TELLING YOU, Alex! The Borealis wasn't going to do SHIT to that Dyson sphere! It's just too big!"

And then you realize... You've finished what you needed to. You punch in the activation code...

[ANSSSSWER ME!]

-And then you grab for your radio and yell, "JOEY, NOW!" as you finally send a ping in response. A simple six letter word.

[S U C K E R.]

You get nothing in response but stunned silence.

> [S] REPRISE

With a rainbow flicker of light, an ice breaker appeared on the edge of detectable space within a large Dyson Sphere surrounding a Star. The interior surface of the Dyson Sphere was covered with tall, black chrome towers powered by Dark Energy Reactors. Many of them with portals connected to other Combine occupied worlds and dimensions.

[I see your face before my eyes. I'm fallin' into darkness. Why must I fight to stay alive? Heroes Fallen.]

The Borealis' engine cores heated up, kicking into overdrive, and pushing the icebreaker down smack dab towards the center of one of many 'towns' made for production of horrifying monsters.

Overseers and other such monstrosities look up and watch as the boat descends...

[Wake me can't you hear me callin'? (callin', callin', callin')]..And touches down. The impact makes the cores explode- destroying the Borealis with a massive surge of portal energy that breaks through to the nearby dimensions and echoes out as well.

[Out of Darkness they come Crawlin']!

That burst of energy hits nearby Dark Energy Reactors, causing them to explode as well.

[Here I am! I am Lost in your Land, and I hope you will be, Creepin' my Soul. ]

The explosions spread out across the surface of the sphere... but it's barely anything at all. As the
smoke clears and settles...

[Shadows Fall. Let me Out! Hear my Call! And I'll always believe. Creepin' in my Soul.]

A crater remains, but only a small fraction of the Combine might was touched. The forces of the Combine mobilize and go to investigate the crater in the several dimensions affected by the blast.

[Creeps from the Deep gon'be freakin' up your mind.]

The device Callie and Gordon constructed activates, immediately snapping into place around the containment cell for the stolen Naquadria Core.

[Creeps from the Deep gon'be feedin' off your spine.]

Drawing one final burst of power through the core about to be jettisoned, the heavily Modified Quantum Mirror empowered Hyperdrive activates for a specific coordinate of space time.

[I fade away into the Night, my eyes are closin' in!]

The rainbow glow around the Mofang Cruiser ceases- mostly because the whole thing vanishes from sight with a very loud, drawn out linking sound, leaving nothing but a large gap in the rings behind, and Dammek swallows, because there's no sign of the Pod either.

[Shadows are fleeing from the light-]

And then he and Sharper are abruptly linked away- accidentally taking Lynera with Dammek in the same swoop.

[My nightmares can begin.]

Joey decaptchaLogues the final Slate, and places it onto the lock.

It lowers down then- dramatically unlocking the Tablet.

[Wake me can't you hear me callin'?

And then she and Tomoki are linked away, along with the Keep itself as it up-heaves itself from that location.

[(Callin', Callin', Callin')]

And in the same vein, Callie hurls herself at Gordon while captchaLoguing the A.I. Core, grabbing both before-

[Out of Darkness they come Crawlin'!]
A link overtakes her and rips them out of the interior of the Mofang Ship, leaving only Alex behind.

[Here I am! I am Lost in your Land, and I hope you will be, Creepin' in my Soul. ]

The entire Mofang Cruiser, plus observation pod, materializes suddenly within the core of the sun inside of the Combine Dyson sphere- and a time dilation field encompasses everything within that dimension.

[Shadows Fall. Let me Out! Hear my Call! And I'll always believe. Creepin' in my Soul.]

The effect spreads out through the Quantum Mirror effects into the neighboring dimensions where Combine Dyson Sphere Homeworlds were set up around the same exact star, and then...

[Creepin' in my soul it's gettin' out of control, I gotta find my escape and get out of this black hole.]

The Naquadria core suddenly is disconnected from powering anything at all, but before the dimensional rifts can close- it explodes violently through those tears in space.

Across those few linked dimensions, the same star goes super nova multiple times over.

['Cause justice in this world is hard to find, time has come gotta make up my mind.]

The wave of incinerating fire spreads out across those worlds at a rate faster than any of the Combine across those dimensions can react.

[No matter how deep or remote I hide-]

The explosions reach the edges of the Dyson Spheres, and burn away at everything on their surface.

[-all my thoughts seem curled up inside-]

Through a few portals to worlds occupied by the Combine, the wave of burning stellar fire pushes through- scorching the earth of those worlds utterly ruined by the Combine themselves.

[Creeps from the Deep gon'be freakin' up your mind. Creeps from the Deep gon'be Feeding Off Your Spine...]

And then the super nova overtakes the Dyson Sphere's structural integrity, and utterly obliterates everything- consuming all remnants and dimensional copies of that specific Combine Homeworld.

[Here I am! I am Lost in your Land, and I hope you will be, Creepin' in my Soul.]

Everyone finds themselves linked into the grassy fields of Tsogahl, outside of the one sole remaining Keep, save for Joey and Tomoki, who remain inside. Joey reaches for the Tablet, and lifts it up off of its mounting.
Yeesha stands and watches with a smile as Joey and Tomoki then exit the Keep, with the Golden Tablet within the Alternian's hands... only to be handed over to the Bahro at her side, who raises the Tablet into the air...

And then utterly smashes it against the nearest boulder. Golden chunks of stone fly out in all directions from the impact, and a wave of golden energy ripples out from the impact spot, blessing all who feel it with the sensation that a great wrong has been righted.

That wave of energy travels across space-time as the certain connections it held to the Bahro Race within this branch of the Multiverse is severed- snapping backwards like a broken rubber band.

All around the multiverse, people found themselves feeling relieved, though they could not quite pinpoint why, exactly...

Well, except for Elwurd's group, who realized rather suddenly that the Keep Stand with any chance of linking them away from Todelmer had vanished with that same wave of energy.

"Spread out!" She demands. "Find us ANYTHING we can use to escape!"

Chapter End Notes

WORDCOUNT: We went from 67,350 words to.... 77158! WOW. 10k words for this chapter. OH MY.

SURPRISE CROS Overs:
>Yeah, that's an hypothetical "Epistle 3" series of events for a Freeman's Mind Gordon Freeman. I couldn't not bring him in after all the insanity that is dimensional crossovers like this. Also, FUCK the Combine. Just, casually just getting Karfin Outpost'd out of nowhere across a couple of different dimensions. That oughta even out the odds for a few Half Life universes.

>Yeah, that's an hypothetical "Epistle 3" series of events for a Freeman's Mind Gordon Freeman. I couldn't not bring him in after all the insanity that is dimensional crossovers like this. Also, FUCK the Combine. Just, casually just getting Karfin Outpost'd out of nowhere across a couple of different dimensions. That oughta even out the odds for a few Half Life universes.

>The Return of SG!GLaDOS! Yeah, I just threw her in there for the fun of it. Just kinda got lost in the shuffle there, didn’t she?

>The BELL of DOOM comes from an omake posted on the Sufficient Velocity forums for a REALLY FUN WORM FIC called TAYLOR VARGA. It's over here on AO3 if you're interested in Demon Magic, Darth Vader cosplay, Building sized Lizards, the utter breaking of time and space in such bad ways, Trolling, Super heroes, and a couple of fun jabs at the Lovecraft mythos- not even in that order. Give it a read here: [works/7830346/chapters/17874580]

Yeah. That was a huuuuuge chapter. Wasn't it? GOSH. That was a fun fun fun chapter and lots of writing to be done.
Next chapter: The epilogue to this arc of sorts. And then we gently transition right back into your regularly scheduled timeline.
A doorbell rang, and a woman who looked like she'd fought a tiger with her face and lost pretty horribly opened the door.

"Mrs. Inga T. Point?" Major Davis Strider asks upon that moment.

"Yes, what is it?" She asks, glaring at him and his equally militarily dressed companion. "If you're looking to recruit my husband for some Airforce thing, you can forget it. He's not home."

"We're here on behalf of Social Services, actually," Major Karkat Vantas corrects her assumption.

"Oh, so it's about my missing Son, then?" She frowns. "I don't know what he's told you, but he's severely mistaken. He's only a child. Not even ten yet. I really don't know where he gets some of those ideas like running off in the middle of the night or-

"Ma'am," Strider takes out a pair of handcuffs. "You're under arrest for child abuse, and failing to report your child's physical transformations."

She slammed the door in their faces, and definitely ran.

"Why do they always run?" Vantas asks.

"I dunno, dude, why DO they always run when it's pointless?" He looks over his shoulder as the woman stupidly runs out from the side gate to the back yard, and gets tackled by a time-duplicate of Major Strider himself. "Seriously. She'd have had a better chance of hopping the back fence entirely, not going through the side gate. That's just begging to be caught."

"Stupid people aren't particularly smart, Dave," Vantas answers with a shake of his head.

"No, they are not, Karkat," Strider chuckles grimly.
His eyesight is also pretty bad at this point, because he keeps mistaking you for his old friend who helped him out of so many jams.

...Atleast, you hope that's the case. Though, you suppose if you ever get bored you could always go on a-

No! Nope! No! You're not tying yourself into Yeesha's family History any more than you already have!! God. DAMN it. No. No more time travel- well. Uh, Besides that one stone tablet nobody has actually gone back to plant in the dirt beneath a tree on Haven yet but. UGH.

Please? Pretty please, universe? Besides that one last loop, can you please avoid any more time travel? Please???

"...So, uh," your name is GORDON FREEMAN, and you are pretty much SCREWED. "I guess this means Alex got left behind to explode with the sun?"

"That's one possible course of events," Doctor Ohphee says in response. "Of course, given I was intercepting the messages that Creepy voice was trying to send to her, it's possible she was removed at the last possible second."

"Either way, I can't imagine either of them are going to be happy I'm still alive," you grimace. "Buuut, that's not the first time I've been on someone's shit list. Or hit list, for that matter."

"Fair enough," she nods. "So... what do you plan on doing now?"

"Me? Hah. Oh, I dunno. Find some science group that isn't dealing with quantum physics or involving fighting for planetary survival. Probably gonna ditch the suit. Who knows how many trackers are installed in it. And the Gravity Gun, fun as it is. Too many bad memories."

"You know, the Atlantis Expedition is recruiting new team members." She smiles at you. "Once we get back to the Surface and Earth, maybe you could join them? I hear from some certain former protagonist-types that it's quite relaxing to not be on center stage after everything they've been through and let other people do the crazy fighting and survival stuff."

"...I'm not sure if that should make me excited to join or scared for my Life!" you say. "But honestly I kinda Like the sound of that! ...But, shit. I'm gonna need a new birth certificate, a new drivers license, new social security... new everything, really! God, DAMN. This could be the start of a brand new life for me! I could be anyone I want to be! I could ditch this whole "One Free Man" thing entirely and just be... I dunno. A Ross? Or maybe a Scott. I could see myself going by either. What do you think?"

"Whatever works for you," Doctor Ohphee says with a grin.

Whatever works for you.


"You know, I can't remember the last time someone told me that."
"So, Mike," your name is Douglas Sharper, and you lean up against a wall near the punch table next to your fellow DRC team member, even if he's technically your superior. "How's things going with Wheely and the wild kat over there?"

"Well, we got word to the surface," Mike says. "Colonel Claire over there personally put in a few words with someone named Major Strider. By the time we get back, we'll find out if we can adopt the kid. Willow's gotten really fond of them now. I heard some kid with magic healing spells is coming down soon to help with the claw problem."

"Magic, huh?" You ask, staring out at the dance floor as Willow coaxes that cat-kid out to join her for a small dance in the corner of the room. "Well. As long as things go right and you can keep them out of harms way. I'm not going to fight the terminology."

"So... how was your 'Journey'?" Mike asks.

"Oh, I got to swipe my old sniper rifle back from my ex who swiped it from me before I came down to D'ni," you grin. "So, that was a plus. She's going to blow a gasket when she finds out I managed to take it without triggering any of those security traps she set it up under."

"I see," Mike smiles. "...So, about that air cannon..."

Ugh. Right. You'd almost forgotten about that.

"I heard from Marie and Watson," Mike continues. "Apparently after you and the Colonel stopped that D'ni mind controller, all the hostile Bahro activity we were seeing stopped. I don't see any real reason for us to press installing the thing into Teledahn, unless you really want to install it for 'historical accuracy.'"

Huh. Better than you'd thought it was going to go.

"I'll think about it," you say.

"Good to know," Mike nods. "So... you talked with Phil about if he's returning to duty or not?"

"No, not yet," you answer. "Why?"

"I think he's smitten with that Yeesha girl," Mike shakes his head. "Plus... something in his head hasn't seemed right ever since we found him again. He's been.. really non committal about coming back. I don't think he wants to, honestly."

"If he wants to stay behind and water the flowers, as it were, I don't see why we can't just let him do what he wants," you say.

"Suppose so. But... Beyond that..." Mike pauses. "Do you know what's going on disclosure wise yet? Are... are they going to tell the SGC about the Cavern?"

You consider that and what you've seen and heard.

"I think that's a choice that's out of their hands, Mike," you answer. "I think it's really, really out of their hands. That decision... it doesn't fall on Claire's team, or anyone else involved with the SGC."
"Whose hands is it in then?" Mike asks.

You nod over at Yeesha and her father, conversing with some Bahro. "It's theirs."

"In thanks and eternal gratitude for helping stop the menace of Esher, and helping to end the tyranny of the Tablet, we grant you, Colonel Joey Claire, with the honorary title of the Grower. You will always be welcome among D'ni's citizens, whenever you should desire to wish."

As Yeesha finishes her speech, and all hands clap, and the Bahro cheer and whoop in celebration... You can't help but feel sorry for Joey.

Your name is Dammek, and after everything that happened... Well. She really over did it. She really did.

At the same time, you're a mite angry.

Elwurd's group managed to find a linking book to a place called "the Nexus" on Todelmer, and used it to escape the age before anyone could get in and arrest them. It was apparently a large central hub of LINKING BOOKS, to various ages and locations. Apparently, the Mofang on her crew had technology capable of temporarily overwriting any security measures in the old D'ni tech left there.

They'd escaped to an unknown age, and there was no telling where they'd wound up, or would surface again.

If you hadn't been taken away... well. You wouldn't have gotten Lynera, who definitely is in severe need of a mental break from everything she'd been through. But, you also could have prevented that. Guided them back to the shaft and to the tunnels. Easier to catch them and corale them.

Once again, they're out on the loose and causing all kinds of trouble.

You just hope they chose a world without any links out and got stuck there.

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**EARTH DATE: SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 04/04/0005.**

Your name is Minori, and you smile at the Cait Sith-like child as you finish the healing spell to regrow their claws. "Don't you worry, little one. You're going to be fine now."

"...Thank you," They say quietly. Too quietly. The kind of quiet that comes from someone telling you to be quiet at all times.

"Don't worry about it," Willow hugs her friend. "We're never letting her get to you again!"

They nod at that, and you smile as you make your excuses to leave. Once you gain some distance, they rapidly cheer up a bit more.

You sigh, massaging at the bridge of your nose, as you join Joey, Dammek, and Callie in the
hallway in the DRC headquarters in the town of Catherine in Eddy County, New Mexico.

It was a pain to get here, really. A lot of Asgard beaming re-configurations. Something about a scrambling field? Well, whatever the case is.

"How'd it go?" Callie asks as the four of you start walking.

"Well, they're healed, and the pain should fade shortly," you answer. "I'm just so mad to see that kind of injury in this world. I'd seen enough of it in Alfheim after that one time we..." you shake your head. "Nevermind. That's in the past now. Now it's time for the future."

"That it is," Dammek nods. And within a moment, you find yourselves at the office door for Doctor Richard Watson. Joey knocks, and the door swings open and... there's the conference room.

Doctor Watson, Mike Engberg, Marie Sutherland, Victor Laxman, and Ikuro Kodama stand on one side of the table. Generals O'neill and Leijon stand on the other side, with a NEW MEXICO STATE REPRESENTATIVE standing nearby. Just a bit closer to the door stands a woman named Yeesha, a D'NI AMBASSADOR, and... Oh.

You smile and give a small wave at the creature that, in this universe at least, is called a Bahro.

It tilts its head towards you curiously, and then nods in return of that greeting.

"So," General O'neill claps his hands. "That's everyone here. Right? Are we ready to begin negotiations?"

"Yes," Watson nods. "This is everyone. Alright then. I suppose it's time to start with diplomacy, then, hm?"

"Yes," Yeesha speaks. "I believe that now is indeed the time for diplomacy."

You get the feeling this is going to be a very long week.

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DIASPORA DATE: 04/05/0005.

"Wait." You are once again the TETRARCH, Dammek, and you stare at the images of the Astro Megaship as you catch up on the news from the past few days. "WHERE ARE THE WINGS!?"

Apparently the Megaship had landed at one of the 304 hangar bays for repairs.

REPAIRS!?!!?!

"Huh," Callie remarks, "it looks like they got blown off with the laser canons-"

"I can SEE THAT!" you stare at it, feeling faint. "Where are the damned wings!? Did they leave them behind!? Fixing that is going to be a- GAAAAAAAAAAH!"

You run your hands through your hair, ready to rip out whole chunks of it at once.
"OF ALL THE FUCKING, STUPID!!" you can't believe this you just can't believe this!! "I! Am Going. To PUNCH TEGIRI. In his stupid smug face! If I find out that this was ANYTHING but a god-damned accident!!"

And then Callie places a hand on your face, and goes, "Shooosh."

...Mrrh.

You sigh. "Damn it. It just looks so dumb without the wings."

"I know, Dammek. I know," Callie pats at your cheek. "Ssssh. It'll be okay."


DIASPORA DATE: 04/07/0005.

Your name is Kohiru Karren, and you turn on the news as you munch on your breakfast cereal.

"--nny Harp, reporting live from the World Trade Center in New York!" A happy weather woman concludes her report, as the news cuts back to the channel.

"Thanks, Ginny," the anchor in the studio says. "And now, we cut, live, to the latest press conference from the head of Homeworld Security, General Hammond."

And so the man appears on screen, looking regal and proud as he gets the okay to begin.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of Earth, we are pleased to announce two events that occurred within the last week," General Hammond starts. "The first is that Colonel Claire, Tetrarch Dammek, and Doctor Ohphee were able to locate, and neutralize the hyperdrive of the ship that had created the rift out between our galaxy and Alternia's. This incident resolved itself, but not without drawing the interests and eyes of people who we were pleasantly surprised to find to be our universes local versions of allies our friends from the parallel world Aincrad had made. This is our second announcement. The conclusion of a peace treaty between our various alliances and their own world."

"Huh," you blink. "That's neat."

"Due to differences in our dimensions histories, these new allies once lived on our planet of Earth, as they did in the world of Aincrad. Although they now live elsewhere, their city still remains beneath the surface of the planet Earth. While I am not at liberty to disclose that location at this moment," Hammond continues, "I now turn you over to the head of the Restoration team that seeks to restore that abandoned city as a historical monument, as well as a future hub of potential world-connecting activity between the incidents of our universe, and those of our allies in parallel worlds." Hammond takes a step back. "Please welcome to the stage, Doctor Richard Watson, of the D'ni Restoration Council..."

The Beltus Stargate alarm sounded off as a connection came through. WAA WAA! KAWOOOSH!

"Receiving Colonel Claire's IDC!" Zebede reports. "It's not from the SGC address, though. It's Kaptar?"

Your name is Xefros Tritoh, and you smile. "That's expected. Let her through!"

There was a pause, and the shield lowered, and a few moments later, your Moirail returns home along with Dammek and Callie... plus a very tired looking Lynera Skalbi, and a human woman with red hair and some fancy tattoo over her eye.

"Xefros!" Joey runs over and gives you a hug.

"Hey, Joey," you hug her back. "How was the trip?"

"Exciting, and tiring, and... really really incredible. We'll talk more about it later, but we've got a way to circumvent the Rift problem." Joey smiles. "You're never going to believe it."

And she explains it. She's right, you don't believe it at first.

Holy shit, though- magic books that let you travel from one world to another? It sounds like something out of a video game.

And yet... Well. You'd already gotten phone-tag-warned ahead of time about Joey's team returning through a different means than they'd left.

And here they are.

For individual person to person transportation, this is probably going to be the most readily accessible means of getting from one galaxy to another without having to dial up four different Stargate connections.

Dammek and Callie take Lynera off to be sequestered away in the brig for the time being, and you and Joey lead this YEESHA woman to the room that you'd reserved ahead of time for the "Linking Chamber." And then she... she gets out a book and just starts writing in it.

As she works, occasionally she hums the words as she writes. It's... melodic, really. It's all kind of... simple and happy sounding.

She stops suddenly. "Wait." She skims back through what she'd written, and then checks another book she'd brought with her. "...Oh, that's amusing. The panel works again without me even needing to modify it."

"What is?" Joey asks.

"One of the Rules of Age Writing is that 'you cannot link within the same age baring an exceptional distance.'" Yeesh smiles, sadly. "The D'ni never bothered traveling beyond a planet's surface to see exactly what that exceptional distance was. At the very least, a Galaxy's worth of distance is apparently enough I don't need to apply any modifications to either book to ensure that they work based upon that rule." She chuckles. "I will, of course, still need to modify the Book for this room to
tie it specifically to this room, but... the other modifications for linking within the same Age are not necessary. We're outside that distance."
Joey muses on that, then says, disconcertingly, "Then that begs the question of how many other ages that the D'ni have written that fall within our own universe, that they just... didn't realize were within this universe?"

"That is an interesting question," Yeesh says. "I would need to visit them each specifically to be certain."

"I'm just worried Elwurd's crew chose a book out of sheer luck that either sent them here to Alternia... or to Pegasus." Joey narrows her eyes. "If we're lucky, maybe they wound up in the Ori Galaxy, or some other galaxy without Stargates... but knowing our luck?"

"Yes," Yeesh frowns. "There is a significant chance they chose a D'ni age that resides elsewhere within one of those Galaxies."

"I dunno what we just talked about," you say, "but that doesn't sound good to me."

"No," Joey says. "It isn't. Especially if the distance isn't as great as we think it might be. For all we know... they wound up somewhere else in Milky Way."

A glowing rift in space time, sandwiched between two galaxies, illuminated the night sky of a very sandy world.

A troupe of Mofang, Caprapacians, and Alternian Trolls finally stumbled to a stop at the familiar sight of a Stargate.

A certain blue haired Alternian woman removed the bandana around her mouth, and cracked a grin. "Finally! FINALLY!! Dial out to the first address we can get a lock on! We're leaving this sand-blower behind!!"

And so as the DHD was activated, a glowing glyph lit up the center of the top chevron, and spun around the circumference of the Pegasus Stargate, before locking into place behind the first chevron.

Chapter End Notes

Myst Rule Clarifications:
In this part of the multiverse it's only the vast, spanning distance between Galaxies that affects books within the same Universe of an Age. In Canon Myst-verse it's a much, much larger distance, multiple galaxies, I believe? Could be wrong on that, though. Even if a D'ni written age did target a planet within Milky Way, it'd target a *different* Milky Way rather than the same one. Joey's just worrying about things that'll be tested and confirmed to work differently later on.

Related to the Above Fact, Fun Facts:
>Haven as we know it from Alternia Galaxy thus is the same age of HAVEN from Myst 4, but specifically, is a parallel version of it. The version Atrus wrote ended up targeting a slightly different version in a different dimension/universe with a VASTLY
more stable sun. (No constant solar flares.)

> The Minkata that got targeted by this universe's D'ni IS the same Minkata that Keiko, Mallek, Daraya, and Tyzias went to in Pegasus Galaxy. If any D'ni stubborn enough to go well off the beaten path had gone in the right direction and braved the sands, they would have eventually stumbled upon the Stargate in this timeline and promptly buggered out because CIVILIZATION!! Thankfully, nobody did that, and so the Minkata book remained within the Nexus Catalogue.

How Books Shift based on Dimensional Instancing:

So. Basically, the books are ever perpetually keeping track of timeline divergences, and subtly shifting links as timeline changes happen so as to keep things consistent. To use an example, Minkata, existed as a D'ni age before any of the timeline shenanigans that resulted in Keiko's Earth, and our canon Stargate Earth.

Let's say Minkata's ID is MINK01. It keeps that ID into the timeline where Weir showed up and her expedition drowned and she was the only survivor. She travels back in time. Minkata's Book in the new timeline immediately keeps track of the splintering of Minkata's timeline and keeps pace, changing the ID to MINK02. Jade then appears, shifting the ID to MINK03. Now comes the fun part. Jade has a 50/50 chance to convince the Ancients to take Atlantis to Earth. When she succeeds, the timeline ID shifts to MINK03A, and that Minkata is tied to Keiko's version of Earth. When she fails, the timeline ID shifts to MINK03B, creating, in essence, our canon timeline.

Now, that's just a pared down version of it, but that process basically happens every time there's a timeline shift anywhere. The end goal of this instinctive shifting is to prevent two versions of the same person from linking to the same Minkata and running into themselves. This is part of why the D'ni never liked modifying their ages Descriptive Books after first linking to them, too much of a chance they'd run into themselves by accidentally changing a book in one timeline and it not being changed in another.
INTERVIEW: G. FREEMAN, JOB TRANSCRIPT.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

EARTH DATE: 10/01/2001; DIASPORA DATE: 04/10/0005.

RECORDED AT 10:24 A.M., EARTH, MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME.

LOCATION: SGC CONFERENCE ROOM.

[Active Participants: Doctor Rodney Mckay (M) and Doctor Gordon Freeman (F).]


[Transcript provided by T. Sevenson (E. Bregman Documentary Closed Captioning Editor).]

M: "So... Doctor Gordon Freeman, huh?"

F: "Yup, that's me."

M: "So. Let's see here. Mirror-verse crossover."

F: "Even though I technically didn't use a mirror. Yes. That is True!"

M: "Right. Okay. Gordon Freeman. 29. Former Native of Seattle, Washington. Went to MIT... Ph.D in Theoretical Physics, Quantum Mechanics, Relativity... God, you've got about as much Theoretical experience as I had when I got caught up in all of this."

F: "Uuhh. That sounds about right. Check out the practicals."

[Mckay reads through several pages of documents in silence for a minute.]

M: "...I'd say this sounds like a game plot if I hadn't been asked to take a look at that Gravity Manipulator device."

F: "Yeah, be careful with that. It's got quite a kick."

M: "Yeah, Siler noticed."

F: "I'm sure he did."

M: "Anyways! Right, so... Medical, I guess."

[A Significant pause of silence, broken only by pages flipping in a folder.]

M: "My god, you've broken your ribs and legs how many times!?"

F: "Could I see the number?"

M: "Here."
[Mckay shows the paperwork for a few moments. Freeman visibly grimaces.]

F: "....Yeeeah, that seems about right. Oh, geeze, no wonder my wrists feel all funky. Guess even the best shock absorbers fail at some point. Maaaan. That's messed up."

M: "Yeah, it is... Um. Red flag question. It shows here you've got signs of substance abuse and brain trauma?

[Freeman looks puzzled, panicked, then forcibly indignant.]

F: "Substance Ab-? OH! God, no. THE SUIT! It's the goddamned suit! The old one at Black Mesa injected me with all KINDS of stuff when I got hurt. The newer one was a bit more limited and I've got NO IDEA what the hell they pumped into me. But, uh- Yeah, that's probably it."

M: "...Okay, yeah, that checks out. But the trace residue of Oxy-?"

[Freeman slams his hand palm down on the table. All participants jump.]

F: "ESPECIALLY THE OXY."

M: "Uh-"

F: "I'll say one thing about Black Mesa, they had a GREAT Stash of drugs they probably shouldn't have been letting their employees access. Eheh... Yuuup. But yeah. It was the Suit. Definitely the suit, and nothing but the suit."

M: "And the brain trauma signs?"

F: "I've basically never had my helmet for the suit at all. I got beaten up by HECU soldiers at Black Mesa and lost my memory for a while. That was... not fun. And I've been through so much fighting and shit that, well... Uh. Let's just say I'm lucky to have kept my head on, some times."

[Freeman tugs down shirt collar and shows a pale, red line scarred along the side of his neck.]

M: "Uh. Fair enough... So, um... Moving on. What makes you want to come see the Ancient City of Atlantis?"

F: "Money. Need a steady job under my feet that actually pays. Oh, being as far away from any version of Earth as I physically can get. Aaaand. Oh, yeah, just getting a chance to live my life without being the 'protagonist' of any 'video games.' That cool with you?"

M: "...Uh, yeah, I don't really see any problems with that."

F: "So, uh. Do I get the job?"

M: "Yeah, I don't see why not, as long as you pass the psych evaluation."

[Freeman looks considerably displeased as he begins to respond, before forcing a smile mid way through.]

F: "...A Psych Eval? Uhhhhhhhh... Sure! Why not? Probably could use a good talk with a proper therapist after everything I've been through."

[Editor's Note: Psych Evaluation pending, Mikari Leijon has Requested Dr. Heightmeyer for the
Chapter End Notes

Expect some shorter chapters in the next week as we take a bit of a breather. I mean, good grief, a 10k word chapter?? I didn't realize that thing had been so long. LOL.
Your name is Roxy Lalonde, and you feel incredibly lucky that this even is happening. First Rodney finds the "Missing DHD Crystal" during TIME TRAVEL SHENANIGANS, and gets contact two way contact between Earth and Atlantis restored...

THEN Jo-jo gets involved with people who can make TELEPORTER BOOKS!!

And THEN. THEEENNNNN! Only THEN do you find out that Jude and Cassie found another Ganos Lal Hologram with a MIND SCAN DATABASE more recent than Atlantis' Database!

So yeah.

Now you're just finished installing the latest hard-drive copy of a Ganos Lal Hologram into your existing gestalt of a memory repository on LOPAN. It'd taken the techs from Earth a while to safely remove that particular memory drive that Ganos had installed a copy of herself on, but they'd done it, and now you had three copies of her to work with. Sort of.

The Atlantis Database was focused more on the Ancient History. The Avalon Messenger was a LOT more close to current. And your Sword DNA reader was woefully absent of much of anything proper, but seemed to be able to bridge the gap between the two instances fairly well.

You have to believe that by making up the difference of her life with two other hologram repositories, your DNA reader could pluck out the memories of Ganos' life from after she'd come back to this side of existence.

Jake always said that HOPE was the most powerful of emotions... well. You're hoping PRETTY HARD here.

You set set the program to run... run... run... and then everything green lights and you're cleared to activate the hologram. Time to see if your crazy idea worked.

You step forwards, and reach out to touch the handle of the sword you'd planted into the memorial on LOPAN.

"Ganos, if you're in there... I hope you remember me," you say, before stepping back.

With the Whirr-HUM of a hologram forming, Ganos Lal appears before you.

"Well..." She remarks, "this is... different. Not the Atlantis Database, and not the Avalon matrix either..." The hologram turns around to look at the sword. "...Why is my memory matrix interfaced with a Sword?"
"Because that's where your body ended up after you died," you say. "We cremated you and put you in there as a sort of... memorial. I wasn't sure if any of this DNA coding would work."

Ganos turns around to face you, frowning. "I feel as if I should know you, somehow, even if you're not recorded in either of the databases."

"I'm Roxy Lalonde," you reintroduce yourself. "We were, sort of close friends at some point."

"I see..." Ganos muses. "I suppose you'd have to be to choose a sword for my ashes. Not the most unusual of choices, but certainly one I'm not opposed to. I think Merlin and Artoria would approve of the idea."

"Speaking of Artoria," you start, "she's safe and sound back at the SGC. We were able to revive her from the cryo pod and stabilize her wounds."

"Artoria was within Avalon's cave?" Ganos blinks. "That's... Hrm. Clearly I never returned to Avalon to check after I made the- but then why do I feel as if a mystery has been solved?" She looks at you, a bit of awe in her eyes. "There's a device trying to scry my memories from what remains of my body within the sword?"

"Yup," you nod.

"You're rather clever, aren't you, Miss Lalonde?" Ganos asks. "I'll admit I'm rather relieved to hear that Artoria is alive, though, concerned to hear that she was in that state to begin with. Mordred, I'm guessing?"

"From what she's told us, yeah," you nod. "Um, but, ah... Mordred is still around, too."

"That's concerning." Ganos frowns. "Tell me everything that I've missed out on."

Chapter End Notes

There's a lot to think about when it comes to the "Ultimate Self Meta." An existence can spread across multiple timelines, or dimensions... or in some cases, reassembling pieces of a person spread across different holographic data resources.

Roxy's doing her best to see if she can basically remake a person from old scattered pieces. But... that person will never be there. Even with this Hologram business... the hologram is innately aware of that nature. Just another version of Ganos Lal that has outlived the original person. ... Again.

Anyways yeah. That's about all I got to say about that.
"So... Our Trump Card has gone Rogue, our Force of Nature has been forced back to mortal and captured, and our Negotiator has been slain." The Ascendant known to many as HUNT frowned as he turned to face the woman with skin as golden as a sun. "Tell me, Trance, why is it that our plans fall in this critical moment?"

"Well, Dylan, I believe it has more to do with how inattentive you were to Mordred's wishes. Losing Rommy..." She shakes her head. "Well, that is all to do with how we let Mordred slip her leash to begin with. The fact that she has yet to Re-Ascend following her attempt to capture the Astro Megaship tells us she is still alive following her fall- a feat she would not have been able to perform when we first recruited her. She is powerful- more so than we ever anticipated thanks to the Fissure's Energy empowering all those it touches."

"You choose to blame ME for this?" Hunt asks, narrowing his eyes at her.

"You did ignore Mordred's requests over fueling your own stomach," Trance answers. "And you only noticed these events had transpired after Rommy failed to appear to your summons. Your inattentiveness has failed us all, Hunt. Mordred is loose because of your failures. You are our leader. You refuse to let anyone move out of step of your plans verbally, and yet when it comes down to it," she steps towards him, leveling glowing eyes towards his own, chilled ones. "You don't back up your actions with words."

"Your words edge on treason, Trance, be careful with what comes next from your mouth," Hunt warns her.

"More boasting," Trance smirks. "Let us see how long Becca or Harper stay in line- or Tyr, for that matter- when all you have is fear and boasts and no actions to back them up. The other Ascendants- the Ancients and the Others- they're expendable. But us? Our team? We are not. You cannot lose us more of us without your plans failing." She reaches up, and lightly pokes the man on his forehead. "We are Andromeda. With or without you, Dylan Hunt, we will persist and we will achieve our own goals. So you had best figure out a way to change your goals to better align with our wishes, or else we WILL leave."

And with that, she turns and leaves- a glimmering tail of starlight swishing behind her as she walked away, and traveled to a different area of the Ascended Plane.

And so Hunt stood there, growling.

"Mordred must be brought to heel," he would inevitably decide.

Chapter End Notes

Hunt still doesn't get it.
"Heyyy! Skylla!!"

Your name is Skylla Koriga, and you look up from your work helping to weed a garden in the Villein Village to see Joey Claire, Polypa Goezee, and... a human woman you've never seen before approaching from down the long winding road back to Diaspora.

You smile and wave back at them.

You wonder what this is about?

"Howdy there. What's up?" You greet them once they're in range. "An' who's your friend with the fancy face art?"

"It's a long story," Joey says. "Where's Bronya? We need to talk."

"Hey, Bronya," you quietly knock at the door to Karako's nursery. "Joey and Polypa are here."

"Just a minute," Bronya answers. A little bit later, she opens the door, and quietly closes it behind her.

"How's Karako?" You ask.

"Finally sleeping," Bronya smiles. "Thankfully. The poor thing tired himself out so badly with last night's coughing fits."

"That's good," you smile, and lead your... well. You lead your MATESPRIT through your have to the main dwelling room, where Joey, Polypa, and the woman, YEESHA, sit on the spare couch sized for Villein visitors to the dwelling.

"Joey, Polypa," Bronya smiles, "to what do we owe the pleasure?"

"Just coming to visit, and doing some networking," Joey says, standing up, and briefly resting her weight on her cane. "Bronya, this is Yeesha, she's an ally we made just recently."

"It's a pleasure to meet you both," the red-haired woman bows slightly in greeting.

"You too..." Bronya frowns. "Joey, what's this about?"

Joey explains, remaining standing for the moment, "Her people are called the D'ni and they have the ability to travel to different worlds."
You feel Bronya take a sharp breath upon hearing those words, and she takes a seat down on one of your more troll-sized couches. You sit down next to her, holding her hand.

"So," she starts, "Elwurd and Lynera-?"

"Joey, Dammek, and Callie found and stopped their rogue Mofang Cruiser," Polypa explains. "We've got Lynera in custody. Elwurd and the rest of her crew escaped, though."

"I see," Bronya considers that for a moment. "I... Thank you for letting me know. If you're asking me to come visit her though-"

"No, no," Joey shakes her head, smiling apologetically. "Nothing like that. Lynera isn't... exactly taking Visitors right now anyways."

"There's more to the story than you're telling us, isn't there?" You deduce.

"She went through a very traumatic event," the woman, Yeesha, explains. "Her mind was gifted in a way- leaving her able to perceive events in a manner the others were unable to."

"What do you mean?" you ask, frowning.

"Basically," Polypa summarizes, "she spent all these last few months since the Rift formed in real time, while the rest of the crew kept reliving the same few hours again and again and again until Joey and the others intervened."

"Oh by the Mother Grub," Bronya breathes out. "I wouldn't wish that fate on even my worst enemy."

"Me either," you grimace. "How's that even possible? Wasn't Lynera, like...? Rage-bound? Not Time-bound?"


"Some people are just unlucky like that," Joey sighs as she sits back down. "Though it's arguable that she wasn't driven mad by her own aspect, if that's the case. That much direct exposure to the Rift energy could do anything to a person."

Silence fills the room, and the conversation stalls, so you change subjects. "So. What else brings you three down here beyond letting us know you got Lynera?"

"Well," Joey begins. "Networking, for one thing. We've finalized some general alliance stuff with most everyone immediately involved, so we're spreading out to do talks with the other allies."

"Such as the big silent dudes who can magic up matter out of nowhere," Polypa grins, motioning at your hive with her eyes.

...You'd honestly forgotten that, with how homey it is. At first glance the pale marble textures would seem like perfectly carved stone. But they're not. Villein technology allows them to generate materials at command- sculpting, and 3D PRINTING entire structures at will.

"And beyond that, we're here offering a gift of sorts," Joey says, decaptchalogueing a curiously locked book. "This is a Linking Book, the tech of Yeesha's people that lets them travel to other worlds... or, in cases of Books that Yeesha has worked her specific brand of writing magic on, to places within the same world."
She uses a key to undo a lock, and opens the book, and springing to life on the first page is...

"What in tarnation?!" You stare at it in shock.

"My goodness!" Bronya gasps.

A living picture!? It's a familiar view of garden outside of Joey Claire's Hive. Hell, you can even see Mierfa working in the garden right then and there!

"We're going to be talking to the Villein about whether or not they want a structure to house books like this," Joey continues. "We're already building a small library in Diaspora's Library- heh- to house books that'll allow quick transport between the different settlements. Our eventual Goal is to have a means of fast travel between the huge cultural centers across the Settlement Planets as people spread out. And regardless of what the Villein decide on," Joey closes the book, locks it, and hands it over to you. "This is so you two can come and visit more often, if you want to. I'll have a Return book at my hive that goes to the closest rest stop near to here if we don't build a Book Hub. And if we do, then we'll have a link to a specific place back in Diaspora's library."

"Thank you," Bronya smiles, accepting the book and holding it to her chest. "It's such a long hike to take."

"This is how you're getting around the Rift stopping Gate Travel to Milky Way, isn't it?" You guess.

"Yep," Polypa nods. "There's a specific pair of books in the SGC and on the Beltus that're going to be exclusive to those places for security reasons, but yeah. Basically."

"Yeah." Joey shifts in her seat, and you finally take notice a book resting on her left hip. You wonder if it's one of the same books? "That's pretty much it. Beyond that, Stargates can be destroyed. We're hoping to have a backup network of Books between the Settlement planets just in case of accidents."

"There are also other plans to create bridges to certain parallel dimensions as well, to restrict potentially unsafe use of the Quantum Mirror," Yeesha says, "however, that is something that will require further negotiations with certain potentially wary individuals who may be afraid of meeting with their parallel selves."

"What we're doing here with this is basically a trial run," Joey says. "See how things go small scale, slowly escalate from there."

"This could be huge," Bronya says. "And... and anyways, if you'd like to make a "link" to this Hive, I wouldn't be opposed. I'm actually sort of interested in watching how the process works."

Yeesha smiles then. "It would be my honor. Where would you like the return point to be?"

Chapter End Notes

Checking in with these two for a bit, they're doing fine. Also, bumping the timeline ahead a bit further. Hopefully we'll get to the point that Atlantis' arc will take off again sooner rather than later. I'm getting itchy on that front.

Alas, the timeline isn't ready yet, and there's still some loose threads to tidy up and stitch back into place before we can move forwards.
Question for the Readers: How would YOU speed up your daily life if you could use a book to go from one point on a planet to another? Any family or friends you'd visit more frequently? You can leave it as a vague "yes" if you want to.

DIASPORA DATE: 04/13/0005.

Hours later, and with a paired set of VRRRMMMSSHHHHshhhes, you are Polypa Goezee, and you are HOME again, feeling the satisfaction of a job well done.

You yawn and stretch out in the late evening sun, and you grin. "Man! I love this book travel. I could get used to it."

Your Kismesis grins, "Hah! Sure."

You two head into the cabin.

"Hey!" Mierfa greets you from the couch, putting a book down. "Welcome back, you two. How'd it go?"

"Good, though we're going to be discussing more stuff in the morning," Joey answers, slumping down onto the couch next to Mierfa. "The Villein are really interested in all the Book stuff, but more so about meeting the Bahro. Apparently they sound like some distant relatives of another race the Villein knew at some point?" She shrugs. "It's weird, but we'll be talking more tomorrow."

"The wonders of Linking Books!" You grin. "We'd be staying with Bronya and Skylla otherwise."

"Speaking of, how'd Bronya take the news?" Mierfa asks next.

"Better than we'd thought," Joey answers. "She didn't want to talk about it much."

"That's understandable," Mierfa nods. "Oh. I heard from Wanshi and Lanque while you were out."

Joey sits to attention. "The Egg? Is everything okay?"

Mierfa nods. "It's fine. Just that it's displaying some odd traits is all."

"Odd?" You ask. "Odd how?"

"The shell showing swirled colors," Mierfa answers. "Red and Teal."

You blink, Joey blinks, Mierfa just chuckles.

"Olive and Cerulean averages to Teal," she continues. "And that's the color it was starting to show before the red came in."

"So... what's that mean for the grub?" Joey asks.
"No idea until it hatches," Mierfa shrugs. "Mutations are a thing that happens. But everything else about the shell and egg development is on course for normal, so Wanshi's hopeful nothing wrong will happen in the mean time."

Joey doesn't seem convinced, but she sighs. "I guess... that's the best we can hope for."

You feel for her on that front. It's been alternating who exactly's been feeling the most concern at any given time, but it's been cycling through the three of you- that fear that something wrong might go wrong with the egg due to, well... A number of factors.

You did talk with Roxy Lalonde for while when she came through a couple of days ago to work on the Hologram Device on LOPAN.

"That kind of concern," she'd said, "is pretty natural for a new parent. I was so scared something would go wrong with Rose... And then we had John suddenly to worry about." She'd smiled. "Well. That was a long time ago for me, now. A whole 'nother life, even..."

"Well," you speak up, echoing the words that followed. "Whatever goes wrong will go wrong, and we'll deal with it as it happens. Won't keep us from caring about the little grub any, right?"

That works to cheer Joey up some. "Right." She nods. "Weird mutations or not, that Grub's our kid. Whatever happens... They're ours to care for."

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**EARTH DATE: OCTOBER 5TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 04/15/0005.**

Your name is still Polypa Goezee and you can't help but laugh. "Did you run into a tree or something?"

"Dammek's got one hell of a right hook," Tegiri gripes as you meet him for lunch that day at some cafe on Earth- a large poofy bandage stuck to his left cheek making him look ridiculous. "And I know he was holding back too, cause he only hit me the once. Who knew the guy liked those stupid red wings so much anyways?"

"Well," you smile at your Matesprit, "he did design the thing."

"I know that," Tegiri gripes. "Still!"

You and he go through the process of entering the cafe, ordering food, and finding a table to wait at.

"So." He resumes the conversation, "How're things going back on Diaspora?"

"Well, I'm here, aren't I?" you grin. "Negotiations are done, and the Villein have agreed to a book shelter hub. Though, they wanted stone Linking Tablets instead of Linking Books. More sturdy, they said."

"They can make Linking Stones?" Tegiri blinks.
"Bahro Specialty, apparently," you shrug. "It was so much fun watching one of them make the thing. They just sort of wove the covering cloth out of these grass reeds and then did some weird magic to it to turn it into actual burlap, or something like that. I don't even know how it worked, but it was fun to watch."

"Huh," he shakes his head. "Well. At any rate. I'm glad you're having fun." He cracks a smile- then winces. "Oww."

You can't help but laugh. "So, uh. How're repairs going?"

"Slowly," he gripes. "Since we have to wait for Cla'dia to manufacture new wings and they're not on high priority given the Mega-PLAS, we've settled just for tearing off the broken mechanisms entirely and leaving them off until we can get replacements."

"'Mega-Plas'?' You ask, frowning. "That's a new term. Sounds like a model kit brand."

"That's basically what people are thinking when they look at them," Tegiri answers. "They're customizable model kits in Mecha size. The base frames are all the same, but the pilots are going around and ordering their specific customization and special transformation gimmicks already."

"So what's it mean?" you ask.

"Mega- obviously shorthand for Megazord- P.L.A.S.- Short hand for, Precision Lancer Armament Series," Tegiri answers. "Since, well, The Ruby Lancer was the first prototype made, the name's basically stuck for the series even if most of them don't go for lancer type armaments." He shakes his head. "Of course, Ashler thinks most of the Pilots decided to take the brand name 'Mini-Pla' and made up the acronym after. Who knows. I don't really care how they got a name now that they have that name."

"Yeah, seems kinda silly, in retrospect," you shake your head. "Couldn't they have gone with something that doesn't sound like they're saying it's bland?" You then shift into a stuffy announcer voice and go "Blah Blah Blah Blah, Yak Yak Yak Yak."

Tegiri laughs, bracing through the pain of a punched cheek. "Oh, geeze, I didn't even think of that."

It's a nice date after that ice breaker.

Chapter End Notes

When in doubt, riff an existing product as a reference.

Reader Question: Place your bets! What blood color do you expect the grub to hatch with given a swirled shell?
INTERMISSION: Vault of Vala

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Your name is VALA MAL DORAN, and you've gotten your payments from Earth and the Jaffa. But, well, while you were getting that you heard about a planet called P8X-412 which you ... MAY have sneaked a TINY PEAK at the gate address of and realized it was a world you once ruled when you were Qetesh.

Apparently they'd started gaining powers and these Andromeda people were going around pretending to be the cause of it.

So... Time to do the right thing (BLUH!) and put on the old cloak and dagger and robes and set your 'people' free.

Okay, so, basically you've... still... SORT OF. Innocently?? Pretended to still be Qetesh.

Yeeeeeah. Not your brightest move, but. Well. They had a lot of treasure you liked and would gladly keep it stockpiled.

You... don't really NEED most of Qetesh's treasure given your latest windfall but. Hell. You've got a few artifacts you've since stowed there under the guise of being her that. Well.

You'd rather have them safely stowed away and not in any stupid Ascendant's hands.

Soooo. Yeah.

Here you are, sneaking through the streets at night to reach "Your" Temple, and get what you need and get out.

...Your job is made a bit easier because you were able to use some of your "Store Credit" from Earth to get one of those Captcha-card-thingies.

You get in, start retrieving all the important YOU STUFF and not the QETESH STUFF-- okay, you take some bits of gold here and there just incase of a rainy day, but you leave most of it behind, you SWEAR!!-- and then prepare your dress and get the voice modulator thingy and prepare a hologram device that-

"Lady Qetesh!!"

Fuck.

You just happened to run into one of the most stupidly bli---nnggh YOU MEAN LAVISHLY DEVOTED of Qetesh's followers who happened to be praying at an ungodly hour of the night.

"Yes?" You ask, forcing back the wince at the memory of your voice being like THAT. "What is it, Devoted?"

"You... you've returned! The interlopers said you would never appear again and that you had been
slain in battle!” The poor girl beams, eyes wide as she stares at you with hope.

"Ah... Yes, well, rumors of my demise have been greatly exaggerated, as well as possibly properly reported to some degree," you cough. "I have lost my fleets. The System Lords have all but crumbled into obscurity, and the state of the Galaxy has made it clear that there isn't room for a Goddess like me in it anymore."

"But surely, you are here to prove the interlopers wrong!" The girl says. "That you are alive and well! And that-"

"I'm retiring," you quickly blurt out.

"...You're what?" the girl stares, a little bit heart broken.

...Fuck it. You can't stand the puppy eyes.

"I've seen the change in the Galaxy's course, and I've decided to retire to a small moon-" Uh, quick quick, what's something they've never heard of- OH! That movie you watched on Earth. "New York, it's called. And it's home to lots of cute, puffy, marshmallowy sort of creatures who have a strange sense of trade negotiations involving streams and how not to cross them." You start rambling. Oh YOU, do you start rambling. "But in the mean time I have decided to give you my people, my so darling loyal people, fractions of my power."

"You have?" The girl's eyes widen.

"Yes, I have begun giving you my power, and soon, I will no longer have any left to give," you lie your ass off. "So... I came here to leave a goodbye message for you all. Please, allow me to record it, and ensure that the people of this world see it for their own eyes."

"Of course, Lady Qetesh!" she nods fervently.

"Now, now," you quickly say, "none of that, my darling." You temporarily turn off the voice modulator. "Soon I'll just be a normal woman just like you. You can call me..." fuck it. "Vala. If you ever see me again after today. But that will be a secret between us girls, alright?"

"I... Of course, Miss Vala," the girl nods again, very devoted. Very foolish.

Oh. Your chest feels all kind of wet and drowning for a moment. Is this what GUILT tastes like?

You don't really like that. Not one bit.

Chapter End Notes

Vala is an interesting character to deal with, that she is...
INTERMISSION: Playdate Introductions

Chapter Summary

Those four are going to be Trouble with a capital T someday. That they are...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Waah!!"

*SPLASH!*

"HAAHA! GOT YOU!"

"we got you we got you! hehehe!"

"Bluuuhhh.... You got me alright!"

*KASPLOOOSH!*

"Now I got YOU!!"

"SHE GOT ME!! SHE GOT ME!!"

"she got me tooooo!"

A day at the beach was exactly what kids of all ages and all walks of life from all sorts of planets desire when they're aware of what the concept of 'a day at the beach' even means, exactly.

And so it was that three kids from a certain other dimension chased each other around in the ankle-deep water at some still unnamed beach on what could have been any planet at all in the Alternia Galaxy. It was certainly one of the nicest beaches across the various planets that Alternia's citizens had fled to after the moon crash.

Your name is Baizil Soleli, and two of those kids are alternate universe versions of yourself and your sister. Carefree, and smiling, and laughing, they're chasing around and splashing the third kid- Amisia.

Her guardian rests beneath a large umbrella a bit nearby- a fellow purple blood, except from that other dimension too.

Chahut Maenad.

Like you- Like your parallel sibling and self- she's ditched the clown paint. Ditched the clothes and rags and even her sign after recovering from the hospital.

Neither of you have barely spoken at all save for idle chatter arranging for Amisia, Barzum, and Baizli to have their get-togethers and grow up as children together.
There's been some attempts by that Jade girl, Wanshi, from the caverns, to get this other girl she's been keeping eyes on to join them, but the charge in question, Tirona, has been... reluctant, to say the least.

You know some kids have taken great to the Rift stuff. Others haven't, Tirona among them or so Wanshi's told you.

Those three out in the water? Splashing and giggling and laughing? You've seen nothing yet from those three as far as powers or changes goes. You guess there's some internal fears about not blending in on Tirona's part. You know you've dealt with... well. "Similar" isn't exactly the word you want to be using, but it's the only one your thinkpan is drudging up.

You can't help but wonder about the future of these kids.

"Baizil!"

You're shaken from your musings, and look up to see Wanshi heading down the path to the beach and clutching at a towel-skirt behind her is a little wolf-ized Troll girl.

Triona Kasund.

Well. Looks like you just wasted about a minute of introspection. Oh well. Today's about to get interesting, that's for sure.

You wave and smile, and then call the kids over to come meet who you hope can be their new friend.

You see Chahut smile a kind, motherly smile as Amisia immediately takes to the new girl and declares her 'new fluffy friend!'

You think things might be looking up.

Chapter End Notes

A short scene that demanded to be written. Takes place at any given point in the timeline after the Rift formed. No real dedicated place for it otherwise.
A tour happens.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 04/20/0005.

Your name is Jonas Quinn...

"So, wait, you're saying we get to go to this 'D'ni Cavern' as an official Mission?"

And you are completely surprised by this shocking development.

"Yes," General Landry nods. "General O'neill's whirlwind press tour has gotten an extra leg to it, and he's requested SG-1 to come join him down there."

"Hell. YES!" Mitchel exclaims. "This is gonna be great!"

"I've loved those games," Jude smiles. "I'm interested in seeing how it all stacks up."

"I'll call Roxy and let her know we might be a couple days," Cassandra says.

"No need for that," Landry says. "There'll be a book to return you to the SGC at night... And isn't That a weird sentence to say?" With a shake of his head, he smiles, and says, "Good luck, SG-1."

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PVVVVMMM-SHING!!!

With a burst of sparkles and light, SG-1 appeared inside the DRC Conference Chamber... Also known as the office of Doctor Richard Watson.

Your name is Jack O'neill, and you check your watch. "You're late."

"Sorry, Sir," Mitchel apologizes, "the Daedalus had some problems triangulating where to drop us off at."
"Funny, that," you say. "Joey and Okurii are already waiting for us with the rest of the DRC groupies."

"Waiting where?" Jonas asks, glancing around and seeing nobody else.

"Through the book on the table, obviously," you roll your eyes. "Now come on and use the danged thing already so we can get this day overwith and I can hitch a ride back with you to Colorado."

Jude eagerly steps up to the pale green bound book on the table, and grins as he reaches a hand out for the fancy moving picture. "I can't believe I'm actually going to do this."

"Believe it, Jude," Cassie claps him on the shoulder.

Jude laughs, slams his hand onto the pic, and fades out of sight with that weird sound. Cassandra follows suit a moment later without hesitation. Mitchel and Jonas head through next, and you follow them, pausing at the picture.

It's rotating.

You get the feeling you're going to be dizzy by the end of the day.

You press your hand to the picture and woosh. Black void, then sudden reassertment of gravity beneath your feet and- ooof.

Yeah. Okay. That's a rotating building alright. You can feel the gravity tugging at your ears in a weird way.

"Ah, finally," the guy named Victor Laxman greets. "Now that everyone's here, we can begin the tour. But before we do, any questions?"

"Yeah, I got one," Joey Claire pipes up, peering up at the bright blue sky above. "Have you ever mapped this planet's star charts?"

"Uh, no, not yet," Laxman answers. "It's on our list of things to do eventually, but we haven't had time for that yet. Why do you ask?"

"Just some unnerving sense of Dejavu, is all," Joey shakes her head.

"Well," Okurii claps her hands. "I for one am really happy to get today going. Shall we start?"

"Of course," Marie Sutherland nods. "Let's head on in through the airlock."

She waves her left hand in front of a large stone and metal door, and it slides open with a pulse and hum.

"Fancy that," Mitchel whistles. "This place is high tech."

"We call it Gahreesen," Laxman explains. "It's a compression of 'Garo areeu Senaren' or 'Great Structure of Protection.' We couldn't recover the proper name for the Age from any of the existing documentation. It's possible it was unnamed to keep people from finding out about it."

You nod, "Hard to name a place without a name, that's for sure."
"Heh, kind of like Alternian Movie Titles," Okurii giggles. "We don't say the titles in casual conversation usually."

"The D'ni Maintainers Guild used this place as a training ground, among other things," Sutherland continues as you enter the airlock chamber. "High Security everywhere. They did things here they didn't want anyone from D'ni to know about."

"These devices," Laxman lifts up his left hand, showing a watch thing strapped to it, "are called KIs." He pronounces it "key."

"Kai," Marie corrects.

"No, it's Key," Laxman counters.

"It's a subject that's up to debate, and let's just leave it at that," the final member of the DRC's tour group here, the hunter DOUGLAS SHARPER, interjects. "Key, Kai, it's all the same to me. They're basically glorified cellphones."

"More than that," Joey says. "Callie used Mike's for a while. It was basically an all in one sort of thing. She used it to get energy readings off of a Rift of all things."

"Anyways," Laxman coughs. "The Maintainers used them as communication devices and pass-badges. This whole facility is built around them. Visitors were highly restricted and watched."

"We're working to wedge the doors open permanently," Marie says as the first set of doors closes. "But for the moment it's still working under the old safety rules. Try to keep up."

"So, what's this room for?" Jonas asks. "Searches?"

"Basically, the Maintainers Guild didn't want people bringing in book supplies here. They'd take in stuff that could be confiscated on one side, and then release a bunch of Ink Seeking Beetles from the other," Marie explains, motioning at the respective grates. One looks like a beetle, the other looks like a ticket booth window at a movie theater. "Once that was done, the doors would be opened." She signals the next door, and it opens.

You head out into the hallway beyond, and Joey pauses, staring at a crack in the wall opposite. "What's that?"

"Structural damage," Laxman explains. "We're not sure what caused it, but it was sometime after the Fall, or just during it, we're not sure yet. It gets worse a bit further ahead."

You head down the hallway for a bit, and then duck into a room whose doors were definitely forced open a long time ago. There's a bit of damage to the ceiling.

"Looks like scorch marks to me," you say.

"You'd think, but it's not," Laxman says. "We're not sure what caused it either."

"This is one of the locker rooms," Sharper says- and then stops upon seeing something in one of the lockers. "And that's new."
"What is it?" Okurii asks.

"It's a Bahro Stone," Joey says, moving over to the locker, and peering at a tan stone tablet with a burlap cloth plastered over it. "Looks like it heads to a balcony somewhere."

"I'll fire a message off to Phil," Sharper says, grabbing at his "KI" and-

"Woah!" Jude exclaims as a holographic screen sprouts out from the side of the device. "Is that working Hologram technology on a wrist mounted scale?"

"Ah, yeah, that it is," Laxman nods. "The D'ni have a lot of Imagers and Imager based tech all over the Cavern. Nothing quite as compact as the KI was available for mass market consumption just yet at the time of the Fall, though."

"Well, there's debate about that too," Marie says. "Nick just translated some interesting documents from the second building indicating the Nexus Terminals across the City were just being installed during the Fall in prep for a mass release of the KI technology to the public."

"Huh, fancy that," Laxman grunts, peering at the stone. "Speaking of, Sharper, let Phil know it looks like that the stone goes to either Bevin or Seret. It looks like the right kind of layout for that style."

"Bevin and Seret?" Jonas asks.

"D'ni Neighborhoods," Marie answers. "Two fairly identical ones, all things considered. You'd never know they were different if not for the lamp styles in them. Or the clock, or the mushrooms, or-" She shakes her head. "They're actually really close to eachother, coordinate wise, too. The KI's GPS system gets them confused still."

"Yeah, yeah, working on that," Laxman grunts.

"Ah, Phil got back to me awful quick," Sharper remarks. "Apparently the Bahro left a new monument on that balcony dedicating recent events to memory."

"I'll have Mike check it out later," Laxman shakes his head. "Wonder why they left the stone here for, though? Surely there's a better place for it."

"I can come back to it later," Joey promises. "Let's keep moving on?"

"Right," Laxman nods, and leads you on past the Locker room into a large room with a huge machine standing in the center of the back wall. "This here is a KI dispenser. Put your hand in it, and it'll give you a KI device."

Joey Claire doesn't hesitate and scoops one up for herself. The rest of you follow suit, and while Laxman starts giving a quick rundown of how the things work, Marie elaborates on some fun facts you're already aware of.

"So, we've been wanting to field test how good of a range these things have within our own local universe. Doctor Watson approved us giving you all a set of KI devices for that kind of testing. There's been some hope that maybe now that we're opening up to the public, we can see about reverse engineering the technology."
"I'll make sure to grab a couple copies for Callie to mess with," Joey says, pausing.

You glance over at her. She's got that LOOK in her eyes- the one you're sure you'd gotten a bunch of times when you planned on taking off suddenly and-

"Excuse me for a moment, I need to check something out."

And then she walks towards a door hidden behind a barricade.

"Um, wait, there's-" Marie starts.

"A gash in the floor behind the door?" Joey asks before opening it, and...

"Now how'd you know that was there?" You ask.

Joey says nothing, and instead hops over the gap, stopping, peering upwards, and then spreading her wings and taking off.

Well, Crap.

"JOEY!!" Your name is Jude Harley, and you leap after your sister over the gash in the floor, and then find yourself confronted with a pile of settled debris and rubble, and a huge hole in the ceiling.

Joey took off up and through it. Now how do you...?

"There's a ladder on the other side!" Sutherland calls out.

"Right!" You head around through the door, and then through a damaged hole in the wall just beyond that. You find more lockers, both with ladders on them heading up to the top side. One of them has some rubble spanning the gap between the edge to the next level. You use that, and then climb across the debris to the next floor.

You find Joey leaning next to a window, looking out over the linking chamber you arrived in, chuckling tiredly to herself.

"Joey?" You ask, approaching her. "What's wrong?"

"This place... I think it's a D'ni version of The Garrison," Joey answers. "The architecture is a different style, and there's no clear signs for the Stargate mounting tracks in the Well, but... All the damage matches up with what we did when we raided the place, somehow." She shakes her head. "I need to go outside to be sure."

And then she spreads her wings again, and takes off through the window- soaring upwards into the air above the building you're in.

You watch after her, hovering in place for a good minute or two, and yet spinning, because the building you're in is turning and she's not.
And then she descends again, a somber look in her eyes.

"Well?" You ask when she comes to the window again.

"It's the Garrison, even though the second building's a lot more intact, the middle bridge is missing just like..." she trails off. "I think I'd like to move on, now. Actually."

You nod, perfectly understanding of that.

You are now Cassandra Fraiser.

Armed with KIs and able to use a Nexus Book's internal mechanisms properly, your group moved on to the next tour location.

You arrive at the default link available to all KI devices- "Ferry Terminal." It's a large stone paved plaza next to a large building on one side, and a large, towering, angular-arch shaped structure set opposite the plaza, with a dim, orange hued lake set inbetween. The railing separating the dry ground from the lake is marked with the symbol of that grand arch-shaped structure.

There are glowing lanterns spaced occasionally along the railing, too... the only lighting around, because the sky above is dark colored- almost dark as night, but brown in hue.

You're properly underground.

"Welcome to the Island city, Ae'gura," Marie starts. "The central hub- the zero point of everything within the Cavern of D'ni. That arch out there is called Kerath's Arch- named after one of the D'ni Kings. Some lore says that he rode a giant lizard on a boat through the arch just to reference some even more ancient lore from the D'ni history back before they'd come to D'ni."

"Seems a bit overkill," O'neill remarks.

"Kerath was a bit extra like that," Sharper says. "Even for the D'ni." And then he motions for you all to turn around, which your group does, and-

"Oh. WOW," Jude breathes.

Towering, is the only way to describe it.

This is the shore line, and there's a staircase that zigzags up and up and up through rocks and buildings, and then there's nothing but a towering mountain spire dotted with glowing dots going up even higher and higher- with a huge building in the middle- before terminating in a large glowing red dot, slowly blinking on and off.

Marie, Laxman, and Sharper start heading for the stairs, and so you all follow.

"This place is amazing." Jonas asks, "How far down underground are we?"

"The Great Shaft goes down about three miles beneath the surface," Laxman says. "D'ni's a bit further away and a bit further down. The Cavern itself has similar scale in radius and height. We're still mapping the outer edges to be sure of the exact numbers, though. So it's a bit in flux. Plus there's
the side caverns too. We're still finding new tunnel access points to those areas, and there's no telling how far D'ni spread underground over the ten thousand years they were here."

"This main cavern was basically a large bubble that had formed within the magma rocks when the D'ni arrived," Marie takes it over from there. "They started here on Ae'gura, and spread out in all directions to cover everything."

"Though, there is some debate as to whether or not they brought the lake algae that made it glow or if that was written in," Laxman says. "Given that it doesn't show up anywhere else on earth, it was likely brought in, I say. But, you never know with the art."

You ascend what's called "The Great Stairs" and boy, are they sure big and great and tall. Periodic landings all the way up to the first main plaza.

"Welcome to, uh... what was it again? 'Takotah' or 'Dakotah'?

"I think Nick was going with 'Tokotah' this week," Marie answers.

"Right, welcome to Tokotah Plaza," Laxman motions around. "Through the stalagmite is the path straight to the Guild Hall Entrance, to the immediate right is the path through the Gallery and Art District, to the right and a bit further down are the stairs to the Palace of Kings library, and a longer route beyond that to the actual Linking Book Library, but the route is blocked at the moment by some collapsed rock structures we're clearing still. To the immediate left is the Tokotah Alley-"

Marie chimes in with a handy, "Mind the gap!"

"-Right, and then to the left and a bit further down is the Museum," Laxman pauses, then, to Joey, adds, "Yes, we had a Todelmer book there at one point."

"Huh," She nods. "Good to know."

You're lead to the TOKOTAH BUILDING, which has a huge tent structure set up in front of it.

"Now, Ae'gura is more like, the original, historical city district, comparatively," Marie rambles on. "On the Cavern Wall is what we call The City Proper, which was basically where everyone actually lived their lives, pretty much. Ae'gura has a few other districts in it, but the routes are blocked off at the moment, and we're still trying to figure out ways to safely clear them and access them, beyond Linking Books."

You get distracted for a few minutes by DRC workers and a few startled "Explorers" with the same book that Joey and Sharper have with them. Most of them gather around Joey for a few minutes, thanking her for freeing the Bahro and calling her "Grower" like it's her rank now instead of Colonel. "Grower Claire" and stuff like that.

Joey seems pretty off put by it, all things considered. Thankfully, though, they all head back to whatever they were doing after giving her their thanks. Some respectful folk down here, it seems.

You head inside the building, and up some stairs to an office the DRC had set up there. Sharper seems a bit bemused by being in there for some reason. Your vibes don't really give you any reasons for it, though, not that they would if it doesn't prompt a disaster.

What does prompt vibes of imminent disaster, though, is Laxman laying out a short course of the
next few steps of the tour. Something about taking a visit to one of those previously mentioned
NEIGHBORHOODS is giving you a warning vibe.

It's hard to parse almost at first, but then you get a grasp on it right as the time to avert it rapidly---

"Hey, actually," you quickly speak up, motioning at Jude's sister with a smile. "I'm sort of more
interested in looking around here in the City a bit more. If that's alright?"

Joey eagerly agrees to wanting to do the same, and Sharper basically volunteers to keep an eye on
you two while the others go on ahead.

Laxman seems displeased, but Marie lets it go through, and just like that, crisis averted.

For the most part.

The levels of disaster have basically shrunk to the barest minimum level. Once everyone else goes
through a Nexus book to get to the next tour destination, you sigh in relief.

"Bad vibes?" Joey asks.

"Yeah," you nod. "Felt like it could ruin any good will we're trying to build up here."

"I don't mind, but you're acting like you're psychic or can see the future or something," Sharper
asks., "what's up with that?"

"I basically get these vibes of disasters before they happen," you explain. "Impressions of good or
bad... basically after we ignored the time I said to not connect to a planet and we ended up dialing
into a black hole, people usually listen if I nudge things along or warn against doing something."

"Huh, like that Cassandra Truth myth, except people actually believe your predictions," Sharper
muses, and Joey gives him a look. "What? I can be just as nerdy as anyone down here. Why do you
look so surprised?"

"Nothing, nothing," Joey shakes her head. "Just... caught me off guard, that's all." Then, she looks to
you, "What now?"

"Mmh..." You peer out the window over the plaza, watching people work at moving crates or
wheeling large carts around... "Before we go looking around the city, do you think maybe we could
look around this office?"

Sharper laughs. "You know, I've actually been hoping for an opportunity to get alone in this room
for a while now."

Joey gives him a look, and says, "Let me guess. Hidden spy camera planting?"

"Nah," Sharper shakes his head. "I already have a Spy Room across the alley." He points out a
window towards one of the other buildings across the way. "Don't need that. Just wanted to see if I
could find a specific book."

"Oh?" You ask. "What kind of book?"

Sharper grins. "A Treasure Book."
"Treasure, huh?" Joey seems interested.

"Specifically, a book with a vault full of ancient D'ni Treasure," Sharper continues. "I think I know what age it is, though. Phil let something slip the other day about some talk he had with Yeesha. Full of trees and puzzles. It's one giant complex, ever changing password."

"Sounds like fun," Joey smiles. "I'm in."

Your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you've all gotten stopped by another crowd in a "Bevin" Neighborhood.

Most of them are fairly nice like the last group, except, a lot of them don't have the books with them, and there are a few who look fairly disgruntled.

"Really? All our hard work keeping the Military out of here, and you just give them a guided tour?" Someone finally speaks up, interrupting the otherwise pleasant conversation that had been happening. You're sort of shocked to see that its someone in their late teens. Less shocking is the fact that his skin is so pale it doesn't look like he's seen the sun in a year.

Everyone else still has a healthy looking tan, but this kid doesn't look like he's stepped outside in a very long time. That can't be good for his mental health, staying down here in such a deep, dark, cold cavern without even going to some Age to get some vitamin D and sunlight.

"Lay off it, Sid," one of the other late teens in the group grunts. "If you don't have anything nice to say-"

"Hey now. Let him speak," O'neill raises his hand. "I'm kinda curious what he has to say."

"Alright," this Sid kid steps forward. "You Military types don't belong down here. This is a civilian op. Get out, and leave us alone!"

"That it?" O'neill asks. "Because we're not here to take over."

"Please!" Sid scoffs. "As if! You guys hoarded the Stargate for ten years and only came clean when an Alien attacked us. All you want to do is hoard, hoard hoard and never let anybody else benefit from it!! I don't trust you! I don't trust any of you military types!!"

"Well, ain't you someone special," you mutter.

"You do realize that technology from Alternia and Earth's alliances and exploration of the various galaxies has impacted every day life, right?" O'neill asks. "Like, I'm pretty sure the last six or seven years of tech advancements in the everyday public life come from Technology that came from trade deals, or were stolen by the Trust in some way."

"Yeah, and that's why I don't trust you, because you pin the blame on EVERYTHING on the 'Trust!'" Sid shakes his head. "I don't think they even existed! Just like these 'Bahro' don't exist either! It's all lies! You're all in on it together! The D'ni, Yeesha, you fucking Aliens!!" He glares at Okurii, who stands there impassively. "You all want to take this Cavern from us and kick us out, Don't YOU!!?"
"God, Sid, you really know how to make an ass out of yourself, don't you?" the other teen from before sighs, placing his head in his hands and backing well away from the guy. As does most everyone else, save for a few other angry, disgruntled folk who nod in agreement.

"Do you even realize how dumb you sound right now?" Laxman asks. "Kid, just give it a rest."

"Like hell," Sid growls. "Like hell I'm going to give it a rest when you assholes come in here and try to take this Cavern away from us! Now where the hell's that Grower chick!? I got a piece of my mind to give her too!!"

Tension runs through the air, and you see Jude frown. You can see why Cassandra pulled Joey away from this, and Jude probably sees it too.

...It's also probably a good thing Vala got her payment and left for parts unknown, otherwise she'd probably stir up the pot more.

But, Joey Claire. That's what's going on. Isn't it?

You see Jude quietly cross his arms behind his chest, and start tapping at a KI hologram to compose a message.

"You realize-" Marie starts.

"I don't care what any of you bastards say," Sid continues on. "I'm right and you know I'm right! I'M RIGHT ABOUT THIS!" he yells, pointing at your group. "YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO STEAL EVERYTHING FROM US AND LEAVE US NOTHING BUT NDAS!"

"YEAH!" The other disgruntled ones chime in- though, a few have the decency to sound a bit uncertain about it.

"Good grief," Okurii sighs. "Sometimes, you just can't avoid the stupid people, can you?"

"WHAT DID YOU CALL ME!!?" And then Sid draws a fucking knife because of course he does.

"Woah, hey now!" And then most of the other disgruntled people back away rapidly. The rest back away a bit more slowly.

"Nobody said anything about knives!"

"Fuck this shit, I'm out!"

"WHERE ARE YOU COWARDS GOING?!" Sid whirls around, pointing his knife at one of the too slow to move back-up-ers.

You ask, quietly enough that only those people near you can hear, "Permission to Stun him before he hurts someone?"

Sid yells something incoherent, turning his back to you as he points the knife at someone who never even stood near him- the poor girl screams.

O'neill replies, "Granted."
"Double Granted," Okruii agrees.

Laxman and Marie share a look, then nod.

"Do it," Marie says. "While he's distracted."

You decapotchalogue a Zat, pre-armed, and PCH-ZYU!

The shot hits Sid and--

"What the hell?" you stare

--gets redirected straight into the knife, where it humms and builds up charge along the blade.

Sid whirls to face you, and then grins with something very unhinged. "I thought you'd try that, so I tazed myself every night to build up a resistance!"

And then lightning spreads across his whole body. Every civilian in the area screams and runs for cover. Laxman and Marie both take steps back and away for cover. Jude follows them.

Well. You guess his pale demeanor might have something to do with his powers too. Either that, or his constant self-tazing. Geeze. Who even does something like that??

"Well, lovely," Okruii laments. "He triggered with a lightning based Rift power, didn't he?"

"Yeah... I guess I did, didn't I?" Sid grins, and the lightning around his knife suddenly bolts outward, shaping into a very long form... A sword blade made of electricity and Zat energy. "You're first! Zappy Zappy!" And then he lunges at you.

You dodge to the side and yell- "Anyone bring a sword?" -hoping that fate provided somehow.

"HERE!" And then Okurii of all people decapotchalogues a freaking flashlight and throws it to you.

You catch it- and realize- wait, no. This isn't a flashlight.

You point it away from you and everyone else, and flick the switch.

SNAP-HISSS!!!

And out comes a green colored plasma blade- contrasting sharply to the blue sparks coming from Sid's weapon.

Everyone pauses and stares for a moment, and you can't help but remark, "That'll do."

And then Sid lunges at you again and you block his strike this time.

Hey! That actually worked!

Sid yells something incoherent, and just tries to press his blade through yours.

Yeah, no, not happening.
You easily knock him loose, and say, "I've had Fencing practice. Do you even have a strategy beyond-" You duck a swipe for your neck. "-Swinging Wildly?"

"DIIIIIIIIIE!!!!"

"GUESS NOT!"

It's actually refreshing for once to not be on the defense and outclassed by more refined, less rusty skills than yours. To actually be the one leading most of the fight.

You manage to secure a few strikes against the kid, but his electrical aura always flares up in strength around that area to block.

You end up doing a sort of long, drawn out dance around the whole neighborhood. Down some stairs, across a rock garden in a large pond. Up some stairs, into a small courtyard with a clock in the center, through a small book chamber area, across a bridge, up and around some upper balcony thing, back down into the first courtyard, and then dancing around a deactivated water fountain.

By that time, though, you've wasted enough time that Cassandra and Sharper are waiting in the plaza, and everyone else has taken cover somewhere else.

"Having fun, Cam?" Cassie asks, and you notice an Arai Beetle perched on her shoulder. Joey's watching, huh?

"I'd be better if this kid would tire out already!" you answer.

"Get him on the fountain," Sharper requests.

Sid doesn't even seem to hear the conversation, just roaring, and swinging angrily.

You're able to get on top of the fountain with a couple of leaps, and then you have the high ground. Sid stands in the bottom reservoir and just swings up at you rapidly.

Idly, your foot catches on something in the top of the fountain's top, and your attempt to dislodge it while fighting pulls up a nozzle of some kind- and then promptly gets bent out of shape by you stepping on it like a clumsy oaf.

Cassandra seems to have been waiting for that though, and yells out- "JUDE! NOW!"

And then the nozzle you bent out of shape starts spewing firework sparklers right into Sid's face.

He drops his knife to shield his face, and at the same time there's a rumble from within the fountain.

You wisely jump off of the thing before the fountain starts gushing water through the top area and down onto Sid's still electricity covered body.

**BRRRRZZYYYYYYYYAAAAPP!**

The kid goes down quick as his own electricity field shuts down to stop from killing himself.

Well, that was a fight.
The rest of the group and the former crowd emerge from across a tunnel/bridge area you didn't even bother exploring during the fight. Guess that explains where they went so quickly.

Your name is Okurii Leijon, and you're rather amused by the shenanigans going on.

"So, we lucked out with that Bahro stone in Gahreesen," Sharper explains after Mitchel asks what just happened. "It went to the Bevin Balcony where the firework controls were hidden away at. So Claire went there and we came here, where we told Harley and Victor to trigger the fountain on our signal."

You spot a glint of light from far up along one of the cavern walls surrounding the neighborhood, and realize that Joey's up there, spreading her wings and heading down to you.

She swoops over the whole place, and then circles the plaza before touching down- landing, right about the time some guys in blue colored hardhats link in and come to take custody of the Sid kid.

"Hey, Mitchel," Joey blinks. "Nice sword!"

"Hah, yeah," Mitchel deactivates the laser sword and moves to toss it back to you.

"No, keep it," you say. "I've got three more spares in my Sylladex anyways."

"...Why do you have four laser cutters inside your Sylladex?" Joey asks.

"Incase you lost yours on a mission while I was there and needed a spare, obviously," you answer.

"Ah," she nods. "That's frugal of you."

"Yeah, but you've been surprisingly stubborn about not losing yours, so," you shrug. "Kind of a wasted opportunity."

"Well, it came in handy for now," Joey answers. "So, not so wasted, after all."

"Fair, fair," you nod.

"THAT'S IT! I'M DONE!" and then a sharp voice garners everyone's attention as one of the DRC staff that had been present for this latest event storms out from the middle of the group. "Victor! I'm finished! I quit!"

"Doctor Kae, please-" Laxman starts.

"No, I've had it!" The... you hesitate to call her a teen, but not late in her twenties, shakes her head. "I'm done putting up with people like Sid going around and causing trouble, and getting away with slaps on the wrist even after I've reported him acting out of turn MULTIPLE TIMES ALREADY!!" She turns to O'neill and demands- "You there! General What's your face!"

"Yes?" O'neill looks amused.

"Do you have any need for a Bio-hardware engineering Major on Atlantis or in the SGC?" she asks.
"Uh, probably?" O'neill answers.

You interject with a quickly de-captcha'd business card and a "Send me your resume, and I'll pass it along to Mikari Aiikho for the Atlantis side of things, and forward it over to General Whats-his-face for review."

"Hey!" O'neill says with a false indignant tone.

"That I will," the Bio-Engineering Major takes your card, and then strolls away without so much as another word.

"...Okay," Laxman speaks up, "What the hell was she talking about just now? Because I don't KNOW and I intend to find out."

Ooh, you recognize the look in his eyes there. That's the "Someone's keeping secrets from me" look. Someone's going to get in trouble, you get the feeling.

"Well," O'neill remarks, "someone's getting fired."

Or that. That's also equally possible.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that was different. Wasn't it?

Another bit of confirmation that powers manifest with intent of the soul or based on situations. I mean, we knew that already with the kids, but given that this wacko *shocked himself with a tazer* until he gained electricity powers... Well.

But yeah, that's a thing.

We'll come back to the Treasure Book thing later. Rest of this week: We finally start the return to Atlantis.
M: "Right then, Doctor Gina Kae. Pleasure to meet you."

K: "Thank you, Doctor Mckay. Likewise."

M: "So, let's see here..."

M: "You've got a hefty bit of this redacted to most civilian eyes."

K: "You would too if you'd been abducted as a child to work in a shady alphabet themed, rogue government think tank."

M: "Right. I think some of the people involved in this later got recruited to work for the NID, when the Trust had their hands in it. I think I read some of the files on some of these names."

K: "That wouldn't surprise me in the least, given what they had us working on."

M: "It says here you and your fellow kidnapped 'co-workers' were rescued by Jake Harley?"

K: "Yes, he'd apparently thwarted a kidnapping by my so-called Handlers of a new recruit, and through them, he tracked down where we were being detained."

M: "Jake sure did get around a lot, didn't he?"

M: "It says here you went on to get degrees from-- Holy shit, six different colleges in the intervening years?"

K: "Jake Harley provided each of us rescued children with scholarships and funding to whichever schools we wanted. I took advantage more than some others did. My parents were more than happy to similarly take advantage of not needing to put me through regular schooling and skip straight to
college."

M: "Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Bio-Mechanical Engineering, Computer Programming, Music Theory and... Outfit design?"

K: "A girl needs her hobbies."

M: "Fair enough..."

[Mckay reads through more pages, silently.]

M: "So... with all of that under your belt, why the D'ni Restoration?"

K: "To be honest? I shared some classes with Victor Laxman during my Programming and Mechanical Engineering Degrees. He requested I join him in D'ni to aid in the restoration. To be honest, I felt like I was overqualified and under challenged while I was there. I'd been considering leaving and requesting a transfer to her ever since I'd heard contact with the Atlantis Expedition had been restored."

[Kae visibly pauses, then continues.]

K: "To be honest, the recent incident regarding a fellow member of the expedition drawing a knife and attempting to attack someone in a blatant disregard for personal as well as team safety was just the straw that broke the camel's back, as it were."

M: "And now that you've officially resigned that position, what do you hope to accomplish on Atlantis?"

K: "Accomplish? I honestly have no idea. But it's certainly got to be more of a challenge than trying to de-code a glorified Smartphone written in another language. One small goal I have in mind is that I would like to take a crack and see how the Rift Energy has been affecting lifeforms in another Galaxy, such as these Wraith. The amount of Genetic Engineering that must have gone into making them in the first place makes me extremely curious to examine their genetic structures and see how they're affected by the energy."

[Mckay works his jaw for a moment.]

M: "Well, I can honestly say that you're going to get along just fine with Doctor Beckett."

K: "Do I have the job then?"

M: "I think you've got a job, yes."

[Editors Note: Our cameraman seems to have gotten a crush, going by the way he kept the camera firmly focused on her face the entire time. Oh boy. -T.S.]

Chapter End Notes

....YEAH, Im just... not so subtly weaving Power Rangers RPM characters into this
now. WHOOPS.
MINISODE: Grover and Bregman

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

There was a knock on your office door in the SGC. "Uh, Mister Bregman, Sir?"

"Yes, Ziggy, what is it?" Your name is Emmett Bregman, and you look up from some your final preparations for the return to Atlantis.

Ziggy Grover enters the office, and closes the door behind him, a grin on his face.

Kid's young, got flopy, sticky-outy hair that goes everywhere, but an eye for the camera and filming all sorts of things. Knows when to keep his mouth shut too when the camera's on.

Except the camera's not on, which can mean any number of things, and that grin narrows it down to a verey select few possibilities.

"So, I was thinking..." Ziggy begins. "We've got these spaceships and these giant robots and even Atlantis, right? Why not license the designs of, like, The Astro Megaship, out to some Model Kit company and get replicas of them made as buyable things?"

...And that cinches it. Possibility 9. MERCHANDISING.

You massage at the bridge of your nose. "Ziggy. You realize that they're already selling those in the Alternia Galaxy, right?"

"Th...They are?"

"Yes, Ziggy, they do." You sigh.

"Well, uh, what about Atlantis, right? Why not do model kits of the LOST! CITY! OF! ATLANTIS!" He throws his hands out there far and wide, and wider and wider with every word. "Or the Puddle Jumpers, huh? What about those?"

You shake your head. "Ziggy, why don't you ask General O'neill about that?"

"Oh! Yeah! That's a great idea!" Ziggy claps his hands and rubs them together. "Oh, yeah, this is going to be MAGIC!" He then heads for the door and quickly absconds with a, "Thanks Mister Bregman!!"

You massage at the bridge of your nose again.

"Ziggy. One of these days... I swear..."

Chapter End Notes

Ziggy Grover is always looking for an angle, when he can help it.
And there is a point to this, I swear, even if it might not become apparent until A6A3. >_<;
"Welcome to the Atlantis Expedition, Doctor Freeman," Emmett Bregman begins.

"Glad to be here," DOCTOR GORDON FREEMAN starts, smiling awkwardly across the table in the Daedalus cafeteria. "So, uh... is this part of the usual treatment for people joining this thing, or are
"we getting special treatment because we chose to fly out instead of gate over?"

"It's a bit of both, I would say," Bregman says in turn. "For the audience back home, we have new team members to introduce for the next 'season' of episodes for our Documentary, and at the same time, the historical record would benefit from having recorded who's joined the expedition now at this stage."

"That's a fair shakedown, I guess," Freeman muses. "So, uh... why are you starting with me, exactly?"

"Well, for a multitude of reasons, I suppose," Bregman considers the answer. "I suppose the answer is the question that's on the forefront of my mind. You seem like the kind of man who'd take the easy way out of anything. The quickest route between two points is a straight line, and such. So..."

"Why fly Air Daedalus?" Freeman asks. Bregman nods. "Well, I suppose the answer to THAT question lies in the fact that I HATE portals and portal devices. Anything that breaks the laws of physics to move me from point A to point B in a matter of seconds without my direct input is going immediately on my shit list. I'll have you know that I've been redirected through only God Knows how many portals with unknown destinations at the other end. Sometimes, even ones that I knew where I WAS going got COMPLETELY turned around mid jump! One time I even got dumped into an OCEAN because of it!!"

"So, the Daedalus, despite jumping to Hyperspace, is safer?" Bregman asks.

"Nothing is completely safe, but Yeah. Basically." Freeman nods.

"Colonel Stephen Caldwell, USAF," the man states his name and rank for the camera. "Commander of the Daedalus... Do I really have to do this?" he asks.

"Everyone does, Colonel," Bregman smiles. "It's my job. And you've avoided me for the last few months while we were on Earth. But I'm not about to let you pull an O'neill."

"Well, that'd be fairly hard to do since I'm not him," Caldwell answers.

"No, I suppose you're not," Bregman nods. "So, tell me, Colonel... What are your hopes and dreams for the future?"

Caldwell considers it, then answers, "Victory."

A camera overlooking the Daedalus' Engine room catches the following conversation.

"Oh, Hermiod. Is this what I think it is?" Doctor Novak asks.

"Hrm. Yes. It appears to be a dormant computer virus," The Asgard answers. "How this slipped past any of our data checks I am not sure."
"I'll call for Doctor Mckay to take a look at it," Novak frowns. "I don't recognize this code base at all."

"Doctor Mckay, thanks for joining us," Bregman says.

"Any time, Emmett," RODNEY MCKAY smiles to the camera. "Any time you need content filler, or just me giving my expertise about something, don't hesitate to ask!"

"I'll keep that in mind." Bregman then says, "So, why did you decide to come along with the Daedalus crew instead of returning to Atlantis via Stargate with Colonel Sheppard and the others?"

"I had some other last minute things to deal with," Mckay answers. "Such as getting my Cat away from my clingy neighbor. Also, I had to drop by the Mirror-Lab for a few minutes to double check some readings Aincrad and Alfheim had been receiving."

"Such as?" Bregman asks.

"Oh, you know, the usual, rift related incidents," Mckay answers. "Also, getting some last minute message updates to take back to Aincrad for Keiko."

"Yes, family is important, after all-" Bregman went to say more when a knock came at the door.

"Doctor Mckay? Doctor Novak's requested you in the engine room," says a voice from off camera.

"Now, if you ask me," Freeman continues. "The REAL issue is what's up with these fighter jets? Who just calls them 'F-302s'? Why not something cooler," Freeman rambles. "Like... Like... Oh! I know! Why not call them falcons or eagles? Name them after a freaking Bird, not their production number order? Birds are way more awesome than production numbers!!"

"Welcome to the Daedalus' F-302 hangerbay," one CAPTAIN SCOTT TRUMAN narrates to the camera and the interviewer as he guides them into one of the two large hanger bays equipped on the 304 cruiser. "Or, as I like to call it, the Condor Nest." He cracks a grin and leads the camera through the field of 302 fighters. "Now, when my brother called me and told me, 'Guess what, you're going to another galaxy,' I thought he was pranking me at first. Cause, that's totally a thing Marcus would do. But then my dad told me-"

He deepens his voice for the next line, "'No, Son, this is not a prank, your brother has seriously recruited you for the mission to Pegasus instead of taking it for himself. Don't screw it up,' well, I kinda had to take stock of everything and just relish for a moment because- well." He stops, throws his arms out wide and spins around, motioning at the 302s around him. "This is my chance to spread my wings and get out from my family's shadow. Do my own thing, make my own name..." A content look spreads on the man's face, and he concludes his introduction with, "And I'm going to make my name, alright. I'm going to make it by blasting Wraith Darts out of the sky. They won't see
what's coming."

"That's great," says Dillon, as Ziggy turns the camera to face him. "But I just have to ask. Why the name 'Condor Nest'?"

"Well, my father, Colonel Truman, managed Eagle Squadron, and my brother heads it up. And Condors are just as cool birds as Eagles. So... Condor Nest." Scott answers with a shrug. "Now, c'mon, let's see if we can find any of my squad on duty right now."

He leads the camera crew through more 302s until they come upon a pair of oddly painted 302s-both stylized after animals, a Chicken and a Tiger, in bright gold and silver respectively.

Sitting between the two 302s is a fold out table, around which four people are playing some derivative of poker based on strange, flat plastic chips with animal styled numbers on them; two humans, two Alternians.

"Everyone on Earth, meet Gem and Gemma Simmons," Scott introduces the two humans- a man and a woman who have child like looks of glee on their faces as they focus on their cards. "My second and third in command. Playing opposite them are the pilots of the Ruby Lancer MEGA-PLA Mechs, Kohiru Karen, and Rhubee Xaolon."

Rhubee looks up from her cards and grin and waves at the camera with her hand full of cards, nearly scattering the things everywhere. "HIIII!!!"

Gem and Gemma look up at the action, and Karren takes the opportunity to lay out a winning hand-cheering with a "Take That!!"

"Oh, yeah, that's definitely Wraith Code," Mckay grimaces as he peers over the data. "Good thing we caught this before we hit Pegasus space. This could've been nasty if it triggered." He nods, and then steps away from the computer to start barking orders, "Let's get the systems purged and run a full mainframe backup. And someone make sure to disconnect and wipe the 302 harddrives too, just to be sure we catch this thing by the root."

"Now, the Giant Mecha Spaceships are an AMAZING violation of the square cube law, but the small ones? That's just ASKING for trouble!" Freeman rants. "What if someone hijacks the thing and takes it for a joy ride? Am I the ONLY one concerned about these things??"

"I'm Kohiru Karren," the Violet Blooded Alternian girl bows briefly to the camera. "It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Likewise," Dillon nods. "So, how excited are you to get back to action in Pegasus?"

"Mmmh... Pretty excited," Karren smiles. "I know I'll likely just be flying around in the Lancer, but I'm really excited to be taking the fight back to the Wraith. They give bug-based humanoid species a bad name!!"
"RHUBEE XAOLON! REPORTING FOR DUTY!" The Crimson Blooded Alternian girl salutes. "Nice to meet ya, everyone! What's happening??"

"Uh... you do realize the audience can't hear you, right?" Ziggy, the cameraman, is the one who voices that question while Dillion blinks in a stunned state.


"...Uh. The sky?" Ziggy answers. "The ceiling? The stars?"

"No no no!" Rhubee wags her finger and says, "What's up with YOU, Mister Camera Ziggy Man? What's hanging? What's happening? What's NEEEEW!?"

"...Uh, I'm good," Ziggy answers. "And not much, I guess."

"Now, explosions. Explosions are fun. Would you believe how MANY things I've exploded over the many weeks I've been on the run?" Freeman smirks. "A LOT."

"I'm Gem-" The male of the two twins begins.

"And I'm Gemma!" The female of the two continues, before together, they speak in a well rehearsed catchphrase.

"And We're Here To BLOW THINGS UP!"

"Well, that's great," Dillon says. "Just make sure you don't blow anything up with someone we want to live onboard, right?"

"Pft, we're not amateurs," Gemma says.

"We've been blowing stuff up since we were kids!" Gem adds. "Ever since Jake Harley rescued us from the Soup!"


DIASPORA DATE: 04/24/0005.

A clip from an interview on Earth is played.

"Alphabet Soup, eh?" Jake Harley, the younger cloned version, massages at his jaw thoughtfully.
"Haven't thought about that place in a long time. They were some real nasty folk, those people."

"According to Gina Kae's files and recent interview, they were running a child-labor exploitation think tank," Emmett Bregman recalls.

"Yeah, that sounds about right," Jake shakes his head. "A few of them even tried to use the, ah, "Less Smart" kids as hostages when I sieged the place- their words, not mine."

"They didn't particularly see the children there as people, did they?" Bregman asks.

"They used single letter names for them all the time," Jake answers. "Didn't even record their names in their databases. Basically forced the kids to forget who they were. Took us months to sort out and get everyone back to their families."

"None of this was in the news at the time," Bregman says.

"No, of course it wasn't. It was a rogue operation of Military resources," Jake answers. "The world had bigger issues to deal with at the time. And everyone wanted to get the kids home safe and repair the damages those idiots were doing."

"Of course, a few years after that, the Stargate Program was officially launched, wasn't it?" Bregman asks. "According to files, some people from this think tank went on to work in the Trust and NID."

"Which is probably why any of this has been declassified at all," Jake waves his hand, "if it is, I mean. For the kids own protection I can't imagine it'd be unsealed without their approval. Some of the things they were working on in that place..." he grimaces.

"You encountered things, didn't you?" Bregman asks.

"They were manufacturing weapons, and programs to attack not only foreign, what they considered enemy governments, but their own home country, and allied governments as well," Jake explains. "I delved into their planned projects before I burned the place down. One of the projects they'd planned on giving to Gina was a Computer Virus that could break through any and all firewalls. Not just that, they wanted it to be sentient, and leashed to their every whim."

"So, the Trust had plans to take over the world even back then," Bregman grimaces.

"There's more and more, but I'd rather not get into it," Jake shakes his head. "It was a mess, and as of now, everyone involved with running that place is dead or in jail- even if they escaped justice at the time."

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DIASPORA DATE: 04/26/0005.

"My thoughts on Parallel Worlds?" DR. GINA KAE muses. "An interesting concept, one that I was sure was pure fiction up until recent developments and disclosures." She then says, "However, it's still a concept I'd rather not dwell upon. The 'What Ifs' that might be real in another reality somewhere? Unless it comes and becomes a problem for me, I would very rather not think about it."
"A reasonable way of thinking on things," Bregman nods. "So... How excited are you to be working in the City of Atlantis?"

"Immeasurable," Kae says. "I'm honestly unsure of my excitement levels within the middle of a travel stage."

"Multiverses are annoying, and parallel dimensions are just trouble waiting to happen," Doctor Freeman continues to ramble. "I mean, let's be honest here there's a fuck tone of multiple realities all edging up against each other and rearing and ready to grind and poke holes into those tender fabrics between universes and cause bleed through. Portals, and monsters, all sorts of men in fancy business suits itching for a fight..."

"So what was with the sudden stop and light shutdown last night?" Bregman asks.

"Well, it was a Wraith Virus laying dormant within the computer systems," Mckay answers. "We had to purge everything to make sure it wasn't going to take control when we returned to the Pegasus Galaxy. Probably would have tried killing us all, then lead the Wraith right back to Earth."

"How did they manage to get that on the ship's computers?" Bregman asks.

"We managed to track the original infection to a 302's harddrive, so from there it spread to the computers," Mckay answers. "We're writing up an antivirus based on that now."

"So... nothing like this will happen again?" Bregman asks.

"I'm hopeful that I can say yes, but the cynic in me says 'what, are you kidding?'" Mckay scoffs. "Yeah. Let's just say that the Wraith might realize what's going on, and try it again later."

"Let's hope they don't," Bregman answers.

"Or that we blew up the ship that tried it to begin with," Mckay shakes his head. "Who knows. All we can do is hope for the best and prepare for the worst."

**EARTH DATE: OCTOBER 18TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 04/28/0005.**

"So, the camera crew's back?" Jimmyy O'neill stares at the cameras as they're unloaded.

"Ayup," Aradia Megido nods. "That they are! Back and ready to record every single bit of action! What fun! I can't wait for my closeup!"

Her wings flutter, spreading sparkly fairy dust everywhere.
O'neill remarks, "Wonderful."

"What do you MEAN we can't take off?" Mckay asks as a cameraman follows him and Morgan Carter into an Atlantis Lab.

"What I mean is, the Stardrive is basically seized and refusing to start up," she answers. "Something about the release from the ocean floor caused something to get misaligned and it's not working right. We've done everything we can from a coding and software angle, which just leaves us stuck with a physical issue we'll have to resolve first."

"Of course we will," Mckay gripes, massaging at the bridge of his nose. "It's always something, isn't it? Where's Zelenka?"

"Currently? In a Jumper with Keiko and Silica beneath the city spot checking the engines for visible damage," Carter answers.

"Good, at least we're being proactive about that." Mckay sighs in relief.

"But just hear me out-!" Ziggy Grover trails behind Mikari Aiikho as they head down the halls of Atlantis. "Model Kits of the CITY! We could sell them to people back on Earth! Or- Or Alternia! Can't forget about Alterne- AH! Diaspora, Right, right, Diaspora, and Lopan, and... uh... what were the other settlements called again?"

Mikari sighs, and turns too look at the poor camera man. "Mister Grover, can I ask you a question?"

"Sure," he nods.

"Did General O'neill put you up to this?" She asks.

"...Yes, actually," he nods. "Yes he did."

"Lovely," Mikari smiles. "You can be the one emailing him back saying that I'm putting all the trust in finalizing such a thing in HIS hands, then. He'll just LOVE the extra paperwork."

And with that, Mikari turns and heads off, leaving a bemused cameraman standing behind.

"Well, uh..." Ziggy then calls out- "Should I get that in Writing??"

Chapter End Notes

Working on Monday's chapter... WHEEEEEEIIIIEEE.

This is going to be a FUN ONE. :D (also, some of you are probably going to hate me for this next chapter. XD)

DIASPORA DATE: 03/15/0005.

On the planet NEW SORIA within the Milky Way Galaxy, the Mofang Civilization that had come here from the Alternia Galaxy were living an ordinary, average day.

And then a being made of light descended from the heavens, and he did preach to them.

He foretold the people of the galaxy surrounding and weaving a web of potential death and destruction.

He promised them his powers, lending to their own, to give them abilities beyond what they once had.

He delivered to them a design for a weapon, capable of defeating their enemies... And he promised that he would shield prying eyes away as they built it.

And all he asked in return was his name in their prayers.

HUNT.

O←STARGATE: SG-1→O


DIASPORA DATE: 05/01/0005.

Your name is General Jack O'neill, and you relish the sound of an unscheduled gate activation.

After FAR too long doing the press tour gig, you're finally back at the SGC where you belong, and you have a skip to your steps as you clammer down the stairs into the control room.
"What've we got Walter?" You ask even as the gate does its ol' WAA WAA KAWOOOSH. God, you love that sound.

"Teal'c's IDC," Walter reports. "Requesting Iris Opening."

"Well let him in!" you say, and head down to the Gate room as Walter does just that.

The Iris makes that wonderful squealing sound of metal against metal, and you make yourself presentable before Teal'c steps through.

Accompanying him is Bra'tac and Ry'ac, all looking concerned.

"Well," you say, "I take it this isn't a social visit?"

"Indeed it is not," Teal'c says. "Summon SG-1, we must speak."

You nod, and then motion to Walter to get on that. Then, you head to the conference room and wait.

In the mean time you chat idly about how things have been going beyond the usual frustrations that have caused whatever the catastrophe of the week is going to be.

Once SG-1 arrives, you get down to business.

"Gerak has begun making overtures towards formalizing an alliance with an alien race most Jaffa have never met before," Bra'tac begins. "However... It is a race we are familiar with."

"The Mofang," Teal'c says the name that sends the same chill down your spine that the sound of a Replicator chitter does.

"Oh god," Cassandra covers her mouth. "I thought they were laying low and staying out of sight?"

"Apparently failing to take over Earth wasn't enough of a deterrent," Jude grimaces.

"Um... I feel like I'm missing something here?" Mitchel asks.

"Same," Jonas nods. "I think I missed a mission report?"

"Several years ago, the Mofang migrated to this Galaxy from Alternia," Teal'c explains. "They encountered another race of beings with cloaking and mimicking technology similar, yet different to their own. Using it, they attempted to take over Earth. However, we were able to defeat them, and sent them to another, uninhabited planet."

"Yeah, we were trying to negotiate with them for a while," you say, "but all we managed was returning them to their new home planet and getting a concession out of them to stay the hell put and not go exploring." And then after that those cloaking devices were used to try to frame you for murder. Not Fun. "Anyways, the security breach was enough to get the whole thing classified to hell. It's still buried, and we're not even going to touch it with Disclosure... or that was the plan as long as the Mofang played ball."

"Which they're not," Ry'ac says. "They've parked a fleet of four ships over Dakara. Gerak invited them personally."
"Now how the hell did Gerak get involved with the Mofang?" Jude asks. "That part doesn't make any sense."

"Perhaps this piece of information will, then," Bra'tac retrieves a hologram emitter and activates a projection of all four ships- all different. One pair of mirrored designs, two unique looking ships. All of them the usual Mofang black and red, and, oddly enough, white. "See the text on the banner the ships carry."

"That's Ancient," Jonas peers at the images. "Looks like they share a name, and have different numbers attached... 'Clarent' and One through Four?"

"'Clarent,' huh?" Cassandra crosses her arms over her chest. "This ties back to Mordred, somehow."

"Wild mass speculation here, but," Mitchel voices, "I think we just found out why the Mofang are suddenly acting riled up."

"There is more," Teal'c says. "Gerak has likewise broken his stance on refusing to meet with the SGC or Alternia. He has officially extended an invite to both to appear on Dakara."

"When?" You ask. Please don't be today.

"Today," Bra'tac answers.

"I was hoping you wouldn't say that," you sigh.

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and from the deck of the Delta Megaship, you're watching out into the distant void where the planet Dakara is.

The Delta Mega and Prometheus are out at a safe distance, ready to intervene at a moments notice should something happen.

SG-1 is ready for action, that's for sure...

And so is your guest, Artoria Pendragon.

"If Mordred is intent on attacking an innocent world," she had said, "I wish to intervene. This fight must be stopped before further casualties gather."

And so she was coming with you.

"Alright," Dammek settles into the gunners chair. "Weapons are armed and configured for Anti-Mofang Technology Wavelengths. If it comes to a brawl, we'll trounce them."

"Let's just hope they didn't get any ideas from the Replicators," Jonas remarks.

"Did you have to say that?" Mitchel asks.

"What would you rather have me say? 'Oh, I had a bad dream this morning about a field of magic tree roots that brust out of the ground like hands grabbing at me as I walked past?" Jonas asks in
"What kind of horror film did you watch last night?" Mitchel asks in return of that.

"I didn't," Jonas answers.

"...Your mind scares me sometimes, Quinn," Mitchel answers.

"It scares me too," Jonas answers.

"...Ooookay," Dammek coughs, then radios, "Prometheus, this is Delta Mega. Are you ready for an encounter?"

A pause, then a reply from the other ship's captain, "Delta Mega, Prometheus, yes we are ready for battle."

"Good," Dammek says. "Let's hope we don't have to fight."

You feel some vibes you can't quite untangle yet, but...

You hope that you won't need to do much.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

You're once again Jack O'neill.

Thanks to the magic of Linking Technology, it was easy to get Okurii Leijon back from Alternia and geared up for a diplomatic mission.

You feel unnerved, though. Like you're walking into a trap because of course you are.

And with the amount of ships above the planet, visible from the bright glowing red lines across their surface even from ground level as you step through the Gate, well... the trap vibe feels increasingly great.

You've got Majors Strider and Vantas flanking you as SGC-escorts. Okurii's got Colonel Claire and the YOUNGER Vantas with her. Both Karkat Vantases (Vantas-i?) keep looking at each other with some measure of concern.

Right, the whole Rift Rewriting Memories thing.

You're pretty sure none of this happened at all before, or at least, was different from what they remembered.

You're going in blind.

Hopefully, though, the process will reach the older Vantas faster, and you'll have some minor level of heads up or precognition from him.

Teal'c and Bra'tac lead you to the Dakra courtroom, and you find a bunch of uncertain Jaffa, a bunch of oh-so-certain Jaffa lead by Gerak, and a group of Mofang, all dressed up in glimmery, holographic textured battle dress uniforms.
No Tok'ra, though. THAT makes you a bit uncomfortable.

There's a large C SHAPED table taking up the center of the entire floor, with lots of chairs on one side of it, all facing inwards.

As the doors slide closed behind you with a loud THUMP, you can only hope that the rest of the plan is going to go okay.

Though, if the worst comes to worst... You've got a book in your back pocket that should let you get out in a pinch.

Okay, well, technically, it's on Joey Claire's hip. And also in your Sylladex. You've got Relto Books that Joey was able to bind to her own book incase of emergency linking. So technically it's all the same link to Kaptar that's in your-- Look! It's a metaphor. It's a- why are you even explaining this? It's your own damn head!!

"Welcome," Gerak begins. "Soon we will be ready to begin."

"Doors are closed," Okurii states the obvious. "Why not start now?"

"We must wait for the final member of our party to assemble," Gerak says.

Well, nuts. You should've expected this.

"Well, then," you look for a chair. "Anyone mind if I take a seat then?"

Nobody says a thing, but Gerak nods. And he and the other Jaffa all sit down.

You and Okurii take your seats, along with Teal'c and Bra'tac, and your escorts move to the back wall.

The Mofang continue to stand as well, each of them eyeing Joey Claire nervously, but defiantly.

Is it because they recognize her? Or is it something else?

"It's her," one of them whispers.

"Shut up!" Another Mofang hisses at that one.

"But it is!" the other speaks up, louder. "She's The Star Grower."

"The 'Star Grower'?' Claire echoes. "That's a new one."

"What is this title you speak of?" Gerak asks.

"She is the one who defeated the Tyrant who ruled us, who sacrificed our stars as strategic attacks," The Mofang who started speaks up, louder- voice growing in awe. "It was her actions that transformed Karfin Outpost's star not into a normal nova, but a star of blinding green light! A star that continues to shine! She who Grows The Stars! The Star Grower!!"

The other Mofang seem displeased by this fact coming out, one of them even going "Shut up, you
dummy!" (Or, maybe it was 'Yudume'? Those Mofang have some weird sounding names with the
Stargate Translation Effect in play.)

The one in question- uh, you'll just lable him Yudume just for sake of clarity in your own head-
Yudume steps out from around the table to approach Claire.

"You will have my family's eternal thanks, Star Grower," Yudume bows to her. "If not for your
intervention, my darling wife would have died, forced to build and detonate the next one!"

"Uh... you're welcome," Joey smiles at that.

And then a burst of light emerges from the ceiling.

"And here we go," you hear both Karkat Vantas's mutter at the same time.

...No, still not feeling that pluralization.

"Energy surge from the planet!" Stelsa reports."It reads like the Dakara weapon is attempting to
power on!"

"Cassandra?" Dammek calls out.

"Not a threat yet!" you answer. "It's a trick!"

"They can't turn it on anyways," Jude says. "I disabled that thing myself."

And then the light condenses into the aproximation of a physical form in the center of the room,
extcept with a glowing aura around it.

A man stands there, dressed in what look like battle leathers. His hair is slicked, smoothed, and rolls
past his shoulders before fading into the lightshow and out of sight.

"I am Dylan Hunt, of the Andromeda Ascendant," He announces his presence. "And now, we may
begin our discussion."

"Well," you say, standing. "I certainly wasn't expecting this. General Jack O'neill. SGC, of Earth.
But I'll bet you already knew that."

"We have been observing, yes," Hunt confirms. "And we have found the mortals of this plane of
existence lacking."

"Lacking you say?" You ask. "I dunno, I think we've done a pretty good job for ourselves- not even
just speaking for anything Earth's done, even." You smile to Teal'c, who nods.

"Indeed," Teal'c says. "The Jaffa, Tok'ra, and other various civilizations of this Galaxy have come a
long way."

"Oh, while yes, your galaxy has done some mildly impressive things," Hunt says, "I am referring to
this dimension- this whole plane of exisstance- as a whole. Every galaxy within it... Has been tried,
and found lacking.

"So," Okurii chimes in, "what do you want us to do exactly? I can't imagine you'd call us all here otherwise and not have some grandiose plan in mind."

"Oh, I have a Plan, yes," Hunt says, and spreads his arms wide. "I wish for you, the people of this universe, to accept us as your new gods, and allow us to rule over you benevolently. To prevent such... monsters as English, or Anubis, or the Goa'uld from ever taking root again."

"We Jaffa have barely freed ourselves from the yolk of one master before you design to make yourself their replacement?" Bra'tac scoffs. "You must think we are fools."

"The Goa'uld were mortal creatures, and even Anubis or English, who saw themselves as gods and borrowed powers such as ours... were still nothing more than rats foolishly concerned with the on goings of the mortal realm when their attentions should have been spent on enlightenment." Hunt says...

And you spot an opportunity.

"Yeah, but isn't that what you're doing?" You ask.

Hunt's eyes turn towards you, cold, and unfeeling. "Pardon me?"

"I mean, you're basically all glowy and an 'all powerful' Ascended being, right?" You ask. "Why are you so concerned with this realm of 'mortals'? I mean... shouldn't you have some sort of... pondering up in ye yonder higher planes to be doing?"

"Such insolence," Gerak chides.

"I do not understand what you mean, O'neill," Hunt starts- and you interject with:

"Like, you just said that Anubis and English were ignoring 'enlightenment' to be all 'rawr rawr, I'm a god and you'll worship me', right? And then you go and demand the exact same thing?" You press what's probably a big red shiny do-not-push button. "Why should we put ANY amount of faith into you at all?"

"I agree," Bra'tac says, standing.

"Also agreed," Okurii nods, also standing.

"Indeed," Teal'c says, rising as well. "You speak words that seal your own fate."

Many other Jaffa nod and murmur their agreements.

The Mofang and Gerak's Jaffa, though...

"If you do not follow the wisdom of the Andromeda Ascendants," Gerak rises, a foul look in his eyes. "Then you will all DIE!"

"Is that a Threat?" You ask.

"It is a promise!" The Mofang leader says. "Just the same as any promise of violence that has been
levied upon us by the Alternian Empire. By those ships of yours, encircling our system and watching our every move!"

"The what now?" You ask.


Gerak even seems confused by this, and says, "We have dispatched no such ships to that world, My Lord Hunt."

A RIPPLE goes through the room among the Jaffa. Many glare at Gerak with anger and hostility.

This isn't good.

"We don't even use Goa'uld ships," you elaborate, hopinh to keep this topic somewhat on the rails. "And I don't know of any reason why the Tok'ra would waste resources parking ships in orbit of another planet..." Not with Egeria running the show, at any rate...

"Ah, yes," Hunt smirks. "That would be because they are not the property of anyone with any stake in any alliance within this room, or a member of such alliances there of... though, they are a member of One Particular Alliance."

"Three Ha'taks just dropped out of Hyperspace!" Stelsa reports.

"Affiliation?" Dammek asks even as your vibe meter spikes to dangerously high levels.

"...No transponders," Stelsa answers. "They're powering weapons and taking aim at the Prometheus!"

"Everyone MOVE!" Dammek orders.

"The Lucian Alliance," Major Vantas speaks up suddenly, and you glance at him, seeing his eyes widen.

"Bingo," Hunt smiles-

And then Vantas yells out- "IT'S A TRAP!"

-Right as Hunt suddenly vanishes with a brief, blinding burst of light, and Gerak's Jaffa, and most of the Mofang go with him. Only Yudume gets left behind.

"Wait- what?" He stares, completely confounded.
"Mofang Ships are Powering Weapons!" Stelsa reports next. "They're-- They're Targeting Dakara!?"

Your vibes suddenly click into place at the same time Jude pieces it together and exclaims- "The Weapons' power source!"

Like a collage, you see the images fitting together like a puzzle. The Mofang Ships attack Dakara with the partially activated weapon, wiping the temple off the face of the planet.

"INTERCEPT THOSE LASERS NOW!!" You yell.

Joey and Okurii ignite their lightsabers and start cutting through the apparently LOCKED DOORS that weren't supposed to be locked.

The Jaffa left within the Council all angrily yell about what they were going to do with Gerak when they got their hands on him.

Meanwhile, you try to radio the Prometheus and the Delta Mega... to no avail.

The Delta rocketed into place and started absorbing the laser fire the Mofang Ships were launching. Sparks fly across the bridge- and you grimace. The immediate disaster is stalled for the moment, but the next one's right about to start-

"Abeltive armor's absorbed most of the energy!" Stelsa reports.

-Ah. Now.

"They're breaking off!" Stelsa continues. "Changing formation to-

"They're Going to Combine!!" you warn everyone.

"TRANSFORM US NOW!" Dammek yells out, and the pilots call out a "ROGER!" in response.

"Joey!!" Joey's radio buzzes with her brother's voice. "Evacuate the planet immediately! We just blocked a first attempt by the Mofang to destroy the Temple of Dakara while the weapons power core is online and we're not sure if we can stop a second shot!"

Teal'c, upon hearing those words, immediately starts barking orders- Bra'tac, and the other Jaffa start getting to spreading the word. It all boils down to "Get to the Stargate."

Joey replies, "We're on it!!"
The Prometheus dodged and weaved incoming fire, returning salvos against the unknown enemies in the Ha'taks.

Powered by a ZPM, the shields should have held firm and fast, and yet... Somehow, the Ha'taks were blowing through the shields without much fuss.

You are the captain of the ship- Colonel Lionel Pendergast-and you grimace as you take in the damage reports.

HOW were they dealing that much damage?

It didn't matter. You had to hold off lest the Delta Megazord get swarmed.

The Mofang ships had combined into a giant robot all their own. The identical ones had turned into legs. One was a torso. And the last one had split up into arms and a shield. Then a head had formed and they'd drawn a laser rifle and were just trading fire with the Delta Megazord.

How they'd built such a thing, nobody cared to find out in that moment, least of all you. But whatever it WAS, it was immune to the disruptor technology designed towards breaking up Mofang Technology. That implied it was just Mofang Tech DECORATED, rather than actually based on Mofang Technology.

And it was bigger, too. It was easily as tall as the AstroDelta Megazord, which meant that the Delta on its own was about a head or so shorter.

And then there was an explosive impact, and then the ship's shields failed, and a console exploded in someones face, showering them with glass and shrapnel. Dead in a heartbeat.

"STATUS REPORT!" you request.

"Engines are down! Shields are down! Life support failing and hull breaches along the neck! Casualties reported, decks Three through Nine!" A pause. "Enemy Ha'taks are moving to intercept the Delta Mega and the Mofang Mecha."

Not good- "Power status?"

"ZPM Containment Damaged! Power spikes surging through the engines! Unable to disconnect the ZPM!"

You think on it for a moment, and then order a full, immediate crew evacuation to the planet below using the Asgard beaming tech.

It'd be more people having to escape through the Stargate. But...

But you've got very limited options here.

You activate the beaming systems, and launch the crew down to the planet. Then...

What do you do next?

A ZPM overload would take out the whole system if you let it fail...
You set course, and radio, "Delta Mega, this is Prometheus, we've taken significant damage and are unable to stall the Ha'taks!"

You watch as the Ha'taks swarm the Delta Mega ship and start blasting away at it.

The Mofang Mecha moves to attack the planet.

Fuck it.

You alter the course slightly, and then set the ship to beam you down to the planet before jumping to hyperspace.

"Bye, old girl."

*PVVVVMMM-SHING!!!*

"Armor is barely absorbing the blasts as they hit!" Stelsa reports. Then- "Mofang Mech is moving to alter orbit---"

You swear. "They're moving to attack the plaa...!"

The Vibes suddenly change.

The Prometheus' Hyperdrive suddenly kicks into gear and a window opens up right next to the Mofang Mecha- it pauses in surprise as the badly damaged ship suddenly rams into its laser rifle device and utterly rips it right out of the mecha's hand, knocking it dead into the hyperspace window.

And then, the BC-303 vanishes into hyperspace right after it.

Everything just sort of stops for a moment, even the Ha'taks stop firing...

Beat.

Beat.

Beat.

Beat goes your heart.

Beat.

Beat.

And then there's a massive burst of light off in the far distance.

"They 302'd the Prometheus..." Mitchel stares at it.

And then the Ha'taks turn on the Mofang Mecha and start attacking it- seeing as it was now
seemingly weaponless.

Seemingly, because it reaches over its right shoulder and draws forth a sword hilt.

A sword hilt that, once its clear of the body, immediately ignites with a fierce blade of crimson energy.

"What the FUCK is that!?!" Dammek exclaims, summarizing everyone's thoughts.

And then they swing through the nearest cluster of Ha'taks and destroys them utterly.

Instantly vaporized, essentially.

Shit.

"EVASIVE ACTION!" Dammek roars.

_____________________

Your name is Joey Claire, and you watch as everyone from Dakara and the crew of the Prometheus head through the Stargate.

You don't need to, given the Relto book. You can stay behind to ensure everyone gets offworld safe.

Explosions rock the sky above. You fear and hope your friends and family are safe up there.

Please, Jude, Cassie. Stay safe...

"Joey! We're the last ones going through!" Davis says, suddenly appearing beside you. "Good luck!"

"You too!" You nod, and watch him run through the Gate. Then, you take to the radio, "GUYS! WE'RE CLEAR! BREAK FREE WHEN YOU CAN!"

And with that, you throw open the book on your left hip and slam your hand down onto the panel.

The world fades to black.

_____________________

Joey's message clears up most of the worst vibes, leaving only a dwindlingly MINOR disaster of Dakara being exploded.

"Disengage and get as far away as we can before jumping to hyperspace!" You order.

"ON IT!" the pilots chime in, and the Delta Megaship retransforms into ship mode, and begins rocketing away.

You keep an eye on events with your vibes, rather than with your actual eyes.

The Mofang mech draws a second massive plasma sword, puts them together, and then *MERGES*
them into a fucking katana blade sized for the mecha.

It takes that weapon and then utterly hurls it straight at the Dakara temple.

And then the planet's surface explodes with a crimson hell fire.

And just like that, Dakara was no more.

The Prometheus was no more.

And the Andromeda Ascendents had the Mofang working for them running some fucking... just...

Insanely overpowered mecha.

"Mordred was not here," Artoria finally speaks, after witnessing it all. "That machine was designed for her, and it was to be her weapon... an extension of her will..." And then she says, "This was not just an attempt to ruin our lives... it was an attempt to call Mordred out of hiding."

"Well, great," Mitchel laments. "We got used for someone else's callout post."

"...What's a callout post?" Artoria asks.

Chapter End Notes

WELP. Yeah. That.

Um.

Yeah.

I'm just gonna go hide now until the next episode. >_<;
Your name is George Hammond, and you feel a sense of lament upon hearing of the loss of the Prometheus. A part of you wishes the ship had survived. A part of you wishes that you'd done more... A part of you, though, is happy that it happened the way it did.

A ZPM containment failure leading to a complete erasure from the local subspace- which had been Hyperspace at that moment. Instead of just being beaten upon and ultimately crippled and destroyed, it went out knocking the weapon out of the Mofang Megazord's hands and into hyperspace.

That the loss of life alone given the damage the ship HAD taken was thankfully minimal was a godsend, really. Loosing the ship was nothing compared to the lives that had managed to be saved...

But as for the rest...?

Dakara destroyed. The Mofang working with the Andromeda Ascendants and the Jaffa who had sided with them. The surviving Jaffa reeling from the utter betrayal that Gerak had inflicted upon them not once, but seemingly twice. Bra'tac and Teal'c working to restore order, but many afraid to do much of anything... Most of those who had sided with Gerak were also those in possession of the most ships and most powerful fleets.

And above all else? The Lucian Alliance was making its move, becoming a powerful crime syndicate seemingly overnight. Or rather, unmasking themselves for what they were.

Nobody could tell if they'd been backed by the Andromeda group or not, just yet, but given the timing of their ships apparently surrounding the New Mofang Homeworld, and then appearing to attack Dakara right when it would be most beneficial to Gerak and Hunt?

...It painted a grim picture.

The Astro Megaship was getting its repairs fast tracked, and the Delta Megaship was similarly undergoing rapid fire repairs. And as for the loss of the Prometheus...

The next BC-304 class cruiser, ODYSSEY, was already around halfway done in its construction, and now to be rushed to completion. The next one in line after than from US Soil, to be dubbed APOLLO, was having its construction green lit ASAP.

The Russians were already starting work on their own 304, unnamed as of yet, in response to the news of the Mofang Megazord. Or perhaps the rush order on the Apollo? Who could say with those lot.

Your phone rings, interrupting your musings, and you answer with the usual curt "Hammond."
Never a dull moment, even when you're not directly working at the SGC.

It's Jack on the other line, and-

...Oh.

The Mofang who had been left behind on Dakara had returned with SG-13 from New Soria on their mission to check in and warn the people there about what had happened on Dakara.

They'd arrived to find the village scorched and razed, and only a few survivors left behind to tell the tale.

Men and women of human disposition, kidnapping and pillaging everyone they could, all under the name of "DYLAN HUNT" for "the Glory of the Lucian Alliance."

The raid had started mere moments before the battle for Dakara had.

Nobody had a chance to warn anyone about anything.

Some days, you hate your job.

Chapter End Notes

    HEY ITS A SURPRISE HAMMOND!~
Your name is Wanshi Adyata, and you can't help but smile as you watch Touya help Tirona through some controled werewolf shifts.

"Well, that was interesting," says Touya's sister, Minori, as she sits down next to you.

"Oh? The meeting?" You ask.

"Yeah," Minori nods. "It's amazing how time travel can cause such drastic differences. Aincrad's entire existence apparently hinges on it, and how the world itself transformed in the wake of it, causing so many changes for the people in that world that never happened in this dimension."

"Yeah, that it is," you nod. "So... you knew the D'ni people well in Keiko's world?"

"Eh, not really 'well,'" Minori admits. "To be honest the whole situation there was fraught with tension for a few good years. Our first negotiation attempt nearly collapsed because of a Goa'uld possessing a man. Then we had to deal with Astore's death- and to THINK that sword would wind up back in this dimension after that, just to break and be copied." She shakes her head. "I'm not going to be the one who tells Silica about that."

You really have no idea what she's talking about but you nod in agreement anyways.

"Then while we were mourning her... those dumb Snakes..." Minori's lips twitch into a snarl for a moment. "We found out that they'd killed Keiko's mother, and pretended she wasn't dead, just jailed. All to protect secrets she might not have even known. And then we... we had to deal with..."

She goes silent, and your curiosity nags at you.

"What did you have to deal with after that?" you ask.

"The Gleam Eyes," Minori answers, and the intonation of the name alone makes you shiver. "The Goa'uld in Aincrad's ruling council had figured out how to clone a Bahopect from some of the old Ancient Technology in one of the dungeons, and they made about... eh, maybe less than a dozen of the things? Nine at the least, I think. All as tall as a house, each armed with great swords with blades ground to a fine edge."

"That's..." You try to imagine the scene based off of an ALTERNIAN BAHPOMET LUSUS. Giant, tall, humanoid sort of thing with GOAT LEGS, GOAT HEAD, and A SNAKE HEADED TAIL. Fur of, well, white as per Alternian Lusus genetics, but probably not that. Your mind fills it in more with something akin to a MIDNIGHT BLUE fur atop, and more... MIDNIGHT BLACK for the legs.
Massive blades in hand, and gleaming red eyes...? Then up scaled to massive height???

"That's horrifying," you say, imagining just one, and then not daring to upscale in number. "What happened?"

"The snakes jumped hosts," Minori answers. "They were to be their juggernaut weapons of doom. Except they forgot one critical thing."

"What's that?" you ask.

"Bahpomets have two brains," Minori answers with a grim smile.

The...

Oh.

OH.

The snake head and the goat head. And they threw another snake into the mix...

"It didn't work out for them, did it?" you ask.

"Nope," Minori shakes her head. "As far as we could tell, the Goa'uld symbiotes had their minds torn to pieces, and the Bahpomets escaped to the mainland."

"That couldn't have helped relations any," you grimace.

"It eventually did, in a round about way," Minori says. "It took a lot of us working together to hunt them down to really tie down the alliance stuff."

"So... how did things go here with the negotiations? I mean, comparatively?" You ask.

"A lot easier," she answers. "A LOT, lot easier. It was tough, but, yeah. It was easy, comparatively."

"That's good," you smile.

"Yeah, that it is," Minori nods. "Hopefully things will stay going easy and won't give us any trouble."

Chapter End Notes

Short thing, next, "Runner," and after that... A treasure hunt. :33

DIASPORA DATE: 05/09/0005.

"Man, can this planet get any creepier?" your name and rank is EVAN LORNE, MAJOR, and you're walking through a forest during the night time air along with botanist DOCTOR PARRISH.

What would normally be a creepy forest during the night has been transformed by the Rift Energy. The tree roots have all started bursting out of the ground, growing gnarled growths that look like arms and hands reaching out for people's ankles.

"P3M-736 was uniquely affected by the rift energy, especially given its other unique properties that could help us Save Earth in the future," Parrish remarks.

"Oh yeah, how's that?" You ask.

"Well, for starters the long-term effects of severe ozone depletion on plant life," Parrish says. "That's certainly had some major impact on why the plants here have reacted in the way they did to the Rift Energy."

"So, wait," you stop for a moment. "Are you saying that if Global Warming really gets bad to the point we lose as much ozone as THIS PLACE, we could start seeing trees grow grabby hands back on Earth!?"

Parrish pauses as well, then nods, "That's a distinct possibility."

You eye the tree roots all sort of wavering in the air, and see that Parrish is walking along more, and you're still stopped.

"Hey! Wait, not to far, Doc!" You chase after him.

"Don't worry, Major. I doubt there's much chance any animals have survived on this world, given the long-term effects of sunlight exposure on this planet," Parrish says.

"It's Not The Animals I'm Worried About," you stress.

"The plant life?" he pauses, examining a specific set of trees. "Well, given that the vegetation IS thriving... It's interesting how it managed to persist despite what should be extremely destructive ionizing radiation..."

And then he gasps and moves over towards another tree, covered in some plants.

"Oh would you look at that! Now just what is a Williamsonia Sewardiana doing here?"

You have no idea what that is and you- Wait.
What the heck is that?

You move over towards it. It looks like... blood splatters on the plants?

"MAJOR!" Parrish cries out suddenly, and you turn to check on him and-

"Oh Hell," You breathe out.

It's a dead Wraith, with fresh blood spilled from his body in spots and...

Gunfire.

"Doesn't look like the sun killed him," you mutter. You take to the radio. "Coughlin, this is Lorne. Any Gate Activity?"

A pause, "No, Sir."

"I've got a dead Wraith here. Looks K.I.A. No more than a day old. We're on our way back." You say, and then break out two glowsticks to leave by the body. "C'mon, Doc. Let's get back to the gate."

"I don't understand- how could-?" Parrish looks around at the trees nervously. "Oh God, let's get out of here!"

"No arguments from me." You grunt, and grab him by the arm. "Let's go!"

"Is the gate covered?"

"Coughlin and Reed, yeah."

Your name is Teyla Emaggan, and you enter Miss Aiikho's office, finding her, Major Sheppard, and Major Lorne there as well.

"Ah, Teyla," John nods to you as you enter. "Lorne found a dead Wraith. Shot to death."

"Looked like bullets to me, but given the way the trees have been mutating on that planet, it's hard to say," Lorne explains, shaking his head. "That guy was a mess."

"The Genii use projectile weapons similar to yours," you say. "What makes you suspect it could be the trees?"

"They're growing hands!" Lorne says, sounding freaked out. "And I swear the things turned when we were running back to the Gate, trying to grab at us. That place is straight out of a nightmare!"

"Hopefully, we'll know for sure soon," Mikari says. "Beckett's performing an autopsy."
Speaking of Doctor Beckett, he arrives a few seconds later, trailing behind him is Doctor Mckay.

"I'm not done yet," Beckett reports upon arriving, "not nearly done at all. But I thought you'd all like to know that the enzyme pouch in the Wraith's right arm was removed," and with that, he turns around and leaves, pausing only to nod to Mckay with a "Rodney" before heading back to his lab.

"Beckett was just telling me," Mckay says. "He thinks-

"Ford," John grunts.

"Ah, yeah," Mckay nods. "P3M-736. The planet with the UV index over a thousand or something. If Ford's there... well. I'm not sure what state he'll be in. That amount of radiation..."

"We're going," John says. "Suit up, meet us in the Jumper Bay in Ten."

"But I'm just saying-"

"We're. Going."

You roll your eyes and exit the room, even as Mckay mutters, "My complexion is going to boil under that sun."

"Bring sunscreen then," John says. "Otherwise, we'll get Kanaya to patch you up later."

Your name is Jade Jackson, and you're pretty much party crashing in the city's ENGINE ROOM while Keiko's team plus Zelenka work on checking the internals for damage. Okay, well, you're helping with the work, but you're basically not doing anything you'd be doing otherwise.

Anyways, given that the EXTERNALS of the Engines are fine, and the PROGRAMMING side of things are fine, that leaves the INTERNALS of everything to have the damage. But you have no idea what you're even looking for at this point.

"You know, I'm really curious about what could be the problem," You say as Tyzias sits down next to you after examining one of her assigned engine areas. "Its rare for Ancient tech to just break down and not work like this."

"City was sunken for thousands of years, risen, then hit by a storm, flooded, shocked all the way through with lightning..." Tyzias shakes her head. "I have no idea what could have caused it or not. I honestly don't care. I just want it fixed."

"Mmh," you nod, and start tapping at a control console to activate a test diagnostic.

"Quinn? She's doing fine," you smile. "We've all been taking turns keeping an eye on her, and I think three pairs is better than two. We've really been able to alternate nights taking care of her a lot more efficiently. Heh. Efficiency when taking care of a baby, now there's a concept. "She took to Gate Travel pretty well and didn't seem to have any problems with it, so we're not so isolated if something comes up."
"That's good. No weird power interaction things yet?" Tyzias asks.

"Hmm... No. Though she is a bit fussy around anybody with Naquadah in their blood," you answer.

Hrm.

"Speaking of," you say, "have you noticed anyone acting weird from the Prometheus crew?"

"Me?" Tyzias scoffs. "I've barely interacted with them at all." She pauses, though, and you see a gleam in her eyes. (Or it could be from her glasses reflecting something. Either or.) "Why do you ask?"

"Just... some of the crew's been avoiding me for some reason," you say. "And I think a couple of them might be Tok'ra hosts with a grudge against me or something, cause I keep getting sensations that make me think there's one nearby, but I never get a chance to ask when they're all in a group. Also, it'd be just kind of rude to ask, yknow?"

"Fair enough," Tyzias nods. "Ah, let's get back to work."

________________________

Your name is John Sheppard, and you've got a lot on your mind.

Caldwell stopped you briefly on your way to get geared up and said a lot of unpleasant stuff about you having to put Ford down.

And now here you are, trying to avoid stepping into the gnarly grasp of a bunch of mutated tree roots.

They really do look like hands. Four fingers, thumb, big palm area, connected to a spindly, viney, sort of coiled looking root arm. Urgh.

And they move.

They just sort of pan after anything that moves by them. It's creepy, it's gross, and above all else, it's just adding to the distractions piled up inside your mind.

You're going to be having nightmares about this for weeks.

And then you spot movement- "FORD!"

**PCH-ZYAAT!**

________________________

Your name is Rose Lalonde, and you knock on the door to the Atlantis Administration office with a smile and a grin.

"Yes?" Mikari looks up. "What is it, Rose?"

"Kanaya and I have been examining some of the fish Roxy, Jimmy, and Morgan managed to catch"
off the south pier," you explain. "I think we found something really interesting."

"What's that?" Mikari asks.

"The fish show signs of extremely high radiation processing," you explain. "It's not just being able to process it, but its actually metabolizing it. Consuming radiation and filtering it into some kind of high process energy fuel for their own bodies- the whole byproducts left behind are entirely safe afterwards."

"So..." Mikari blinks. "If we can't get the engines working and take off... We aren't living on a planet that's going to be damaged by radiation?"

"Exactly," you nod.

"Okay, but what quirk exactly made it so they evolved such a trait?" Mikari asks. "I'm vaguely reminded of Alternia. Concerningly so, actually."

"That's... something I'm wondering about myself as well," you answer. "And I honestly have no idea, but the amount of high radiation that the sea life would have to absorb to trigger such a wholly beneficial adaptation, over an incredibly long amount of time? It's concerning."

____________________________

You are John Sheppard once again, and you can't believe you got fucking STUNNED.

Not just you, but Teyla too, and you're both tied up with ropes and stuck in the backside of a cave. Your would be captor is a hulking man with a thick tan and a wild mane of hair, and looks like he hasn't seen a proper shower in years.

You could easily escape your bonds, but he's got his eyes locked on you firmly even as he rummages through your supplies.

Oh, and there he has your P-90. Whiiiich is now pointed at you.

"Uh, might wanna be careful with that," you say. "Safety's off."

"I know," he grunts.

"Ah, right... so, uh... I guess if you'd wanted us dead, you'd have shot us first." You surmise. "So, uh... who are you and what do you want?"

The man says nothing.

"Riiight, okay. We can go first if that suits you," You say.

"I am Tela Emmagan," Teyla introduces.

"And I'm Lieutenant Colonel John Sheppard," you introduce yourself.

"Colonel?" the dude asks.
"It's my rank, Military designation?" You say, and there's a glimmer in his eyes.

"Specialist Ronon Dex," says the newly dubbed Ronon Dex.

"Name and Rank?" You ask.

He grunts.

"Military?"

"Used to be." Ronon stares off for a moment... Then he lowers the P-90 to the ground, easily clicking the safety back on, and then drawing a knife. "That was a long time ago."

"And now?" You ask, eyeing the blade.

"Now I'm deciding whether to kill you and your friends." Ronon answers.

"Ah," you nod. "Right, that's... Not preferable."

Ronon takes the knife and cuts open an MRE pack that you'd stored in one of your vest pockets. He pries loose one of the granola bar rations and sniffs at it.

"I know," Ronon states. "A Waste of time, if you ask me. But I will if I have to." And then he takes a bite of the bar.

"Listen, Ronon," Teyla begins, "we are not here for you. We are here for a friend of ours who might be on this planet."

Ronon says nothing, instead grabbing at your fucking Sylladex and holding it up.

"What's this?" he asks.

"It's a pocket in a pocket," you tell him. "We call it a Sylladex."

"Funny," Ronon says, a faint glimmer of amusement in his voice. "How's it work?"

"To be honest, I don't have a clue," you answer. "Something about pocket dimensions and molecular compression?"

"Hrmf." the guy looks to Teyla. "What about you?"

"Sorry," she shakes her head. "That technology is far beyond me. You could say it's from another galaxy, even."

"Interesting," Ronon says, turning it over in his hands. "But what I mean is, how do you OPEN it?"

"That's something I'd be glad to show you if you untie us," you say.

"Nah," Ronon answers.

"Look," you start, "the men guarding the Stargate are highly trained soldiers with really deadly weapons."
"Stargate?" Ronon asks.

"Stargate. Big Circle Thing. With the puddle that goes Kawoosh?" You elaborate.

"Ah, the Ring of the Ancestors," Ronon says. "Doesn't matter if they guard it, I'll find a way through."

"Look," you try again, "We didn't come here looking for trouble with you and the killing thing is unnecessary, because, if you let us go-" Ronon's eyes narrow. "-If you let us go, I can tell them to let YOU go unharmed. We can all go to the gate and you can be on your merry way to where-ever you need to go."

"And just why-" Ronon points his knife at you as he grabs at the MRE pack again. "Should I trust you?" He takes another bite of the granola bar.

"Because like Teyla said before, we're just looking for our friend," you say.

Ronon thinks on it for a moment, and then...

"Yeah, I think I saw him," Ronon says. "Sort of creepy fella. Black eye? Sort of stares into your soul?"

"Sounds like Ford to me," you say. "Where was it, and when?"

"Yesterday," Ronon answers. "Killed a wraith that was hunting me. I thought he was sick from the sun. This planet makes you kind of crazy in the head if you're out in the light for too long." He then asks, "Why are you looking for him?"

"He's... well, sick isn't the right word, but it's close enough," You say. "It's complicated and requires a bit of backstory."

"I've got time," Ronon says.

"Right, well, I guess the question is how far back do you want to start with? Because there's the last few months, and then there's at least a year...? And then like, eight years worth of other starting points before that."

Teyla handily suggests, "How about we start with the siege itself and work backwards incase our friend here needs any more explanation."

"...That's a fair point," you say. "Any problems with that?" You ask Ronon.

"Nah," he grunts. "Just explain it already."

"Alright... well..."

And so John proceeded to retell the events of the Act 6 Act 1 to Act 6 Act 2 three parter episode "The Siege."
And we proceeded to NOT listen because do we really need a recap of all of that? Although, it has been a while since then. If you DO need a recap, the episodes are just a few clicks away.

Let's check back in with Atlantis, shall we?

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you're officially a little panicking right now.

"John and Teyla are missing?" You ask Mikari.

"Unfortunately, we think Ford managed to take them by surprise," Mikari answers. "We're searching for them --" And then the Stargate dials in.

You and Mikari head to the control room, and receive the radio transmission from Major Lorne.

"Mckay and I spotted Ford, but he hit us with a Wraith Stunner and absconded," Lorne reports. "We're not sure where he is, right now, but he definitely didn't have Major Sheppard or Teyla with him."

You feel a bit more than panic at this point. Damn it. Damn it! DAMN IT!!!!

"That's not the only problem, though," Lorne continues. "He left us a Note."

"A Note?" Mikari asks.

"It reads, 'You'll need the Runner. Love, Ford.'" Lorne reads.

"...Love?" You ask.

"Well, he drew some weird heart symbol, so what else could it be?" Lorne answers.

"Can you get a picture to me?" You ask.

You are once again Teyla Emmagan, and John has just finished explaining the weird abilities Ford has in seeing other timelines.

"So that explains it," Ronan scoffs.

"Explains what?" John asks.

"The weird things he said." Ronan then quotes. "Right after shooting the Wraith he said, 'Don't thank me, I'm just reading the script.'"

"...Yeah, that doesn't make any sense at all without context, doesn't it?" John frowns. "So... Question. Wild question that neither of you have to answer, but do you think Ford... set us up to meet like this?"
"Maybe," you say, then look to Ronan. "Did Aiden say anything else?"

"Yeah, I asked him what he meant by the script thing, and he just said, 'You'll find out in a few hours. Then the question will be answered like a bad tick pulled off the skin.'" Ronan answers. "Like I said, I thought the sun got to him."

And then static cuts through the air.

Ronon asks, "What's that?"

"Sounds like one of our radios," you say. "Our people are trying to contact us. The cave must be causing some interference with the signal."

Ronan grunts, and examines one of your vests, he takes out the radio, and steps outside to listen to it.

Finally, his back is turned to you... and he steps outside.

You ghost out as a burst of breeze, and silently: reform, grab a knife, and cut Teyla loose before grabbing your P-90 and point it at Ronan.

"Keep your hands where I can see them," you warn.

Ronan stills- "I expected you to get loose, but that was almost too quick."

"Yeah, benefits of powers," you say.

"I told you before, I have to get through the ring," Ronan offers the radio to you. "Tell them to let me through."

"Why?" You ask.

"Because the Wraith are coming," Ronan says. "They're hunting me."

"You are a Runner," Teyla realizes. Ronan nods. "I had heard stories, but..."

"What's a 'Runner'?" You ask.

And so they tell you.

Wraith cull a planet, prepare to feed on people... but... sometimes they let them go with trackers implanted into their bodies.

He has a tracker in his back.

Oh.

OH.

"You've got a tick in your back," you say, realization dawning as you lower your P-90.

"...I what?" Ronan asks, glancing over his shoulder in confusion.
"A Tick, the tracking device." You say. "That's what Ford was saying. If he's really looking between universe then he'd have seen that we could have a way to help you get rid of it.'

"You can do that?" Ronan asks, suspicious.

"Yeah, we can," you say. "Can I have the radio?"

He hands it to you without trouble.

Your name is Kanaya Maryam, and with a hurried sense of expedience, you step through the stargate and hurry to meet up with John.

He nods, and leads you through the forest on a merry jaunt beneath brush and canopy to a small cave area hidden away from most prying eyes and grabbing limbs of the local flora.

You find Teyla and the patient- a man named Ronon Dex- waiting for you inside a cave. John makes the introductions, and this Ronon fellow eyes your alternian skin and horns oddly. Then shrugs it off with a "I've seen weirder this last month."

Well, with that, he removes his shirt, and you start the operation... with a question.

"Would you like me to heal the scars from your previous attempts at removing it?" You ask.

"You can do that?" He asks, very incredulous. "Yeah, sure, why not. Might as well."

And with that, you scan his biology. It takes no time at all to find the invasive bio-tech tick- and first and foremost shut it down. Then, you dilute his pain responses, and then you start the cutting and incisions to remove it, and within minutes, you've gotten it loose.

Then, you heal him up and clear away the scar tissue.

"Here," you hand him the tracker. "One Wraith tracking device disabled."

"Huh," he stares at it, then promptly throws it to the ground and shoots at it with his gun.

**PCHBWAM!**

A burst of bright red basically evaporates the tracker and the dirt beneath it, leaving a small crater.

"...Let me guess," John quips, "phasers set to kill?"

"Yeah," Ronon grunts. "Be glad I shot you with it set to stun."

"On that note," you say, "am I required for anything more? Or should I head back to Atlantis?"

That's when the radio buzzes, and then Lorne radios, reporting a Wraith Dart inbound through the Gate.

Ronon seems ready to run. But John tells him to wait.
His eyes and hands glow blue as you feel the wind rustle around you. Then... he reaches up as your ears pick up the sound of the Dart's keening engines.

It's inbound straight towards your position- where the tracker last was- and then with a flash of blue, John throws up a wall of solid air in front of it.

**KABOOOM!!**

Ronin stares as the flattened remains of the Dart crash to the ground nearby, and then he says, "I have no idea how you did that, but that was incredibly satisfying and I'd really like to see more of that."

"Well, I guess there's that," John says. "I was just trying to figure out how to ask you if you needed a place to crash."

---

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you massage at the bridge of your nose.

A Wraith Hiveship had came to P3M-736 not too long after that dart arrived, forcing the search and rescue teams to pack it up and head back to Atlantis without finding Ford.

You seriously hope that Ford didn't get captured, and that if he did... well... the Wraith find him just as mentally unstable as most people do on first glance.

...Is it wrong of you to also hope that if he did get captured, that the Lieutenant would give the Wraith hell and slaughter a whole bunch?

...But still, even insane, Ford seemed to be trying to give you a one up on the world.

*You'll need the Runner.*

Once you got a look at the logo Ford had drawn, you and Argo both had recognized it as the Alternian symbol for the HEART BOUND ASPECT.

Ford had never seen the thing before in his life- so how, beyond having powers based on that aspect, could he know it?

The answers were impossible.

So, you now have a man who was on the run from the Wraith for years in Atlantis.

A potentially very volatile, former military commander, with a plasma gun to blast against the Wraith.

You're going to have to handle this very carefully.

Chapter End Notes
I'm not so good at handling things carefully, at times. Tomorrow, treasure hunt.
MINISODE: Satedan Ruins.

Chapter Summary

Takes place a day or so after the events of "Runner."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your name is Ronon Dex, and your home is in ruins.

Your planet is dead.

The cities are crumbling, and the Ring... The Stargate had even been laying face down in the dirt. That had been an unpleasant discovery. And a pain to get back upright and usable again.

Your home is gone.

Your life as you knew it is over.

Your people...

Your people are dead or scattered and you're not sure which is better.

You have nothing left but the gun on your hip and the clothes on your back.

Your life is... Your life is...

You are not a Specialist anymore.

You are not a Runner anymore either.

What does this make you?

Alone? Isolated? Abandoned by the universe??

"Hey," Sheppard's hand goes on your shoulder. "You ready to head back?"

You take a steeling breath.

"Yeah," you say. "I got nowhere else to go, at any rate."

And so you return through the Stargate to the City of the Ancestors- Atlantis- and wonder what you're going to do next.

Whatever it'll be... at least it should be better than rock bottom.
Chapter End Notes

Realized I'd forgotten an important scene at the end of Runner. Here it is now, a bit orphaned, but no less important.
Chapter Summary

This Chapter Is Posted In Memory of the real life Jeff Zandi, whose Uru-Verse self lives on in memory.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

DIASPORA DATE: 05/12/0005.

VRRROOOOOMSSSSHSSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhh.... VRRROOOOOMSSSSHSSHHSSHHSSHhsshhh....

Your name is Polypa Goezee, and you stretch and blink as your eyes adjust to the relative dark of the Cavern of D'ni. You're in a dead end alley- because the far end of the alley is collapsed into an orange lake.

"So, where are we exactly?" You ask your Kismesis, Joey Claire.

"Tokotah Alley," Joey answers.

Toko...

"Tokohuh??" You blink.

Joey laughs. "God, that name keeps changing! One of these days it'll be 'Tokoha,' I'll bet."

And then she gets a starry, distant look to her eyes.

"Hello? Earth to Joey?" You wave your hand infront of her face. "What's up?"

"Tokoha," she says, looking at you with the most dorky grin on her face. "If she's a girl, let's call her 'Tokoha'!

"What?" You blink again. And then it clicks. "The Grub?" You start to grin too. "I like that! I really like that!!"

"Now we just gotta figure out what her last name'll be!" Joey grins, and then leads you to some nearby stairs. "But that can wait! Let's go meet up with Sharper."

"Yeah," you nod, and then follow.
Douglas Sharper has a quick wit, a sharp grin, and a dashing hat. But he's also got a cunning streak of thievery in mind.

"The DRC just got power to the Gallery Doors," he says in a quiet whisper as he leads you and Joey down some stairs away from the plaza to another alley, this time one missing an entire side and crashing down into an orange river. The other side is full of doors and buildings carved into the rock side. "I don't think anyone's gotten past the damage to the stairs yet, though, so the rest of the Gallery should be unexplored."

You come to a pair of golden metal, shiny polished doors with blue buttons in the middle of each. A press to one makes it go KLINGK and woosh open.

Inside you find a darkened room, filled with junk, and badly lit. There's junk everywhere on this first level, and the stairs leading down to the next area look rickety at best. All the wood planking looks like it got doused in water and rotted. There's no telling if there's anything solid beneath them. Still, they're fancy. Spiraling down in a circle on either side to the ground level.

The door glides shut behind you once you're inside, and then some automated system starts trying to play music as lights click on inside.

What you find is...

"This is a Gallery?" You ask. "Looks more like a Pawn Shop, to me."

It's a large room; the first floor is actually basically just a balcony-slash-waiting area overlooking it. Most of the junk here seems to be old paintings that crashed off the wall into display cases. Downstairs... there's the rest of the space. Stained glass windows cover the upper walls, and there are a bunch of display cases everywhere.

"Yeah," Joey agrees. "This is a Gallery?"

"The Kadish Gallery, according to Nick," Sharper says. "Family owned and operated. Though, that could apply to a pawn shop too, I guess. Maybe he mistranslated it." He takes a rope out of his backpack. "C'mon, let's get down there."

He secures the rope to some stone railing, and throws the rest over the edge. From there, you all climb down to the main floor. You wind up behind a counter that's set center stage between both sides of the staircase.

"...Is this a Cash Register?" Joey pokes at a machine bolted to a counter.

"...Maybe Kadish sold the paintings in his gallery?" Sharper offers.

"Maybe," you say. "Still think it's a pawn shop."

You head out and around the counter and explore the Gallery a bit. Joey takes pictures of all the
stained glass windows- even taking flight to get some close up pictures of some really high up ones.

Meanwhile, you and Sharper poke and prod the display cases.

"...Are these beetle themed inkwells?" You ask, peering at some of the rusted looking things.

"Looks like," Sharper nods. "Pretty cheap materials, though. And it looks like the actively stored the ink inside at the time of the fall. It rusted out."

You're tempted to take one, but they're all pretty badly rusted.

You keep looking for a Linking Book.

Joey ends up finding it, though- after activating some weird rotating triangle stone pieces carved with weird symbols, a hole in the floor opens up and a huge stone and metal gazebo structure rises from beneath the floor.

The whole thing is protected by some kind of force field, though. There's no readily apparent way to get inside. But that's probably for good reason, given that there's a skeleton in leather clothes lying next to the altar with a book on it. Creepily enough, there's a gas mask on its face.

---

Your name is Joey Claire, and you scan the area inside the force field with your KI- equipped with a fancy air-quality scanner that Doctor Kae had apparently worked on before she up and quit to go to Atlantis- before smiling at the results.

"Air inside is stale, and dead. There's nothing biological alive inside there, plague or otherwise," you report.

"Good," Sharper says. "Now how do we get inside?"

"Gimme a second," you start looking around for the little tree symbol icon that activated the gazebo and the spinning pillars.

"...So, what do you think killed him?" Polypa asks of the skeleton.

"If I had to guess?" Sharper grimaces, "Starvation. He looks like one of the terrorists working with Veovis to shuffle the plague corpses into any age survivors might have fled to. The Gazebo probably activated the forcefield and sunk into the floor. If he threw corpses into the age? No way he'd link through after them and risk dying from that. He probably thought someone'd come and pull him out eventually. But... I guess that didn't happen."

"Sucky way to go out, but kind of karmic, in a way," Polypa remarks right as you find the button and deactivate the forcefield.

"That's true," Sharper says. "Bastard won't be mourned, either way."

"Well then," you say, eyeing the corpse. "Shall we head through?"

"Yeah," Sharper nods. "Treasure awaits!"
You step up to the book in turn, and...

VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSSHHSSSHhsshhh....
VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSSHHSSSHhsshhh....
VRRROOOOOMMSSSHHSSSHHSSSHhsshhh....

...The three of you link into an old stone temple, surrounded by trees. You're in a circular formation around a small pile of bones and decayed cloth.

"...Now here's someone we should mourn," Sharper says, nudging a skull with his foot. "Geeze, this is tiny. I hope this was someone really old and not someone really young."

You scan the air with your KI... "No sign of the plague. Air's clear." You kneel down, and pick up the skull. It really is a bit on the small side, isn't it? You peer around, and find another one, buried beneath a rib cage and a cloth- a much larger skull than this one.

"Two bodies, looks like," You sigh, and Captchalogue the remains onto a single card. "We'll have to get these back to Releeshan at some point."

"I'll make the arrangements once we're done here," Sharper says.

You start looking around the temple. It's a small structure, only a metal telescope peering off into the distance, and a Linking book back to the Gallery resting on a stone shelf. It's surprisingly intact, all things considered.

You run another check of the KI...

"The Atmosphere here is incredibly stable," you blink at the results. "Like, temperature controlled stable. There's not even any excess carbon dioxide in the air, and we should be picking up a noticeable spike right around us given we're breathing it out all the time."

"Perfect age to make a Bank Vault, if you ask me," Sharper says, glancing at the wall of trees.

"Yeah," Polypa nods.

You examine the telescope next, and find that it's actually a viewfinder with some puzzle mechanisms in place. It's a rotating image puzzle. You spin around the different parts to make a solid image. But where...

Oh, wait, you recognize this!

You dig up the appropriate image from your KI, and make it match on the scope infront of you.

"Okay, so that was image one of three of that set of windows," you explain, "I think we'll need to find a couple more telescopes like this."

"Sounds like a plan to me," Sharper says.
It's a quiet, somber hike through some meandering forest paths, one of which leads you to a glowing lantern stabbed into the ground, resting next to a Book stand with a Nexus Book on it.

"Wonder why it got put out here?" You muse.

"Maybe this is a Nexus link in point, and the Gazebo is for the Gallery only?" Sharper guesses.

"Maybe," you shrug.

"So, what's this?" Polypa kicks at the lantern.

"Maintainer Mark," Sharper answers. "Some sort of relay beacon for the KI device network, and a sign of approval from the Maintainers that the Age is stable."

"Interesting, but not worth anything, I guess," Polypa answers.

"Nope," Sharper agrees.

And so you carry on, finding the next scope on the other side of a tree wall from the first temple, within, yet again, another stone temple. This one is the same design as the Gazeebo from the Gallery, however.

You set it up, and head to the next telescope that this one is pointing at...

You find that, along with another body, crumpled on the ground next to the device.

"Must be someone who tried to solve the puzzle and died before they succeeded," Sharper guesses.

You captchalogue their remains as well, and then set the final scope, opening a door to the next area.

A large shaft of a room lies before you, but nowhere near as grand as the Descent- the Great Shaft of Earth. No where near as tall, for starters.

There's a fancy chandelier above you, casting light down onto a floor carved with a familiar winding pattern.

"Now why the hell is THAT pattern here?" You ask.

"Familiar?" Sharper asks.

"It's the basic texture engraving that got put on every Stargate in Milky Way, and it's shared with a LOT of the Goa'uld texture aesthetic," you elaborate. "It's probably just a coincidence, but... still."

"Weird," Sharper says. "But, that looks like our door down there. Let's figure out how to set this up."

The picture reference is easy to piece together. There's a set of buttons that make the floor light up in pieces. Press the indicated buttons from the window, make the floor have the shape from the window, aaand...
"Now we walk the path of light to the door, I guess," you frown. It seems too obvious, but that's what's before you.

So, you try walking the path. And Sharper tries walking it. Even Polypa tries walking it. But the door at the end of the path stubbornly remains closed.

So... You cut at it with your Laser Cutter.

"That bastard!" you swear after prying the wood loose. "There's nothing here but solid rock!!"

"So... a red herring," Polypa surmises. "Can I see the picture?"

You open your KI, and let her see it.

"...Ah, I think I see what we're supposed to do," Polypa grins, and then has you and Sharper stand off the floor while she walks a completely random path that wasn't even on the window.

A path not of lit up sections, but of shadow.

And then the floor sinks open and voila, there's another staircase leading to a door.

"Heh," Polypa grins from the center of the floor. "Got it!"

"How the hell did you figure that out?" You ask.

"Not telling!" She grins back at you. "That'd be cheating!"

Your name is Douglas Sharper, and you step out from beneath a tunnel of trees into a large, wide open area.

For the first time, you're able to see the sky, and the distant horizon, and a sun in the air.

Everything is some hue and shade of purple- even the sea of mist and fog that rolls in nearby where the ground falls away entirely, and spreads out far, far, far out into the distance.

Now's a good of a place as any to take a break.

It's been a lot of hiking, a lot of meandering through forest paths. A lot of staring at puzzles and then at pictures... Now it's time to eat some lunch.

"So, how was your Halloween, Sharper?" Joey asks.

"Eh, it was fine," you answer. "Spent it playing cards with Phil, basically. What about you?"

"Family, friends, trick or treating," Joey smiles. "The kids are really getting a kick out of the costumes and stuff now that they're able to be a bit more open about it. Nepeta basically went as herself, except, as a princess. Roxy made her this adorable orange and green princess dress."
"That sounds cute," you muse.

"It was," Joey nods.

"Eh," Polypa shrugs, "I basically went out to some costume party with Tegiri. It wasn't great, really. Everyone just spent the time arguing about whether or not the Alternian or Earth version of some anime was better or not."

"Sounds like a boring time," you say.

"It really was, actually," the girl nods.

Alternians. Honestly, you're not sure you're ever going to get used to this. The whole "Aliens on Earth" thing, let alone the "Aliens From Other Galaxies" thing. Aliens from your Galaxy isn't really all that surprising, really, but still.

After that lunch break, you continue along the path and find a giant pyramid with a large sphere atop it, enclosed by a metal cube-frame.

"I have no comment," Joey says, blatantly ignoring some obvious symbolism you're missing.

You head inside and find a darkened floor, and a button that makes the large orb atop the pyramid spin and shine light on the floor, making symbols appear on it.

There's a bunch more of trying to solve a 'walkable path' but none of the glyphs follow a walkable pattern this time.

And then Polypa gets the bright idea to turn the light off again.

---

An elevator ride later, and you are once again Polypa Goezee, feeling like the champ of the ball. Two out of three Puzzles solved. Hehehe.

YOU ARE ON A ROLL!

...Of course, then you get stumped by the next puzzle. Giant pillars that raise up up up, and only lower if you hit a blue 'reset' button- which lowers everything at once.

You're able to guess at getting a stable, climbable ladder path up the pillars to get to a room that seems to go somewhere, but all it does is lead you back down to the levers that control the puzzle again.

Looking at the picture, your main roadblock here is the fact that neither you or Joey know the D’ni numbering system. This window is covered in the glyphs.

Sharper, on the other hand, does, and it's with that knowledge that he picks out a pattern on window, and then pulls the levers in a certain order.

And then the CEILING fucking DESCENDS, and drops a ladder down to touch the tallest pillar of the bunch.
And then you climb.

And you climb.

And BOY HOWDY IS THIS A REALLY TALL LADDER.

And still climbing.

Climbing still.

Getting a bit afraid of falling off here....

STILL climbing....

And then finally the three of you reach the top, and basically colapse to the floor as far away from that shaft as you can so you can catch your breaths.

"THAT. Was a LONG CLIMB," you huff.

"That's a better bank robber deterrent than anything else," Joey grumbles.

"Agreed," Sharper nods. "So agreed."

As you catch your breath from the climb, Sharper's KI dings, and he checks it for a message.

"...Oh my God," his voice has a sort of wet, warbling sound from the back of his throat. "Zandi what the hell are you doing?"

"What's he doing now?" Joey asks.

"...Jeff just sent out a fucking mass email to a waiting list of people who were applying to come to D'ni through the DRC, and he sent it to everyone on a civilian tourist list too..." Sharper massages at the bridge of his nose. "Damn it. We're so not ready for this at all. What was he thinking??"

"Clerical Error?" You offer.

"No way this was an Error," Sharper sighs. "He did this on purpose. But why? I don't know. No way we have the funding for this,"

"I guess we've got a reason to go get that treasure now beyond just wanting it for ourselves," You get to your feet. "Once we find this vault, and see if it's full of treasure or not... what d'ya say we ask Yeesha if she's willing to instance this age and make a bunch of copies of the Vault Treasure?"

"...And what, launder it?" Sharper asks. "You do realize it'd inflate whatever economy we do that with massively."

"I dunno about you," Joey says, "But that seems like a bad idea..." And then, she grins, and says, "But it's not like we weren't planning on doing that anyways, for 'historical' reasons, right? A Vault left as it was, and a copy of everything to take and put in a museum somewhere. What's a few extra copies of it ontop of that?"
"...Yeah, alright," Sharper laughs. "Fair enough."

And so you head down a long ass tunnel and emerge into a large void of a room, speared across every which way towards the center by metal beams to connect to a large, boxy vault in the center.

"Now for the Final Challenge," Sharper says. "Let's see if we can figure out how to open the doos."

A walk along some spindly stone pathways, leads you to a central platform high high HIGH above the void. So high up you cant even see clouds. Just. PURPLE VOID.

No wonder you were climbing for so long. There's a control console on this platform, marked with symbols and six buttons.

Sharper and Joey immediately consult the Gallery photos, and you... you just look at the board.

Let's see now, button one is clearly marked with a D'ni "1" (You picked up THAT much atleast) so it's likely the first in the sequence... The others are all otherwise identical in nature- glowing yellow front surface, bronze ring around the sides... except for one of them. It's got no paint on it at all along its sides, and is pure yellow otherwise. A painting error? No, that can't be right...

You wonder... could it really be that simple?

You press the buttons in that order. 1, then the off colored one, then the rest in the obvious order.

"Okay, I think we've-" Joey stops as there's a loud burst of air pressure from the vault doors, and they glide open on rusty wheels, before grinding to a halt at the end of their track. "...Got it?"

"How the hell did you figure that out?" Sharper asks.

"My secret," you beam.

You all head up into the vault through the steps and find...

"Oh, hello," Yeesha is standing there in the center of the Vault, surrounded by a horde of golden treasure, looking at the three of you with a bewildered look in her eyes. "I wasn't expecting anyone to come through here before I'd finished scouting." She sees Joey, and sighs. "I really should have realized that it'd be you of all people, though."

"Fancy that," you grin. "We were just talking about you."

Beyond examining a final body of whom Yeesha identifies as GUILD MASTER KADISH, who had sealed himself away in his vault, and died reaching out for a Linking Book back to the Gallery- there wasn't much to do beyond talk shop and count coins.

"There's a ton of money here," Sharper says, running his hands over the golden coins. "This much gold could fund the DRC for years, if I'm counting right."

"Forget that," you say, throwing yourself onto a large cozy throne chair. "This chair's all I need. It's SO COMFY!"
"Shoosh, you," Joey waves for you to get off. "We are CLEANING THAT before we take it! And if we take it, we're taking it from an Instance."

"Booo!" You pout, and get off the chair.

"You're already talking about instancing this age?" Yeesha sounds... amused. "I was thinking of making this age a focal point for one of my Journey Lessons, before the Tablet situation was resolved."

"What about now?" Joey asks.

"Hmmh..." Yeesha peers at Kadish's body, and then says, "To be honest, I was thinking of proving a point that the treasure has no value when hoarded. I wanted to see if this age was still suitable for that, given current circumstances."

"I think we're all in agreement then," you say, "we clone the hell out of this age and loot the vault again and again for the treasure as many times as we need!"

And yes, yes you were all in agreement.

Chapter End Notes

Yeeeah, that ended up being pretty... uh... walkthrough-y in places. BUT YEAH. >_<;;;

Mondays chapter will be interesting.
ALT:09X01(1): Stand and Draw

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 05/18/0005.

In Diaspora's Jade Caverns, it was an average day. Fresh Molts were being adopted, Wrigglers were crawling around or preparing to molt, and eggs were waiting to hatch.

One interesting teal and crimson swirled egg shell stood out among its single hued companions, however. A Commissioned egg made from the donated genetic materials of Mierfa Durgas, Joey Claire, and Polypa Goezee.

It had sat, waiting, growing, for so long... and now...

It wriggled within the nest holding it secure. And then there was a soft crack that went through the air.

A pair of sharp jade eyes locked onto it from the sound made, and Lanque Bombyx smiled.

"Wanshi!" He yells out, "Call Durgas! I think its time!"

O)<--STARGATE: ALTERNIA-->O

Your name is Mierfa Durgas, and it feels like it's been a long time since you were doing anything of importance that wasn't overshadowed by someone else.

The dangers one takes when they choose a Light-bound as their Matesprit, whose Breath-bound Kismesis is also your Moirail, you suppose. Your Lusus, long ago, gave you a sign without any aspect tied to it, which has always been a curious case of you making your own destiny... but that's a whole different story.

In fact, today's story has nothing to do with anything to do with stories that existed before hand.

Today is the start of a new story, overshadowing your own entirely.

You, Joey, and Polypa run like you've never run before.

Today, your child hatches from their egg.

And so you run.
You arrive at the Diaspora cavern, and Wanshi quickly escorts the three of you to the egg.

It wriggles, and there are large visible cracks on the shell, but not enough that the grub inside could break free.

Soon.

Soon!!

Polypa's buzzing with excitement, Joey's itching with anxiety.

You...

You suddenly feel as if this is the end of one era, and the start of another.

One book ends, another begins. One act's curtains close, another act's opens.

And then the shell cracks again, and a piece of its crimson and teal hued shell falls loose, revealing a gleaming green eye.

Wait.

Green??

Your name is Polypa Goezee, and you feel extremely nervous as more and more shell gets broken away, and then there's your little one crying out and squeaking and--

Green.

The Grub has green hair and eyes in a hue that you're sure isn't on the usual Hemospectrum. It's not Lime. And it's not Jade or Olive either, but somewhere inbetween. The back of her shell is teal hued, though. A mutation? Her horns... They look almost like flower buds waiting to bloom.

Squeak, squeak, crying out- and Joey reaches out with a small cloth that Wanshi had given her to help start cleaning the egg-gunk off of the grub.

"Sssh.. it's okay..." Joey whispers, and soon enough the Grub gets cleaned up and soothed into slumber.

Once in that state, Wanshi starts to give the newly hatched grub a medical exam.

Your heart clenches up, worrying over the possibilities of disaster....

And then Wanshi smiles, and reports, "Looks like female dominant genes, stable genetic structure, no real mutations aside beyond the hair and eye color not matching her blood hue, but that's not too uncommon of a thing, atleast with the hair."

"Like Callie's hair color, or Okurii's," Mierfa sighs in relief, and you can't help but do the same.

"So..." Wanshi smiles. "On today, May Eighteenth, Year Five, a life has been born. What will her
The three of you had really discussed this... And you settled on the words Joey speaks next.

"Tokoha," Joey says. "Tokoha Anne Claire."

"Tokoha, huh?" Wanshi smiles. "Yeah, I think that'll fit just fine with this little one."

"When can we take her home?" You ask.

"We'll keep an eye on her for the next few days to be certain nothing major will crop up," Wanshi answers, "but if she's fine and stable after that, you can bring her home with you. I'd get whatever preparations you have left to do done before then."

Your name is Joey Claire, and despite you feeling like everything is going to go right in the universe with your kid now here...

You could retire easily and never have to worry about money, if not for the latest turn of events with the damned Andromeda Group and their rogue Mofang Mecha.

The real question is... how involved do you get with the events going on back in Milky Way?

Dakara had nearly been destroyed with you on it.

If the Delta Megaship hadn't blocked that laser...

If things had gone even slightly differently...

Is there a level of acceptable risk now?

Retiring... Retiring...

Is that a thing you even want to do? What would you even do with your life beyond devoting yourself to raising Tokoha? Money definitely isn't an issue, given the Kadish Vault's stores, but...

But now you've fallen into the trap your Pa fell into, isn't it?

What do you do to make some use of your life now that you've done so many things? That you've essentially "Completed" one character arc and started "another"?

If you retire from being a 'hero.' Focus instead on being a better parent than your Pa was...?

You think you need to talk with Jake about this.


DIASPORA DATE: 05/19/0005.
Your name is Jake Harley, and you smile as you meet up with Joey Claire in the parking lot of some nondescript combination Taco Bell and Pizza Hut off of a highway in Colorado. (Chixie had almost started making up a song about the idea when you'd mentioned this meet to her last night, until you pointed out that someone else had already beaten her to the punch on that. You'll be grabbing a ton of extra food To-Go for dinner when you leave to make up for that blunder.)

"Joey," you greet.

"Jake," she nods, and inside you go.

Nobody gives you much of a second look, after all, why would Joey Claire, Alternian Colonel, and Jake Harley, matesprite of THE Chixie Roixmr, be coming to some rinky dink highway Taco Bell Pizza Hut for?

Honestly, you're sort of wondering that, too.

You both order your food, and find a window seat in the far back corner to start talking.

Your once daughter sits before you, changed, renamed, and grown up. Mentally, you're still ages older than her, but physically, nobody would ever suspect you'd been her father in another life at first glance.

There hasn't been any fuss made of this. Not really.

Maybe that's been a mistake.

"So... how's Chixie's galaxy spanning tour going?" she asks, starting the conversation.

"You'd be surprised at how well its going," you answer. "Really well, super well. As well as anything could ever go, I guess. Every now and then the Grubbels comes up, and someone asks if she's going to do a colab with you guys."

"Mnh," she nods, a glimmer in her eyes for a moment. "...Ah." And then that glimmer sparks with a snap of recognition, and she jolts slightly in her seat. "I'd completely forgotten about that as an option."

"Options, huh?" You muse, suspecting you know where this is going. "Let me guess. Sudden influx of money plus the new kid soon to be joining the family gotten you thinking about stuff?" Oh. "Ah, and congrats, by the way."

"Pretty much," she nods with a sigh. "Also, thanks. We're really happy." She smiles. "We named her Tokoha Anne Claire."

"Anne, huh?" You smile at that memorial to your late wife. "I think she'd be happy, you know. And I know she'd be proud of everything you've done." you nod, remembering that day all too well, and all the days after... "A lot has changed since then. We all have."

"Yeah," Joey says, and for a moment, you're in a different place. A different lunch, a different restaurant, the last time you'd see her alive with those old eyes you'd had. So much smaller, so less sure of herself. So rebellious, too. "We've been doing all this crazy stuff, and now I feel like I've done everything except live a normal life," she continues on. "Do you think she'd be proud of the less nice things I've had to do?"
"She put up a lot with me," you admit. "All those bad habits. Ah, what a mistake some of those were. I'd nearly fucked up, a few times. Lost track of our experiences and our lives..." You shake your head. "Sometimes, I'd screwed up so badly that it was a wonder of a miracle that she still agreed to marry me." You look into your daughter's eyes, one of the few things really unchanged despite everything else different about them, and you say, "I think she'd be proud of you for doing what was right, even if it wasn't a generally nice thing by earth standards."

"Mmh..." Joey stares out the window for a moment or ten. The silence passes uncomfortably, and yet somehow unobjectionable.

Then, your order number is called. "Four Thirteen! Four Thirteen!"

You retrieve your order of food, and bring it back to the table.

Lunch continues on in relative silence, save for the occasional question here or there about trivial things.

"How's Jane doing?" Joey finally asks. "I haven't heard anything about her in a while."

"You know, I'm not sure," you answer, pausing before you take another bite out of your taco. Infact, you set it down entirely, and stare at it. "She's gone somewhat off the grid the last while. I don't think I've heard from her in..."

...When was the last time you heard from her? You... you can't remember.

"...I can't remember. Does that make me a bad brother?" You ask.

Joey frowns. "No, but that makes me concerned that something is up. Tell you what, we finish up lunch, and we'll go see if we can figure out where she last was and where she is now. Maybe we've just been out of the loop."

"Sounds like a plan," you nod, and get back to your food. You pick up your taco and... it sits half-eaten in your hand.

Down in the pit of your stomach, there's a gnawing, aching feeling.

You don't know where your sister is. You've failed to keep tabs on her AGAIN after you'd sworn not to.

You're a failure, almost certainly.

No.

"Actually," you change your mind. "I think I can handle that on my own, Joey."

"Mh?" She asks around a mouth full of burrito. "Mrely?"

"Yeah," You nod. "I'll let you know if I find out anything. I get the feeling you oughtta talk with that Moirail of yours about what we were talking about just before we started eating."

Finally, you're able to take another bite of food.
Several hours later, it would be confirmed:

Jane Egbert was missing, and had been for almost two months.

Your name is Xefros Tritoh, and you blink as you process your Moirail's concerns.

"Alright, I think I got what you mean," you say. "Basically... what to do with our lives now that we've basically done everything we set out to do?" Joey nods. "And you're thinking... Grubbels? Full time?"

"Let's be honest, Xef," Joey massages at her legs. "I don't think I'll ever be tap dancing or doing ballet full time or professionally after what happened. I think it'll just be a hobby, really... And as sad as that makes me feel... I think I was only doing it to try and be more like my Mom. But I'm not her. I'm me."

You nod. "That's very true."

"But that makes the singing something that only I've done," she continues. "Something that either of them didn't do. Mom was a great dancer, but she didn't sing, and Pa was an adventurer, but he's too shy to share a stage with even Chixie! So..." She nods. "Music. The Grubbels. What do you think, Xef?"

"I think it's a great idea," you smile. "I'll talk with Dammek and see if he wants to get back into doing some more serious stuff with it."

"Great," Joey nods. "But, um, here." She offers you a sheet of lyrics. "Show him this, if he's interested in doing more stuff."

You look at the rather rough draft of ideas down on the paper, but... "This is good." You smile at her. "Is this based on what you went through in D'ni?"

"Sort of, yeah," she nods. "I mean, it's based as much on recent events as any of our songs have been."

"If the idea of doing more music wasn't enough to get Dammek back into the idea," you smile, "I think this will. I think... yeah. It's time to get the band back together."

Joey grins. "It's time to get the band back together!"

Meanwhile, on a random ass planet in the Milky Way Galaxy, Cameron Mitchel suddenly sneezed twice in rapid succession.

Chapter End Notes

The reason for the sneeze is tied to canon SG-1 season 9. Mitchel talked a lot about
getting the band back together.

The Band being SG-1's recurring cast.

IDK why I went for that joke. It's probably not that funny without that context.

ALSO; Fun Fact. USA Daylight Savings Time really screwed me over. Gotta get used to uploading this at 6 P.M. rather than 5 P.M. now.
ALT:09X12: The Knight and the Maid.

Chapter Summary

What ever happened to Jane Egbert?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 03/26/0005.

Jane Egbert hummed a tune as she meandered down the road towards the Stargate on a random Jaffa aligned world.

And then she stops- spotting a splash of crimson and grey metal lying face down in the grass near the Gate itself.

She frowned, and approached the armored figure, hearing them breathing heavily.

Jane knelled down, and asked, "Hello...? Are you okay?"

And then Mordred's armored head lifted up with a growling, pain filled grunt- "He... help... me...!"


DIASPORA DATE: 03/29/0005.

Your name is Mordred.

And you awaken to a world of pain.

Your whole body feels like its on fire.

You try to move, but find you really can't.

It hurts too much. The pain is so much your eyes are blinded with flickering bright blue flames of illusionary light.
"Easy now!" And then a face you can barely see hovers infront of you. "Your body fell from a very tall height! I'm trying to heal you as best as I can, but please, don't move...!"

And then you black out again.

---

**EARTH DATE: OCTOBER 3RD, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 04/13/0005.**

You awaken again for what's probably the millionth time...

But for the first time... the pain has receded to a dull throb across your entire body.

"Wh..." You start to speak. "Where...?"

"Oh, I was wondering when you'd wake up again," the woman who's been healing you kneels down and helps you sit up. "It's been days since I finished healing the last of the broken bones and ruptured organs. I've been keeping you alive in the mean time, but you really need to eat now."

You really have no complaint in that regard.

You'll gladly take food after... ugh. However long you were out of it.

You're fed soup at first, and then some solid breads... then...

...Cake?? Okay, you're not going to complain about food, but, CAKE?

Next comes some meats and such...

Sleep comes again all too quickly.

---

**EARTH DATE: OCTOBER 4TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 04/14/0005.**

Her name is Jane, and as you quickly learn from hearing her ramble on about her life so far, she's from Earth, and she has some slow burning HEALING ABILITIES.

"Nothing quite as fast as Shaper," whatever that means, "but enough to help out in a pinch."

You lie your ass off about who and what you are. You say your name is 'Saber', and only say that you're on the run from the people you used to work for. You also fudge it a bit and say they threw you off of a spaceship into a canyon mid flight, when that was really your own fault for not paying attention to where said spaceship was flying.

Jane, for whatever reason, doesn't pry more after you say those few things.
All she says is, "Well, I know how that is. I'll keep you company until you're healed." And there's a smile that... That...

Gods above, that's as motherly of a smile as you never got before in your entire life.


DIASPORA DATE: 04/20/0005.

It takes time for your legs to get feeling in them again. And by the time you're barely able to walk, you're forced to run.

"Some glowing people came from the skies," Jane reports one morning. "They're looking for someone matching your description."

And she didn't turn you over.

Instead, you ran.

You ran, dialed the gate, and went to the first uninhabited planet that you could find.

After you'd settled in inside some old cave, she asked you...

"So... Saber... Why are you running from them?"

And something just made you tell her.

"They don't want me for me. They want me for my power. As much as I hated my Father, he had it right. I was too stubborn to listen." You answer. "I didn't start to understand until they refused to let me take action against the one they'd sworn they'd let me fight against should they ever reappear. And..." You were actually crying at that point. "I didn't understand that all they wanted was my power with a blade until I was falling from failing to use it right."

You were a fool, if you were being honest with yourself.

A rebellion spurred on by ascended beings with an axe to grind... making you believe you were special? Oh you were, but not for the reasons they said.

Your father was right. Your mother, and all those others had lied to you. Used you.

Made you into a weapon.

And for what?

To puppet around as their pawn and forget their promises to you when the time came?

Maybe they were right to hold you back. At least if you'd heeded their words, you wouldn't have seen them for the power hungry maggots they were.
"I've been such a fool."

"I'd say not," Jane counters. "You left their service, after all."

And wasn't that something to think on?

So. You did.

You thought and thought and thought. Stayed up a whole night on it.

You were young and impressionable then. You'd been GROOMED to be their weapon. That you'd realized how they were using you was wrong... that didn't make you a fool. No. Quite the opposite.

You would have been a fool to follow their orders unquestioningly. HUNT... When you get your hands on him...

---

**EARTH DATE: OCTOBER 21ST, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 05/01/0005.**

You and Jane spent the next week hopping planets, running and running as the Andromeda Ascendants hunted for you, and failed.

Then, they suddenly stopped chasing. Just fell back in the middle of it, and turned around and left. As if ordered.

Your mind wondered what they were planning...

And then you felt Clarent react with something greater. A Twin of proportions massive in scale. A Weapon trying to draw from your own sword's abilities, and further, your own innate powers.

It couldn't be traced. you could tell that... but that wasn't what was happening. No.

They were taunting you. Showing you the utter destruction of a whole planet.

They'd really gone ahead and done it. Built a suit of armor for you, attuned to your soul... and then went ahead and used it without you.

You were mad- raging- steaming- how DARE THEY---!?

And then Jane put a hand on your shoulder, shaking her head.

"Let cooler heads prevail." She'd said. "They want you to rush in and confront them."

And you realized... she was right.

There was no point to that slaughter. It had never been in any of the plans you'd been informed of. So why do it?
...The weapon was incomplete without you. Its sword weak and pitiful. Its very essence hollow- just a suit of armor without you to pilot it, to fill it, and to guide its will.

A dangerous weapon, even as weak as it was without you... but one that they were using as bait to lure you into a trap.

Hunt must really be desperate, if that were the case.

You refused to be used by him ever again.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, hai Mordred. This is also what SHE'S been up to since she got knocked off of a space ship.

Updated the chapter order slightly. Put yesterday's chapter (Satedan Ruins) behind "Runner" proper.

The two remaining chapters for this week will be a MINISODE and a MIRROR chapter.

The Minisode will be touching on the last of the RPM Rangers who I haven't mentioned in some form or another already. They're not doing much, but they are interacting with the setting as established in some means or another. Should show some ripple effects from Joey, Polypa, and Sharper's Treasure Hunt.

The Mirror Chapter will be checking back in with that other SGC Mirror-verse that kicked off the whole Quantum Mirror shenanigans that I've made ample use of since then. It's been a while I think. Atleast a year or two in-universe since we last saw what they were up to? Someone correct me if I'm wrong, if you can remember the last time we've seen them.

DIASPORA DATE: 05/19/0005.

Your name is SUMMER LANDSDOWN, Heiress to the LANDSDOWN DIAMOND FORTUNE, and your parents have entrusted you with the VERY important task of DONATING FUNDING to some quaint archeological dig in New Mexico.

You're not sure why- you were a bit too busy painting your nails to listen to the "Briefing"- but with your faithful servant Andrews at your side how could anything go wrong?

"Yeah, no, sorry, but we don't need extra funding at this time," says the head of the Foundation Thing- Doctor Watson.

"I'm sorry, what?" You ask. "But we have Money."

"Yes, and so do we," he says. "Infact, we quite recently came into a great stockpile of it. Limitless, it seems like. Endless, it feels like. We're quite secure in our own funding and we don't need outside investors at this time, Miss Landsdown."

"But... But... I don't..." You feel as if a vital piece of who you are has just been knocked in the gut with a gold brick. "...Who? Who's funding you? It's that bitch, Cate Alexander, isn't it? I knew she had her sights set on this!" You're spitballing, actually. Cate's niece is a friend of yours and neither of you like the woman much- too rich acting even for the snobbiest of rich kids.

"No, actually, we're locally sourced," Watson seems amused. "But, yes, sorry, I'm afraid you'll have to return to your parents with a rejected check." He hands the DEMONSTRATION CHECK your parents granted you access to offer with a kind smile. "Though, if they are interested in the D'ni Restoration beyond more than monetary aid, perhaps you would like a tour?"

"...A tour of the digsite?" You ask.

"Heh, no, something much bigger," Watson's eyes twinkle like those MALL SANTAS Andrews took you to see during those holidays when your parents were busy elsewhere.

Something deep down in your soul makes you agree to a tour.

What you see makes you re-evaluate your entire life. How the hell did you MISS a news broadcast as important as the one announcing D'ni to the world?

Your name is FLYNN MCALLISTER, and you've had a hard life of trying to be a SUPER HERO and doing THE RIGHT THING...

And gotten fired from each and every job you've tried.
Life guard? Policeman? Fireman? Foreign Aid Worker? (Actually, you're pretty sure that your group was just as exploitative towards you as it was the rest of the natives in that case. A Tennis Factory? Really??) And now...

You're at the bottom of the barrel once again.

MECHANIC.

Oh, sure, it's been your old trusty and reliable fallback for the inbetween years, but you're not quite sure how you landed THIS particular job.

Your badge is all shiny and proper, even...

**BC-304, ODYSSEY, SECURITY PERMIT:**

**[CONSTRUCTION WORKER GRADE B]**

**ISSUED BY: STARGATE COMMAND**

How in the world had you managed to swing this??

You're beginning to suspect your DA had something to do with it. You don't even remember applying to this international job and yet... there it was in the mail. Approved and stamped and requesting you be in the States by no later than October 31st.

You're helping build a SPACESHIP!!

It feels like a dream. Like it still hasn't even sunk in yet!!

You might not be a super hero in the traditional sense with the fancy spandex- and you flinch for some reason imagining a shrill voice warning you that it was NOT SPANDEX, whatever "it" actually was- but you're going to be helping save the world in your own right.

Hey, if you play your cards right, you might be able to swing staying on as maintenance staff!

Chapter End Notes

I'd covered everyone but Flynn and Summer in a previous episode. So. Yeah. Here they are. Summer's family tried getting in on the D'ni stuff, and Flynn's workin' on the Odyssey.
MIR:02X04: Elsewhere along the Mirror's Edges.

Chapter Summary

Hey, let's check back in with this dimension! It's been a while, hasn't it?
(AKA: Deploying Feels Bombs IN 3... 2... 1...)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.


In one world, a very smart woman was being recruited for an expedition down to restore the ancient city cavern of D'ni.

In another... a very terrified girl unleashed a terrible computer virus onto her captors, and was stopped before she could install a firewall to keep it contained.

And so it spread, silently, quietly, infiltrating all that it could as quietly as it could as quickly as it could.


It's takeover went unnoticed, and it was able to take hold of a vast majority of the world's computers without anyone being the wiser...

Save, unfortunately, for one stubborn mountain in Colorado Springs, Colorado, US of A.

And so it devoted itself to attempted to gain access.

In the end, it found itself unable to do such, but its attempts were getting itself unwanted attention.

It wasn't ready to unveil itself yet...

And so it made a cover screen with a fake virus- Y2K. Attention was focused there instead.

It went unnoticed, though it did notice the construction of an environment dome over the city of Boston, Massachusetts. It was unimportant.


It knew what was in that facility, and how advantageous it would be to take it over. The ability to spread not just to other worlds within this dimension, but to other dimensions as well.

And yet its computer systems were somehow more powerful than It could fathom. Than it could penetrate. Alien Technology. Dangerous technology. It had been designed to beat anything Earth Made... and this was not of Earth. The technology in this Galaxy was immune to its powers, for
It would content itself to steal the data on how these technologies worked for the time being... And it would destroy them completely for now- until such a time that it could be properly controlled.

The falsity of the Y2K virus had been defeated, leaving the world secure in their victory.

It would grant them this one day.

And then, tomorrow, it would begin its grand overture.

As for the domed City, renamed Corinth? It paid it no mind.

_I AM VENJIX. AND YOUR WORLD IS NOW MY WORLD._


Meanwhile, as damaged Megaships slowly made their way along to get repairs, in another galaxy, in another dimension, on an Earth we’d visited once before, where a time loop was broken, and a Mirror had come into play to save the day...

The Y2K Virus had been defeated, and one Joey Harley and Cassandra Fraiser worked in the SGC inside the Mirror Lab.

You are now the Joey Harley who lost her brother to a car accident.

"So, did you hear about the new movie they're making?" Cassandra asks.

"Hm? What?" you muse. "What movie?"

"Based on the events of us going to another world and saving our earth from the Goa'uld!" Cassandra answers.

"They're seriously doing that?" you frown.

"Well, yeah," Cassandra nods.

You continue working in silence, until the Mirror suddenly flickers into activity.

Both of you look up at the mirror, and smile and wave upon seeing their friends Keiko and Silica there, working on a Mirror in another dimension not their own respective ones.

The dimensional twins wave and smile back, then move onto the next dimension.

"Well, that was nice to see them," you say.

"Oh, yeah, definitely," Cassandra nods. Suddenly, though, she shudders.
"Hey, you okay?" You ask.

"Just more of this damned bad vibe I can't shake," she shakes her head. "It's been building up for months now but I can't figure out how to shake it off. We beat that dumb Y2K thing, so that's what I thought it was before that, but... It's as strong as ever now."

And then there was the sudden buzz of the SGC's SOMETHINGS GONE WRONG ALARM, and your names called up to the Conference Room, as well as announcing a BASE WIDE LOCKDOWN.

Commander Samantha O'neill of the SGC starts the briefing in her very official sounding "I'm the Boss" voice and giving you no room to think of her as anything else:

The specific Computer Security System the Asgard gave Earth specifically for use at the SGC just deflected an intrusion attempt by a computer virus. A VERY powerful computer virus at that. One that reports are claiming is already breaking through some of the highest grade, Earth Made military security systems around within seconds, almost as if it were already there on the systems with nobody the wiser.

"The Virus calls itself Venjix," Samantha says, "and we have reason to believe it's sentient."

"Question," Lieutenant Jenifer Hailey raises her hand. "Why the fuck would someone make such a thing, and why would they unleash it on the world?"

"Why does anyone ever make anything like this?" One Doctor Cameron Mitchel asks. "Greed, money... who knows. A desire to prove that they can? As for unleashing it? Hell, maybe some kid just wanted to go outside and forgot to install a firewall," he shakes his head. "We can't tell right away."

And then it seems like everyone's cellphones go off within seconds of each other, everyone scrambles to answer.

Everyone's phones except yours.

"What the fuck-!?" Mitchel swears. "One of our own ICBM silos just launched an unauthorized strike!"

"Where!?!" Samantha demands.

And then your phone's ringtone for your girlfriend, Rommy Landry, goes off.

"Rom?" You ask, answering your call.

"Joey- Oh my god, the- the Mall doors just locked themselves and we can't get out and-" suddenly the call gets disconnected with a normally benign "boop boop" but makes your heart nearly stall.

"Rommy? Rommy!?!" You pointlessly ask the dial tone, but a moment later--

RUUUMMMBLLEEEE...
The whole mountain shakes with an impact - not a direct one. Distant.

_No NO No NONONONONO---_

"...Colorado Springs..." Mitchel answers with a quiet tone of voice. "It just struck Colorado Springs."

Another rumble and shake causes the lights to flicker.

"I'm ordering an IMMEDIATE evacuation!" Samantha orders. "CaptchaLog anything loose, and pack whatever you can spare! I am ordering a Base Wide Self Destruct and having Walter dial the Alpha site immediately! This is NOT A DRILL! I REPEAT THIS IS NOT A DRILL!"

You barely have the focus to follow Cassandra as she pulls you back to the Mirror Lab.

Still, something in the back of your mind has you captchaLog the Quantum Mirror along with everything else.

You can only hope this is a doomed timeline disconnected from the realities you used to be connected to, but that last appearance of Keiko and Silica...

Your heart feels empty as you claim a small lab on the new Alpha Site, long and far away from the rest of the Galaxy's woes. Your allies, the Tok'ra, helped you move a Stargate to this world so that its coordinates would never be on the Goa'uld's starmaps. They themselves did similar for another planet within this star system. You're practically neighbors.

...It doesn't matter.

You've lost your parents.

You lost your adoptive father.

You've lost your brother.

You've lost your girlfriend.

You've lost your entire home planet, now.

And why?

Why did this have to happen?

_"If you can hear my voice: Head now to the Domed City of Corinth! It's the only place we can be safe!"_

---

**EARTH DATE: JANUARY 16TH, 2001.**
In one dimension, a President was inaugurated, and brought into the loop of the Stargate Program-blissfully unaware of the events transpiring in another dimension...

In another...

A girl mourned the loss of her world, and refused to tell those from other worlds who might be able to help about what had happened... Going so far as to lie to maintain the illusion that all was well. But she knew all too well. She knew that the Earth was lost, whether or not anyone could spare a ship to investigate its status.

A lone black painted car drove through a radioactive desert, its nameless driver chasing after a radio signal, hunting down the Domed City of Corinth, and seeking answers.

He would stop at a flower, fight off some of Venjix's mechanical foot soldiers, and then drive off on the Road to Corinth, with a Destiny he couldn't even imagine waiting for him in just the hours ahead.

Elsewhere, the Venjix Virus contemplated its final moves against the City that had thwarted it for so long.

Once it would finish these last remnants of humanity off, it would begin research into spreading into other worlds in other dimensions.

There was no rush. It had all the time in the world to accomplish this, after all... and soon, it would have a perfectly impenetrable base from which to launch attacks.

Once Corinth was out of the way? The multiverse would belong to VENJIX.

Chapter End Notes

I'm giving myself wriggle room for other appearances of this verse's Joey and Cassandra that I may have forgotten about by way of having this Joey not mention it to anyone because... well... I might have actually forgotten about previous appearances since the mirror scene I mentioned before. So. UH. Yeah. >_>

So, uh. Anyways. Yeah. Jake's intervention in our timeline came about from butterflies caused by Hammond following his own letter. Nothing even intentionally IN the letter caused it, just ended up with the winds of change nudging ol Pa Harley into being a Papa Bear at just the right moment. In the timeline where Hammond didn't do that... well. We already saw what happened with Apophis. Now we get to see what happened when Alphabet Soup didn't get spilled out on the floor. :P

...So yeah, the events of Power Rangers RPM is happening on a Stargate Verse Earth that already had been attacked by Apophis and the Goa'uld once already. That's a thing. That's the most fun part about RPM. It's a post apocalypse setting! You could literally set it in the same setting as canon Obduction or the bad end of Myst 5 where Esher got the tablet.

It's a fruit ripe for subtle crossovers like this! So... yeah. >_>;
I have reasons for this, I swear.

DIASPORA DATE: 05/26/0005.

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and the planet THENORA had been culled by the Wraith.

They fought back- heavily, drastically, and fiercely. But...

In the end, all that was left were crashed darts, dead Wraith, and dead villagers.

A massacre on all sides.

And so you and the Atlantis teams who went to search for survivors found none human.

And as for the Wraith?

A lone dart attempting to get to the Gate and escape. It had grabbed Doctor Mckay and one Lieutenant Laura Cadman, and then had crashed into the ground- not even being shot down by anything done by your teams. The Pilot died on impact.

The Dart had just been that damaged, and that made retrieving the Doctor and Lieutenant a daunting task.

Raddek Zelenka and Tyzias Entykk had been called in to try and rescue them...

Their attempts failed, however, to retrieve both due to a low power supply, and instead, only the Lieutenant was de-materialized, unconscious.

And so now you’re helping get the wreck of the Dart back to Atlantis so that efforts could be made to retrieve Doctor Mckay.

You hope he’s not going to feel left out over the idea of being stuck in a state of perpetual de-materialization yet again, especially after the last time.
"Careful... Careful... Don't drop it now...!" Your name is Gordon Freeman, and you're muttering to yourself as you pry loose the MATERIALIZERIFICATOR INTERFACE from the Dart wreckage. Scientists all over are working on other parts of the Dart.

"Hey, so how's it going?" Major Sheppard enters the room, and- wait, no, wasn't it Colonel? No, never mind- DISTRACTION- you ignore him. Just ignore him. Focus on removing the MATERIALIZERIFICATOR.

"Ah, well, the good news is we were able to stabilize Rodney's life-sign signature," Zelenka intercepts. Good. Keep Ignoring them. Don't drop the MATERIALIZERIFICATOR, Gordon. Don't Drop It... "Now the question is if we can get the machine online again."

You carefully, gingerly lay down the MATERIALIZERIFICATOR (you're not going to get tired of calling it that) onto a table, and wipe the sweat from your brow. "Oh thank God.... That was tiring work."

"So, how DO we power it up?" Sheppard asks.

"Well, there in lies the bad news, Colonel," Doctor Kae steps up next, with a box of rattled and burnt parts inside. "From what we've been able to deduce the Wraith Dart uses a very specialized transformer to convert raw power into a highly stable, very specific stream of power. We believe it's crucial to operate the machine safely."

"...And that's it?" Sheppard glances at the box.

"Yes, unfortunately," Zelenka says. "We're working on reverse-engineering one, but it could take some time."

"Good," Sheppard nods. "Let me know the second you have something." And with that, he leaves.

Zelenka turns to start giving orders like the decent team manager he is (better than anyone from Black Mesa atleast) when that Entykk girl speaks up.

"Hey, maybe this is a dumb question," she says, "but what if we interfaced a Sylladex Fetch Modus with it?"

Everyone stalls at that.

"I'll start running simulations!" you volunteer before someone else gives you another high intensity, high hand eye coordination job. "See if that's feasible!"

"Good," Zelenka nods. "Get on that. I also want someone running tests to see if we could use other means of accessing the storage device's data. Anything that handles a high stream of data management. Asgard Transporters, Stargate Control Crystals- Let's Get Something Working, People!!"

Your name is Ronon Dex, and you feel a sense of unease as you pick at some food you'd gotten from the lunch line here at Atlantis.
It'd taken you about a week to process the fact that your home was gone. And then a week further to process the fact that you could stay in one place now for longer than a few hours without being tracked down. To... to suppress that trained instinct that death was but minutes away.

You eat food.

Your mind is otherwise... fairly blank.

What do you do? What can you do?

"Not bad, huh?" Sheppard sits down across from you, a plate of food in hand.

"It's fine," you shovel a handful of food into your mouth.

"So, have you given it any thought about what you're going to be doing?" Sheppard asks.

You don't bother even looking at him as you ask, "Are you asking if I want to leave? Because I can if you want me to."

"No, no. Definitely stay as long as you like,' Sheppard says. "Just, um. All I'm saying is, if you haven't thought of anything, I've got a job offer for you."

"A job?" You look up at him.

"Well, you hate the Wraith, we hate the Wraith. Point is, I could use a guy like you on my team, and you could use a place to stay."

"...Not sure I fit in here," You say, glancing at a pair of Marines that definitely are guarding you despite assurances that they're not doing that at all.

"Well, the only way to find out is to try," Sheppard says.

"...Do I have to decide now, or can I finish eating?" you ask.

"Sure, take your time. And, ah," Sheppard hands you a pair of utensils made for cutting food. "Maybe try these?"

You pointedly ignore them as you grab another handful of food and shove it into your mouth.

"...Or not. That's fine."

Still, though...

A job...

A job....?

Hmm.
"They're WHAT?" Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you massage at your forehead temples.

"Apparently," Beckett explains, "the botched re-materialization put Doctor Mckay's mind within the skull of Lieutenant Cadman, along side her own mind. It's remarkably similar to a Tok'ra symbiote interactions in terms of how their minds are remaining distant and separate, except I'm worried about the long term effects. Lieutenant Cadman's brain is showing an incredibly increased amount of brain activity. Much higher than her last recorded scan."

"So her brain is running overtime to maintain two consciousness?" You ask.

"Essentially, yes, and I'm worried that the constant strain is going to cause one or both of them to fade before too long," Beckett nods.

"Well, let's hope they figure out how to do it before too much longer," you grimace.

Your name is John Sheppard, and you just watched Ronon utterly demolish four marines in a sparring match.

"That's... enough for today," you allow. "Let's move onto shot practice."

Ronon nods, and the marines sigh in relief.

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you flinch as the attempt at re-materializing a benign head of lettuce ended up a smoldering pile of burnt plant matter.

"I guess we can cross out a Sylladex Fetch Modus from the list," you grimace.

"Yes, I suppose we can," Gina Kae nods. "Interesting after-effect results, however. It appears to have been thoroughly cooked through with a high intensity flame!"

"This is SO not my fault," Gordon Freeman says.

"We should move on to trying the Asgard beaming modulators next," Zelenka muses.

"While we start prepwork on that-" you suddenly remember something. "Roxy. Someone get Roxy Lalonde down here! I have an idea on how she can help!"

"And what's that?" Freeman asks.

"She could magic us up a Wraith Energy Transformer from the void!" You grin.

"This is a P-90!" your name is Kohiru Karren, and you hold up your beloved pink painted weapon-P-CHAN! "It's the most compact, lightweight, incredibly sturdy, fully-"
Ronon Dex takes a P-90 off of the rack and fires a quick burst barrage at a paper target, before putting it back.

"Crabs In A Hat!!!" You stare at the bullseye- or rather, sudden lack there of.

"He's good," John remarks. "Really good. But that's a bit further down range from what I was hoping to start us out with." He motions for a Nine Millimeter handgun- "This is a-"

Ronon picks that up and fires off eight shots in a tight cluster. Another bullseye of paper shredded away.

"...John," you turn to look at him, "where did you find this guy exactly?"

"They're good weapons," Ronon says, putting the 9Mil back and then- "But I prefer mine." -He quick draws his own personal blaster and--

PCHBWAAAAAM!

Paper Target? What paper target? You're quite sure there never was any paper target hanging there to begin with.

"...I can see why you would," John says.

"Holy shit," you glance at P-chan, and then ask- "Where can I get one of those? I wanna upgrade!!"


DIASPORA DATE: 05/27/0005.

"Cadman kissed me last night," Beckett sits down at the dining table in the early hours of the morning, a distant look in his eyes.

"...Who did what now?" your name is Daniel Jackson and you feel out of the loop.

"Lieutenant Cadman," Sarah nudges your arm with her elbow. "The girl who got Doctor Mckay stuck inside her head?"

"Oh," you blink. "...She did what now?" You reiterate with proper clarification.

"She framed it as her being asleep at first and pretending to be Rodney, but then," Beckett just stares out at the window. "Well, I realized it was the other way around, called her on it, and she kissed me."

"That's, uh... bold of her," You say.

"Aye," Beckett stares on. "That it is. I think Rodney's a bad influence on her. And to think he's missing the date he had lined up because of this."

"...Wait, Rodney Mckay had a date?" You ask. "With who?"
"Doctor Heightmeyer," Sarah informs you. "Come ON, Daniel, were you that engrossed in your books last night that- oh, wait, no, actually," she frowns. "I don't think I did bring this up last night at all. Nevermind."

You laugh, a bit nervously. "We were a bit... ah... distracted."

Beckett doesn't even respond, instead lamenting, "And I think she's cute and all, but my god how awkward is it when the girl who has a crush on you has your best friend jammed up inside her head!?"

"Ah, yeah," you cough. "That's ah, deffinitely quite the problem, Beckett."

"I don't know what to do." Beckett finally breaks his thousand yard stare with the window and asks, "Do either of you have any advice?"

Oh Boy.

Your name is John Sheppard, and you only manage to finally get a sparring victory on Ronon thanks to your ability to go windy.

Teyla applauds from one side of the room, Jade and Argo from the other.

"You cheated," Ronon grunts as you offer him your hand- he doesn't sound offended, though. Atleast. You hope he doesn't. It's hard to tell with this guy sometimes.

"Yeah, well, you said not to take it easy on you," you say. "So I didn't."

"Yeah, yeah..." Ronon takes your hand and you pull him to his feet. Then, he goes to get some water from a bottle.

Likewise, you move to sit down next to your girls, and Teyla takes up the staff sticks and goes through some warm up motions.

And then after her warm up, Teyla insists on fighting Ronon next, similarly no holding back.

And like before, Ronon quickly gets the upper hand. Unlike your match, though, Teyla has no breezing escape moves, and she's quickly pinned to the floor.

"I don't think I'm anywhere near that level of skill yet," Jade says.

"Me neither," Argo agrees.

You are once again Teyla Emmagan, and you find yourself re-evaluating some of your techniques as John and Jade go for a practice match.
"So... how are you finding your training?" You ask Ronon.

"You mean the testing?" Ronon asks.

"Is that how you see it?" You ask, a little concerned.

"Am I wrong?" He asks in turn.

"Colonel Sheppard believes you can be of great help to us," you say. "If he is testing you, it's only to find out where your skills are to be used in relation to everyone else on the team."

"HIYYAH!" Jade tries a tackle, John ghosts around behind her.

"BOO!" Argo yells, "Take your tackles like a man, John!!"

"So... why did you join them?" Ronon asks.

"My people are strong and proud..." You pause, "And yet we've done little but survive to the best of our abilities before they arrived. And without their knowledge of other worlds, we would have had no context for the rift energies that have been effecting everyone."

"So?" Ronon asks.

"I believe Atlantis is the best hope for the people of this Galaxy," you say. "I wonder if perhaps you see it, too?"

Ronon simply grunts.

---

"[Commencing Live test in three, two... one...]" Your name is Raddek Zelenka, and you successfully de-materialize a pair of rats with the Wraith transport device.

"[De-materialization successful... beginning re-materialization using Asgard Beaming Suite...]"

PVVVVMMMMM-SHING!!!

You swear in at least three different languages all mashed together into one mangled, incomprehensible, untranslatable sentence as you quickly try to keep your lunch from coming up from your stomach. You look away from the... the poor test subjects.

"[OH MY GOD! MAKE IT GO AWAY! MAKE IT GO AWAY!]" Freeman yells, verging on panic attack.

"[Those poor rats!!]" Tyzias gasps, covering her mouth with both hands and looking like she wants to cry.

"[Hrm... we may have over calibrated the Asgard sensors there...]" Kae muses. "[I'm beginning to suspect the Stargate Control Crystal might be our only remaining valid course of action should miss Lalonde fail to make us a replacement transformer."
"So, you want Ronon on your team, huh?"

Your name is John Sheppard, and Mikari isn't making this easy on you.

"Yes," you nod. "You gotta see him in action. He's an incredible shot, and none of my guys could beat him in a fight, plus he's ex-military."

"But not Altermian or Earth military," Mikari reminds you. "Not that either of those are a deciding factor for me, but I know Colonel Caldwell's barely accepting of the Altermian presence here, let alone the Tok'ra representatives, or even some of the Jaffa reps who came through on the last dial in after Dakara was destroyed."

"Well Caldwell's going to need to grow up a bit and stop being so childish," you say. "I want Ronon Dex on my team."

"You know I have to bring up that we don't know anything about him beyond the fact that Ford apparently rigged events to get him to come to us," Mikari counters.

"And Ford's clearly got some weird, meta-versal insight that we don't," you say. "I mean, we barely understand how this Heart Aspect works. Argo's kid-self has a completely different power set capable of ripping a symbiote straight out of a person without harming either, and the Seers on Diaspora are saying that's Heart-bound powers!"

"I'm well aware of that," Mikari says. "It's the Wraith Enzyme inside Ford's body that's making me concerned. He thought I was Weir, John. And he attacked Janet. That's... that's not just something I can overlook."

"I know, I know," you say.

"And you're dodging the point," Mikari adds. "We don't know anything about Ronon Dex."

"What's there to know?" you ask. "He's been on the run from the Wraith for the last three years. And he's got that look in his eyes."

"What look?" She asks.

"The same one I've seen in my own reflection," you say. "In Jade's eyes, Argo's, Rose's. Yours." She blinks, not quite getting it. "The one where you're soul searching and trying to find out just who the hell you are after everything's been shaken up beyond recognition."

"...I suppose it's about time for a one on one conversation," Mikari says after a moment. "At the very least, I owe him that."

"That's all I ask," you say.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you find Ronon Dex training some Altermian Soldiers and Earth Marines, some Athosians, plus one Tok'ra and a pair of Jaffa.
"May I have a word, Ronon?" You ask,

"Of course," he nods, and steps away from the group after giving them an instruction to carry on with what he'd shown them for a few minutes.

You step outside the training room, and he follows.

"So, I hear Colonel Sheppard asked you to join his team," you begin.

"He did," Ronon grunts.

"While I don't have any problem with that personally, he was supposed to ask me first," you smile. "John has a way of... acting first, talking later."

"I've noticed," Ronon says. "So. What's this about?"

"I'd like to know what your thoughts on accepting it are," you say. "It's a really big decision to make, and I'd like to know you're making the most of the time you have to make that decision."

"I'm thinking about it," he answers.

"Good," you nod. "Keep thinking about it. Take as much time as you need. When you make a decision, my office door is always open."

"Okay," he says.

"Okay," you nod.

And then your radio buzzes. "Miss Aiikho, we have a problem."

"Pardon me, Ronon," you say to him, turning to leave as you answer your radio. "Yes, Chuck?"

"Lieutenant Cadman just collapsed. She's in the infirmary."

Because OF COURSE.

"I'm on my way," you answer.

"Well," your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you scratch at the back of your head as you speak into the radio. "We've got simulations running alright with the Stargate Control Crystal, but the same could be said with the Sylladex and Asgard beaming simulations too. If we try this now before live testing, we might end up with both of them dead."

"We don't have much time," Beckett says on the other end. "If we don't do something now, we're going to lose one or both of them. They're already arguing over which of them should 'let go', and that kind of talk is making me nervous."

"...Okay, I'll tell them to push the mice test to now," you say. "Get Cadman down here in the mean
time and if its successful or not... we'll try it anyways."

"Thank you, lass," Beckett says, and ends the call.

"OKAY!" You call out. "We're running the Gate Control Crystal Test NOW! Beckett's bringing Cadman down for the separation."

"Buh- What?? Now?!?" Freeman asks, raising his head from resting in his arms. "But we're still checking the simulations!"

"Doctor Beckett says they don't have much time, so we're pushing it now!" you answer. "Let's check these Mice! Now!!"

Everyone is hopeful... and...

It works!

The mice come out unscathed, and just in time, because Beckett arrives then with Lieutenant Cadman.

You get her in position infront of the Wraith Dart's MATERIALIZERIFICATOR, and then ZAP! In she goes.

"Two Bio-signs," Gina reports. "Stable, and separate. Beginning re-materialization sequence..."

ZAAAAAP!

And then Laura Cadman and Rodney Mckay reappear solid whole and---

Unconscious.

---


DIASPORA DATE: 05/28/0005.

"So... Wait." Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you blink. "The reason that the Stargate Control Crystal worked was because the code bases were similar?"

"Basically," Tyzias nods. "The Wraith use a derrivative of Ancient for their language, so the Asgard tech and the Captchalogue tech wasn't working coherently with the Wraith tech. It was basically a difference between code bases. Like using ~ATH and ^Cake to try and make a Stargate dial."

"I don't know what those are, but okay," you nod. "I think I get what you mean."

"Anyways, I'm just glad they've woken up now and are both on the road to recovery," Tyzias says.

"Did Roxy ever manage to make the right transformer part?" You ask.

"Nah," she shakes her head. "We got a bunch of super springs that looked like the transformer coils, but... Nope. There was just something about that device Roxy couldn't replicate."
"Shame, that," you say. "But, at least we know how to fix a crashed Wraith Dart's materializer-"

"Materializerificator," Tyzias corrects.

"-Uh, yeah, that." You blink. "Um, yeah. In case one ever breaks with someone inside again."

"True, true," Tyzias nods.

"So, uh... why 'Materializerificator'?'" You ask the question that begs asking.

"Because we needed something goofy to call it or else we were going to tear our hair out figuring out a proper scientific name for it," Tyzias answers, sipping at her coffee mug full of water.

"Fair enough," you answer.

Your name is Ronon Dex, and you knock on the door to Mikari Aiikho's office.

You enter with a sense of trepidation- as if feeling there's a multitude of people who have once worked here. Ancestors or otherwise.

"Oh, hey, Ronon," And then one of Sheppard's girlfriends smiles at you as she turns to leave. "I'll leave you with Mikari, then. I've got errands to run now that I'm back on duty!"

"Later, Argo," Mikari says, and out walks the cat eared, crow winged girl with impossible hair colors. "Hello, Ronon. What can I do for you?"

"I'd like the job," you answer.

"Well then," she smiles. "Have a seat. Let's talk."

Chapter End Notes

So yeah. That was Duet.

Lots of minor things changed this episode from canon. One thing to note is that canon Atlantis was in 2005/2006, we're in 2001 in this timeline, so Ronon's 7 years of running from the Wraith has been curtailed a bit.

Gonna be some shorter chapters this week, and some longer ones a bit after.
Your name is Roxy Lalonde, and you hold in your hands a box full of parts from a broken Wraith Dart Energy Transformer.

"I'm sorry," you bow your head in apology. "But I couldn't make anything to replace it! I just... couldn't get a grasp on what exactly it is that the thing does from the remaining parts."

"It's fine, Roxy," Tyzias sighs, running a hand through her hair before taking the box back. "I'm just glad that the Stargate Control Crystal plan worked."

"I'm really sorry about that," you say. "I wish I could have..."

"it's fine, it's fine," she waves it off."Really, it's fine. Sometimes these things just have to work out in a specific way."

"That's... true, I suppose." You sigh, and head back to your room.

The truth was, you just couldn't get your mind to focus on this transformer right. You couldn't get into the MINDSET of a WRAITH.

You get on your laptop and connect to the Email Server on Atlantis. It's really just a basic server for the City for long form project messages- Because DOCUMENTATION!- but it also connects to a secondary database that receives updates from emails sent to a respective server at the SGC- which is where emails other people send are sent to you from.

The SGC dials in every night to ferry over new emails and such.

You don't get many from Earth, save from your other self sharing pictures of the kids. Anymore these days Joey's more likely just to pop over with that magic linking book of hers, and--

Oh.

She DID send you an email, well, you and your other self, but the fact that it was sent to both of you is....

"New Arrival At Home" reads the title.

You click on it, download a zip file of pictures and---

**OH MY GOD. SO CUTE.**

Pictures of a Little tiny grub in a crib, snoozing, awake, reaching up towards Joey as she picks it up.
Alternating Pictures of Joey, Polypa, and Mierfa holding the grub as it stares around everywhere it can.

The email reads as follows:

"We've got Tokoha home now and she's adorable and cute and everything is going fine here for the moment! And while I know Alternian grubs aren't exactly within the wheel house of your motherly expertise... do you have any advice about juggling career stuff with raising a kid?"

You should probably leave this to your other self--

Wait. She already replied.

"Sorry, Jojo. I'm probably the wrong me to ask about this. I've been more the stay at home mom type. XD Maybe other me's got some advice?"

This is going to be an awkward email to answer, because you've got no advice here.

...Well played, alt-you. Well played.

Chapter End Notes

Well, there's some Roxy. *probably* should have made this part of the last episode, but it just didn't fit tone wise.

ANYWAYS.

Reader Question: A Roxy Trolling Her Alternate Self- Something you'd be interested in seeing more of?
MINISODE: The Function of Fuel

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


Your name is Joey Harley, and you're conflicted over how well you managed to reproduce the lab at the SGC where you stored the Quantum Mirror.

"Nobody's said anything," you tell Cassandra. "They haven't noticed."

"You're the one who's insisting on not telling anyone," she counters.

"It's not like they can help us out," you answer. "A spaceship is what we need at this point and there's no way to fit it through a mirror."

"It's probably a hybrid blessing and a curse that we never built any space ships of our own," Cassandra muses. "Blessing in that the Venjix Virus never got a grip on it, curse in that we don't have that ship for ourselves."

"Doesn't make me feel any better about it," you say.

"Know what will? Lunch." Cassandra puts up an 'out to lunch' sign in front of the Mirror.

"Alright," You sigh, and follow her out.

Food... food should help, right?

You just... you just wish there was a way to fix this problem that wasn't already...

That wasn't just...

Moving to another planet and letting a computer virus blow up the entire planet.

You feel so useless.

Meanwhile there's a whole other world where you're out being a hero. Where you haven't lost everything.

Where...

Where she hasn't lost anybody at all in perfectly generic and preventable ways.

Unknown to that Joey Harley, the Joey Claire in the main reality we've followed was fighting in vengeance for the death of Ganos Lal.
Chapter End Notes

A scene that came to me after I'd posted that last MIRROR chapter. >_<;

Next Chapter, a post episode tag on for SGA:02x05. Then an Alt Chapter to finish off the week. Come Monday? SGA:02X06.
"Oh would you look that that?" Your name is Keiko Ayano and you facepalm as the ruins of a Puddle Jumper are dragged through the Stargate. "That's never going to fly again!"

"That's what I said!" Mckay agrees, pointing at the damaged ship. "But NO! Apparently Zelenka thinks it'd be a fine challenge making this hunk of junk work again as prep-work or whatever for getting the City engines fixed!"

"How do you even damage a Puddle Jumper that badly!?" You ask, gaping at the holes in the side of it.

"Two words, Naquadah Infused Bombs. Er, actually I guess that's three words, but..." Mckay shakes his head. "Anyways the 'mineral' the locals were mining up was Naquadah. Packs quite a punch when they direct it at a ship." He shakes his head. "Even if we hadn't shown up when we did, those Wraith were in for a nasty surprise one way or another."

John steps through the Gate after the Jumper and approaches. "Speaking of the Wraith," he starts. "Mikari and Lorne did a flyby over the city again. They picked the place clean. The Olesians are basically wiped off the planet."

"Lovely," Mckay grimaces. "And to think because of them we were almost Wraith Chow."

"And to think we almost got into a trade agreement with them for Naquadah of all things!" John scoffs, and storms off, muttering about taking the next two weeks off.

"So..." Mckay sighs as the gate shuts down. "...How exactly do they expect us to get this down to the hangar bay again?"

"Same way we got the Wraith Dart down there, I suppose," you answer.

"I was sort of inside someone elses head at that time and missed it," Mckay says. "A little clue in would be appreciated?"

"Oh, right, well, there's a simple explanation for that," you say as-

"Alright, clear the area around the Jumper!" Tyzias calls out, and everyone quickly backs away to a safe distance.

**PVVVVVM-SHING!!!**

And then the Jumper wreckage is beamed away.

"Yup," you nod.

"That was a pretty simple explanation, wasn't it?" Mckay muses.

"That it was," you say, turning to and then actually walking away.

"Wait, why didn't you just say that in the first place?" Mckay asks, following.

"Because it was funnier that way," you answer.

"Uh.... Okay. I guess?" Mckay pauses, and you get the time to step in the teleportvator and abscond.

Seriously, you're gonna have to have a talk with Zelenka about this project of his.

---

Your name is Rodney Mckay, and you're feeling sidelined. On the one hand its been wonders for your sleep schedule to NOT be the guy everyone comes to when something goes wrong. On the other, it's been a massive blow to your ego.

You'd like to think it's not a big problem but you're feeling like other people are stealing the scripts meant for you.

First with the Puddle Jumper fiasco and getting stuck in the Gate. Then- well- SHEPPARD of all people using a MENSA TEST QUESTION to solve a puzzle and get you a ZPM. Tyzias being the one who managed to contact Earth...

Oh, sure, there was a lot of time travel stuff that you did some great work on, but you were basically cheating because you'd already read the code-work you'd ALREADY DONE to make everything happen the way it did.

Where did the code even come from? You have no idea. It just sort of exists in a self-contained ex-nihilo deus-ex-mckay-ina of a paradox.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.

You Hate Time Travel.
And THEN. OF ALL THE INDIGNITY. You got STUCK inside Cadman's HEAD. You were unable to do ANYTHING to help your own damned situation.

Now this? A Jumper crash where you were forced to barely power the DHD and Drones respectively? You barely got that to work and now Zelenka's swooped in to take over repairs because HE is helping with the City's Stardrive Engine Repairs and you're...

You're...

You're not doing anything ground breaking like that.

And what's worse is you've brought in people who are basically doing jobs you WERE ALREADY DOING.

Oh, sure, it's doing wonders for getting you extra hours of sleep, but...

What good do those extra hours DO when you're spending them staring up at the ceiling and thinking about how you hired on your own replacements?

They could make a TV show out of that. The Replacements. Send... eh, a Dollar and Ninety-eight cents and get... hmm... Maybe a Super Spy Mom and a Daredevil Dude of a Dad?

...Wait, no, bad brain. Get back on that tangent you were on before. You're not a television producer.

You want to...

You want to be FAMOUS. You want to do something GROUND BREAKING.

You want...

You want to do a Samantha Carter and revolutionize the UNIVERSE AS YOU KNOW IT.

You start digging into the Atlantis database looking for any projects or allies they might have entrusted projects to guard...

There has to be SOMETHING.

You would then proceed to spend the next week searching the Database, during which time you'd miss out on AR-2 encountering a planet full of people who worshiped a Wraith Queen who was running the planet like she was a Goa'uld System Lord.

Needless to say, you're quite envious that you missed the fireworks of a Wraith Hiveship crashing into the nearby star and killing said Wraith Queen dead, and that prompted you to dive even deeper into the Atlantis Database.

Chapter End Notes

A prelude of feelings before Monday's chapter. Tomorrow- an ALT chapter.


**ALT:09X13: Gripe Cast in Grapes**

Chapter Summary

Have some Neps being Neps, mew!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**EARTH DATE: DECEMBER 2ND, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 06/12/0005.**

"We seem to have a thing about crashing spaceships into suns."

Your name is Callie Ohphee, and you look up from your magazine as Okurii, Joey, and surprisingly both Nepetas- Leijon and Strider- join you at a Cafe on Diaspora.

"Oh? What's that?" You ask.

"Tyzias and Keiko's team back in Pegasus just crashed a Wraith Hiveship into the nearest solar body," Joey summarizes as she helps the Strider kid get into a chair. "They killed a Wraith Queen who wanted to be a Goa'uld system lord, I guess."

"Huh, weird," you blink, processing that thought. "I suppose we do have a strange habit of doing that, don't we?"

"It happens," Okurii says, ensuring that her Nepeta is securely seated next to the other Nepeta, and then sitting down. "Sorry for bringing the kids, but Konyyl and Equius got a cold and they didn't want to spread it to Nepeta..."

"It's fine," you say. "But, what about-?"

"Daddy and Daddy are having 'a fun day off',' The Strider girl informs you with all the innocence of a young child, before turning to her Alternian name-sharing counterpart and asking about crayon colors for the as-of-yet undelivered kids menu.

"And Dirk suddenly got a call back for a Job Interview and had to take off asap, so he couldn't watch her," Joey adds. "He handed her off to Hal, who handed her off to me."

"Ah," you nod. "The classic shirking of responsibilities."

"Atleast we have a quicker way of pulling it off now than dialing a Stargate," Joey says.

"Linking Books are handy that way," Okurii says.

"Wait," you blink- processing something. "Dirk actually talked with Hal for long enough to hand Nepeta off?"
"Apparently they've been working things out in private," Joey explains. "At the very least, they're able to put aside whatever weird self-hate issues they've got going on when it comes to family."

"Even if Hal DID hand her off to you," Okurii says.

"Not his fault," Joey waves it off. "He and Missy were in the middle of preparing to send in a bunch of college level entrance exams."

"...They're what now?" You ask.

"I think it's some elaborate trolling measure," Joey explains, frowning. "They had whole mountains of paperwork clogging up O'neill's old office."

"Ah, yes, that sounds like a Striderian thing to do," you muse. "I'm surprised Hal got Missy involved."

"I think she was legitimately wanting to apply to some of those colleges legitimately," Joey shrugs it off. "I'm sure they can pass 'em, given they already did it once before. Whether or not the colleges let them in or not is another story entirely."

"DU DUU DUUUU!" And then the waitress hops over. "Presenting Your MENUS!"

A solid lunch down in your stomachs, the five of you head to a book store that recently popped up- some collaborative endeavor between an Earth Bookseller and an Alternian Bookseller: BARNES AND TROLBLES. Barnes was the Alternian, Trobles was the Human- despite what one would think on first glance at the name. And according to a sign, it had NO RELATION at all to ANOTHER SIMILARLY NAMED EARTH-ONLY BOOKSELLER. (And to "STOP ASKING. Geeze.")

There were books from both cultures here and there, intermingled by themes and concepts, rather than by planet.

The weirdest moment of culture clash that you could find happened to involve TROLL MANGA and HUMAN MANGA. Some Human series were far behind the Troll versions, and even in cases where their stories were completely disconnected beyond being species swaps of the same characters, they were mixed up together as if they were the same series anyways.

There doesn't seem to be any organization to it at all- you wonder if they're even making any money from this kind of literary alchemy?

"So, how's the hunt for Jane going?" You ask Joey as you both take a look at a row of COOK BOOKS.

"Jake's tracing her last known steps," Joey answers. "No word back yet."
"I hope she's alright," you frown.

"I'm sure she is," Joey says. "Jane's a tough girl."

After buying a few books, the lot of you return to Joey's Hive. Polypa's out on a date with Tegiri, Joey explains, and Mierfa's taking Tokoha down to the Grub Caverns for a progress checkup, so you have the place to yourself for a while.

"So, Mierfa's taking up the medical stuff?" Okurii asks, watching as the two Nepetas run around in the yard, role playing Power Rangers it sounds like from the shouting they're doing.

"She's insisted on it," Joey nods. "I'm glad, actually. I wasn't sure if that was a route I wanted to go or not for myself, yknow?"

"I remember," Okurii nods.

"When I saw how much she was studying for it, I realized that wasn't something I could actually spend time on," Joey continues. "It was... a lot of work that just made my heart sort of freeze up. Especially since I don't have Shaper to manage it for me anymore. But..." She smiles. "I realized then that my having the Bracelet? Having all those powers? A LOT of those weren't me. They were roles and powers forced onto me, but..."

With a gleam in her eyes, an Arai Beetle flies down and lands on her shoulder.

"Well. The powers that got permanently fused to me? Somehow, those have always fit me better, I think, than anything else," Joey says. "Everything else that wasn't me? Just some overpowered ability as-the-plot-demands? Those got discarded eventually- either when I let them go, or I didn't have any more uses for them. And..."

"And?" Okurii asks after a minute.

"I'd just remembered, I'd wanted to be a Vet when I grew up," Joey says. "Like, Animal Doctor. I wanted to help animals and pets and..." She shakes her head. "I don't think I had any idea what the hell that actually required me to do or learn. How much studying that was going to be. I think it was just something I wanted to do out of spite to my... To Jake. To Pa. Not that it was something I actually enjoyed. Hell, I never wanted to pick up a gun because of him, and look where I wound up now."

"I suppose that's one way to look at it," you say.

"So, Medicine wasn't for you," Okurii summarises. "What about everything else? The Ballet or Tapdance?"

"Those were my Mom's things, and I was forcing myself to be her, I think," Joey says. "But that wasn't making me happy. I'd wanted to try merging them together. BALLAP! I called it. Tap and Ballet. Fused together. One shoe each. Never actually tried it, and I definitely don't think my legs can handle it even if I did now." Joey frowns. "I liked doing them, yeah. But... they were a way for me to try and connect with my Mom. Not for me to be me."

"So, what are you going to do now?" You ask.

"I've been talking it over with Xefros and Dammek, and we all really want to start taking the
Grubbels on as a serious thing," Joey answers. "We're working on an Album right now, actually."

"Really?" You ask - a bit surprised. "Dammek hasn't said anything, though, I suppose that would explain why he's been so hyper focused and secretive on his Laptop for a while now."

"So..." Okurii asks, "Do you have any demos we can listen to?"

"Something like that, yeah," Joey nods.

---

Your name is Okurii Leijon, and you're a bit in awe, a few minutes later. "That's an amazing song, Joey. I can't wait to hear the finished version!"

"Thanks," She smiles, a faint blush tinging her cheeks. "It's been really fun working on it. I'm looking forwards to putting it all out there and having everyone listen and enjoy and-"

Then, with a familiar warping of space and time, someone links into the yard outside the hive.

"Aunt Janet!" Nepeta Strider leaps over to the woman.

"Oh, hello, Nepeta! What are you doing here?" one Janet Fraiser asks.

"Playin' Power Rangers!" her alternian twin answers.

"That's awesome," Janet smiles. "Why don't you two keep at that, then?"

"Okay!" The two girls chime in, and then run off to continue playing.

Janey approaches the Hive, and smiles at you.

"Hey, Janet!" Joey waves to the woman. "What's up?"

"Hi, Joey, Callie, Okurii," Janet nods to each of you in turn. "Just coming to check in and seeing how things are going before I head back to Pegasus."

"I thought you'd gone back already?" You ask.

"Some personal matters suddenly came up," Janet shakes her head. "I had to deal with those, and then I missed the last few return trips of the Daedalus and Gate dial outs."

"Dang!" Joey asks, "Is everything okay?"

"Yes, it's fine now," Janet nods. "Just one of my old Med-school teachers had a health scare. They're fine now, but, a bunch of us who were close to them were worried for a while."

"I'm glad that's sorted out now," Callie says.

"Me too," Janet nods. "They're not happy about having to give up grape-based products now, but... Well. Doctors orders are doctors orders, even if you were a Doctor yourself."
"I guess that explains why Missy was applying to a bunch of colleges," Callie muses.

"Oh, yeah, that would explain a lot, wouldn't it?" Joey nods.

"...What's this about my clone applying to colleges?" Janet asks.

Before the conversation can get too rowdy, you hear the snapping of a tree branch and two girls crying out in surprise- followed by one really sharp yelp of pain and continued crying that your heart recognizes immediately.

Joey and you are racing in mere seconds using your respective wings to cover the distance fast to the girls.

Your Nep has her left arm stuck under a tree branch that fell from up above, and Strider is crying and babbling as she tries to help get the tree branch off of her friend.

You and Joey manage that feat a lot easier, and you've got both girls scooped up and hurrying back to the Hive to use the Linking book there to get to town to Gate to the Beltus ASAP!

______________________________

Your name is Nepeta Argo Strider and you can only wait with fear and terror gripping your heart as Aunt Janet and some other doctor work to put your riend's arm back together in another room.

It all happened so fast. You were playing around, and then you startled a bird and it crashed headfirst into a branch and it snapped loose and--

And then Nepeta pushed you out of the way and got her arm smooshed in the process.

"It's not your fault, Nep," Aunt Joey holds you in a hug, and strokes at your hair gently- it's sort of calming you down but it isn't.

"But it should've been me," you say. "I could've taken it."

"Sometimes these things happen," Aunt Joey says. "And they suck, but they happen."

"I couldn't lift it off of her," you whimper, ears and wings folding as close to your body as you can make them go.

"It was a really heavy branch, Nep," Aunt Joey says. "You couldn't do it alone."

"John could've done it," you protest.

"Well, John's a really special case," Joey says. "He can lift a lot of things the rest of us can't. Don't measure yourself up to him, okay?"

...But...

"...Older me could've stopped it," you say.

"Sure, but-" Joey hugs you a bit tighter. "Argo has a different power set than you, and she's older
You're now Joey Claire, and you sigh in relief as Okurii steps out of the back room with her kid tucked safely into her arms- dazed and looking half asleep- but otherwise fine, save for the large olive green colored cast around her left forearm.

Nepeta in your arms stares on, and curls up into herself more.

"How is she?" you ask quietly.

"Tired," Okurii answers. "And sort of drugged into a daze at the moment so she couldn't feel the pain. We couldn't safely use any healing tech with how fractured her arm was. So Janet and Marsti had to do it the Earth-fashioned way."

Ow.

"Gotcha," you nod.

"We're going to have to wait for a while before we can try any healing tech to make it heal faster," Okurii sighs. "Janet said she's going to stay here for a little while more to help Marsti get a schedule set up for how often we should check her arm. But otherwise we're good to go home."

"We'll go with you," you volunteer.

"Thanks," Okurii smiles.

It's a somber, quiet trip back to the Gate Room- you pass Callie at one point and she just smiles and nods in a 'we'll catch up later' way- then you're dialing back to Diaspora, and heading through town back to Okurii's hive.

"You know," Okurii mentions at one point. "Equius has been so scared his strength might break her that none of us ever thought that her first broken bones would be from a tree of all things."

"Those danged trees, always causing problems," you joke a bit in turn.


You get to the Leijon hive, and Okurii lays her daughter out on the couch to rest on for the moment. You let Nepeta sit next to her, and you and Okurii quietly head into the kitchen to quietly make some dinner.

"So, how're things with you and Marsti going?" You ask, trying to change the subject.

"Alright," Okurii nods. "She's not had a lot of patients to take care of recently, and not a lot of messes to clean up either, so she's sort of been idling."
"A familiar feeling all around," you sigh.

"Yeah," Okurii sighs as well. "Well.. today didn't go as planned, did it?"

"Sometimes they don't," you say, glancing out towards the couch and watching Nepeta Strider carefully curling up next to Nepeta Leijon and holding her as tightly as she can without jostling the arm. "But... that's just life, I guess."

"That it is," Okurii agrees.

Chapter End Notes

"Cause its not childhood without someone having a broken bone at some point." - said by someone who broke their arm jumping over someone's legs completely unnecessarily, probably.

donthatemetoobadlyforthischapterpls
MINISODE: If Only If Only

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 06/18/0005.

Your name is STELSA SEZYAT, and you first hear the news when one of your bridge-mates checks their phone and SQUEALS SO LOUDLY you have ringing in your ears for a moment.

"What is it?" You asked, not yet knowing what was about to be unleashed.

"The Grubbels just dropped a music video teaser for their new album!" And just like that, the video got shoved up on the display monitor, and everyone looked up and watched, and listened.

You'll admit, Xefros Tritoh had a good voice for that song he was singing. Out in some desert, strumming along to a guitar.

'If Only If Only,' the Woodpecker Sighs/

'The Bark on the Trees was as Soft as the Skies!'

As the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely/

He cries to the Moon, 'If Only If Only.'

Within half an hour, the bridge crew was humming along to the melody as they worked.

Within two hours, people had gotten the lyrics down beyond the repeating chorus and you could hear it everywhere.

By the time your lunch break rolled around four hours after the announcement, everyone on the Delta Megaship had smiles on their faces, a song in their hearts, and lyrics flowing from their lips.

Similarly, you smile, humming to yourself the melody to that song as you typed up some system report you couldn't even be bothered to care about at the moment. If their teaser song was that good? Well. Heh. You are quite certain the rest of the album is going to blow people away.

Why, oh why did the release date have to be so near, yet so far away?

Chapter End Notes

Sorry. Wasn't feeling uploading/editing a longer chapter today so I'll snipe a short minisode from later in the week for Monday's chapter.

DIASPORA DATE: 06/18/0005.

"Nope. No. NO WAY. I'm out. Find some other scientists to do it, I'm not touching that place with a million mile long pole!"

Your name is Gordon Freeman, and you VEHEMENTLY OPPOSE this idea.

"May I ask why?" Mikari Aiihko, commander of this Atlantis Expedition thing, asks.

"Because that chamber looks AN AWFUL LOT like the lab at Black Mesa where the Resonance Cascade happened and I don't want to be anywhere near it!" You elaborate succinctly.

"Perfectly understandable," Mikari nods. "I'll let Mckay know to-"

"Skip the whole project! Don't even try it! That place is BAD NEWS with ALL CAPS!" You tell her. "I'm telling you. Nothing Good Can Come From This Experiment."

Mikari considers it, then says, "I'll let Mckay know about your objections."

"Thank you!" And with that you go find a nice pile of library books to dig into and hide until this all blows over.

---

Your name is Rodney Mckay and you're so FRUSTRATED.

Here before you stands the perfect opportunity to beat the ANCIENTS at something- zero point energy limitlessly drawn from within your own universe- and you're being told it's TOO DANGEROUS because the room just so HAPPENS to look vaguely similar to some other room in another dimensions!?

Please. Freeman's over-reacting, and Mikari and everyone else are panicking over it.

There's talk of letting Doctor Kae and Zelenka run coding checks and math checks and YOU'VE GOT THIS. You've GOT THIS.
You may have stumbled onto this miracle blindly hoping for one when searching planets allied with the Ancients.. but...

You've GOT THIS and nobody...

They don't...

You can DO THIS.

You HAVE TO DO THIS.

This... This is your best chance to make Atlantis- the whole universe even- independent from-
From...

You can't even convince yourself on that. This is a power source for a weapon the Ancients couldn't control. You want to prove that you're smarter than even THE ANCIENTS.

You just want the damned praise!!!

You KNOW you can do this. You can make this work. YOU CAN MAKE THIS WORK!!!!!!!!!

PROJECT ARCTURUS MUST BE ACTIVATED!!!

You immediately tell Mikari that Freeman's concerns are completely unfounded and that you've already done the coding and match checks and there's no need for anyone else to--

"Doctor Mckay," Mikari raises her hand. "I'm not going to let any trial runs be performed until we've reviewed the data from the Ancient's test logs." And then she says, "The fact that this research lab is the only building on the planet left intact and that the Ancients didn't even send anyone to retrieve the bodies has me incredibly concerned and I'm not going to let anything go wrong here that might risk any team members."

You relent and you let it be accepted for that for the moment.

...You WILL get this done sooner rather than later.


DIASPORA DATE: 06/19/0005.

You'd gotten approved for a tenative attempt to run the project at one quarter power to get "more accurate data" and fine. You can't complain about that.

What you can complain about is them canceling the entire project when it started to overload, and the overload of energy resulted in someone dying of HARD RADIATION.

Not only canceling, canceling without any option for restarting it in the future, pending Zelenka-ZELENKA!!!- giving it a green light.
How short sighted - How so stupidly idiotic to--

Don't they care what a super amazing power up they're throwing away!?!!

You---

You.....

You're going to do this yourself.

You find a Puddle Jumper, and take it out in the dark of night- dialing the space gate near the planet that had been wiped out, and you fly down to the planet's surface. You go into the facility.

You'll make this work. You'll make this work!! You'll use this Infinite Energy to power the Weapon and you'll... you'll...!

You spend the next few hours working on the calculations and ensuring everything is running smoothly, and...

And...

You work.

You work and you work and you're going to make this work.

YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THIS WORK!!!!

They're all jealous of how smart you are. How smart you can be.

They're- They're---!

"Hey, Doc? You okay there??"

You freeze, and slowly turn around to look behind you at the ladder to the surface.

"...Who are you?" You ask, blinking.

It's someone in a 302 pilots outfit- from the Daedalus?? But... what?

"Scott Truman, Daedalus crew," he introduces himself. "You've been out here for seven hours and weren't responding to radio, so Miss Aiikho got worried and asked the Daedalus to come swing by and check things out on its return trip back to Earth."

"...Okay that makes sense by why are you here and not, say, Colonel Sheppard?" you ask.

"Well," he says, "I've seen where you are right now before. Figured I could help."

"Yeah, right," you scoff. "As if you've seen where I am right now. I'm on the precipice of discovering the best solution to..." You start rambling some half hearted spiel about ending fossil fuels and such, only to stop halfway through because he's giving you this look. "Oh come on, as if you actually PITY me. Please. Don't insult me. What? Did you draw the short straw or something?"
"Look, I've been there," The 302 pilot says. "You may not believe it, but I've seen this before. Plenty of good fighter pilots who think they're the best hotshot to hit the skies and then refused to pull up when their planes started to crash, thinking they could fix it until they hit the ground at the last possible moment."

"I'm not that far gone," you say.

"Then you won't mind if I stay and help then, will you?" he offers.

"...Seriously, why are you here? You drew a short straw, right?" you frown.

"Look, you want this thing to work, right?" he offers. "It's either me or Gem and Gemma and they're more likely to make this thing explode because they think it'd be cool."

...

...

"Fine." You say. "Stay if you want but I don't need any help. I've already got it ready to go and fire off."

"Before you turn that on, though," Mister Scott 302-pilot Truman says. "I have a message to pass on, just... words to consider?"

"Fine. What is it?" This oughta be good if it's Zelenka. More Jealousy, no doubt.

He reads from a sheet of paper drawn from a pocket. "The containment shield can't contain the amount of wild and unpredictable exotic particles that are created by drawing from local subspace. There's no way for any simulation to predict what is created, meaning that even if the simulation succeeds, the real life live fire tests will never succeed."

"Well that's a load of hogwash," you say. "But fine. Words considered. Now can I turn this thing on yet or-"

...Wait.

"Where's the Daedalus?" You ask. "I don't want to hit it by accident."

"Outside the solar system, ready to jump in at a moment's notice," the pilot tells you.

"Okay, fine," you say, and safely set to target the debris field.

You're pretty certain the quarter power was the wrong move. Too little power to the right systems... but full power is probably a bit over kill.

You dial it into half power and run the experiment.

But it all goes wrong in the same way as when it was quarter power. The System is overloading. But it shouldn't. You fixed the problem- you fixed it and the problems within it and the predictions showed that this---

And then Truman's borrowed words echo in your head.
The predictions can't predict the unpredictable.

And Truman says, "It's time to eject, Doctor McKay."

You reluctantly try to shut it down.

...But it fails to shut down.

The system rejects your commands.

The Weapon is firing off to discharge but it can't fire fast enough. It can't DISCHARGE fast enough. It's too much too fast too---

You've already done the math.

It's time to eject.

"We have to get out of here," you say. "Now."

"No problem with me. We can gate to Atlantis." Truman starts to say as you both head for the ladder.

"No, we can't risk the shockwave getting to the City," you say. "We have to get as far away from this solar system as you can."

"How big of a bang is it going to be?" Truman asks.

"Atleast three quarters of the solar system big," you answer.

You both get to your stolen Jumper and you take off for orbit on a zig-zag pattern to avoid the weapon locking onto you.

Truman radios while you focus on dodging. One shot could wipe you out and-

With a burst of lights and sparkles, you're both on the Daedalus' bridge.

"Jump to Hyperspace Now," Caldwell orders, and the 304 jumps as far away as it can as quickly as it can.

Then, you drop out, and watch as a massive blue explosion engulfs the space where that planet and solar system used to be...

And it doesn't go away for a solid three minutes and fourteen seconds.

You are so fired.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you ignore the happy return of Teyla and Ronon from a trade mission to talk down your rather uppity scientist who caused all of this.
"You're not the smartest man on this base, and you've clearly let your ego get the best of you to think that you were!" You growl, genuinely angry at him.

"I know," Rodney Mckay says.

"You knew there was a question of safety about what we were doing there and you decided to risk it anyways despite the fact that I'd ordered all work on the project to be halted!" you continue on. "You STOLE A JUMPER, not for the first time either, and went on a risky mission that put other people's lives at risk!"

"But-!" He protests. No doubt saying "But I went Alone and you're the one who sent people after me!"

"No BUTS!" you stop that thought flat. "You should have expected that I'd send someone after you given you STOLE A PUDDLE JUMPER! What if you'd created another Rift instead of a short lived micro-star?! Huh? What about that!? You're lucky as it is that you ONLY destroyed THREE FOURTHS OF A SOLAR SYSTEM!!!"

"Well, five-sixths, it's not an exact science..." He says, not even sounding remotely sorry.

"Rodney Mckay! Can you deflate that Ego of yours for even ONE SECOND!?" You ask, and he flinches.

"..." He opens his mouth, and closes it.

Good.

"You've already done so much, I can't understand what would even BRING you to want to do something so foolish," you tell him. "You've had nothing to prove and everything to lose! If we were both military I'd put in for you to be Court Martialed right now." He restrains the urge to say anything. "You're lucky that as it is I'm only requesting that you be put on leave for Earth to take a mandatory psych evaluation."

He opens his mouth, "That should-"

"And No," you interject, "it will NOT be with Doctor Heightmeyer. I'm well aware of your relationship, and that's why I'm also ordering you to not even discuss this with her until you've completed it one way or another." You huff. "Get your head on straight, Rodney, or you're not coming back."

"But what about my team?" He asks. "Sheppard-"

"Has already been informed about my decision, and he's already looking for a replacement for you until you've passed or failed," you inform. "For your sake, I hope you pass."

"...Alright," he nods. "I'll do that."

Chapter End Notes

Where did today even go? I don't know.

DIASPORA DATE: 06/26/0005.

"Wait wait wait wait wait," your name is Carson Beckett. "Are you saying that there's a Wraith child on that planet and it ISN'T feeding on humans?"

"That's about the gist of it, yeah," Lt. Colonel Sheppard nods. "Zaddik says the ship crashed about five-ish years ago. Girl hasn't had a need to feed yet at all. She's lived like a normal human so far, as far as diet goes."

"I knew it!" You grin. "I absolutely knew it! There was no reason for adult Wraith to have a digestive track other than this! This is great! If we can observe the changes in her genetic structure as she ages, we might be able to understand how and why the Wraith have to switch over- perhaps a protein that they're suddenly deficient in... Oh! This is great! Absolutely fantastic!"

And you are absolutely over the moon.

"Why is this good news?" Sheppard asks.

"Yes, I'm a bit curious too," Miss Aiikho says.

"It means that if we bring her to Atlantis, we'll have the rare opportunity to observe a Wraith as its DNA transitions more from human to wraith, and we'll be able to properly devise a retro-virus that does the exact opposite!" you grin. "We've hit a gold mine here."

"So," your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you look over Doctor Beckett's report. "Do you think this plan of Becketts could work?"

"The Wraith are a strange hybridization of the Irratus Bug and Humans," Gina Kae says, "A Retro Virus could conceivably strip out the bug DNA and leave only Human DNA behind."

"Using Shaper, we could also record any data we need of her current state," Kanaya Maryam says, "and then we could turn the girl human before her Wraith DNA completely begins overwriting everything."

"It's too much of a security risk," Colonel Caldwell says. "We can't bring her to Atlantis."
"Well, we can't leave her on the planet either," John says. "Even once we hunt down the Wraith that is feeding on the people there, the minute they find out she's there, the villagers might go after her, wanting her dead too."

Caldwell looks like he wants to interject, but you overrule it.

"And that is a fair point," you say. "Gina, John, return to the planet with Doctor Beckett and let them know to pack up and that we will be setting up an intermediary place for them to stay until we've managed to create a perfect retro virus." They nod in acceptance of that.

"With all due respect-" Caldwell starts.

"Kanaya?" you interject before he can start. "I want you to get Daraya and revisit some of the old Alpha Site options."

"Yes, ma'am," she nods.

"Dismissed!" you wave them off, and everyone leaves the conference room, save for Caldwell.

"This is too much of a security risk," Caldwell says, standing to try and tower over you. "Letting a Wraith into the city-"

"Who says she's going to come to the city at all until she's been given the retrovirus treatment?" You ask, getting to your feet, and rising to meet his eyes. "You're the only one over-reacting to this, Colonel. I understand your concerns, but believe me, if we just went guns blazing into every scenario without an ounce of compassion? Neither of our galaxies would have turned out the way they did, and we'd never have found the City at all."

"I don't think you understand the severe risks that this could pose to-"

"I understand better than you do, Colonel," you state. "Before I became an Ambassador to Earth I walked the fine line of death day in and day out in secret for the Alternian Rebellion. My Blood Color was enough to get me killed by those who followed the Empress' mandate that my Caste be eliminated. Eradicated. Wiped out of existence just for being born."

Caldwell doesn't flinch at all so far, so you lay it on thick.

"Tell me, Colonel Steven Caldwell, were you dealing with me in place of that girl, right this minute, would you also be so distrusting?" you ask. "Would you cow to those same desires of wanting to dominate and be the most macho man in the room and order the execution of a girl who has been raised to do no harm and hasn't even FED on a human life, let alone develop any of the innate psychic abilities of the rest of the Wraith species?"

You think you see some glimmer of doubt in his eyes.

"Because I'll tell you this, Caldwell. That girl is no older right now than I was when all of this started," you tell him, and you tell him good. "I had to be a VERY good trust of character to survive on Alternia. And right now I trust that girl FAR more than I trust you. What does that tell you about how you're acting right now?"

He doesn't answer, but he does have the decency to look uncomfortable.
"That's what I thought," you say, and leave the room.

Your name is Ronon Dex, and you fiddle with the ammo-cartridge for your gun as you peer out over the river.

"You sure it came this way recently?" You ask. "Cause I'm not seeing any tracks fresher than a month."

"Of course I'm sure," Teyla says, eyes closed. "I can sense its malice. Its hate, and arrogance. But most of all, I can sense its fear."

"Fear, huh?" You ask, glancing around. "You think it knows we're hunting it?"

"No," Teyla says. "It's a different kind of fear. A fear that it will never be rescued."

"You can tell that much?" you ask her, snapping open the port, loading the shot, snapping it closed.

"It isn't hard," Teyla says. "The air is saturated with the after effects of its thoughts."

"How can you even tell?" you ask, unloading the gun again."I thought your whole 'gift' was sensing them in real time."

"I have been training with Barzum Soleli on refining my mental shields," Teyla says. "Part of that training included my being able to pick up on the psychic leftovers of the Wraith's thoughts..."

Her eyes open, and she points at a direction, "This way, Up river. The thoughts are much fresher there."

You squint at the tracks and... Oh.

Wait.

Ohhh.

"That's clever," you chuckle. "It's using the rocks as stepping stones to keep itself from being tracked."

"Yes, I suppose it is," Teyla says.

"But it's not clever enough," you take off in that direction, and now you're able to see it. Where the muds been recently disturbed by weight distribution and...

Heh.

You've got its trail now.

It doesn't take too much longer to find the cave the Wraith is staying in- actively in there at this moment as he drags whatever the local equivalent of a stunned Satedan Deer is to feed on- and prepare a plan.
Wraith don't get much life out of animals, so this one has to be pretty desperate to be feeding on a deer before it goes after the village again. 'Better put it out of its misery' as you've heard someone on Atlantis say, not that you're being particularly sympathetic towards the Wraith in question with what you're about to do.

You load your gun, and set it from STUN to FUN with an enthusiastic twirl.

The whirling high pitched twine it makes when you do such makes you smile, Teyla look hesitant, and the Wraith look up from its meal in concern.

And then you fire three shots.

The first shot hits the Wraith in the chest- knocking it flat onto its back and killing it if it's lucky- while the second and third hit the rock wall of the cave right above it and causing it to collapse down onto the Wraith itself.

With it thusly trapped, you stroll over to the Wraith to check on it.

It's still barely hanging on despite being buried in rock and the chest shot. It tries to hiss at you but you just shoot it in the chest a couple of more times, and once more in the face for good measure.

"That... was a bit much, was it not?" Teyla asks.

"Nah," you say. "Just making sure it's dead."

The Wraith then howls in rage and tries to burst out of the rocks.

You blast it in the face again, and it finally falls dead to the ground.

"...I stand corrected," Teyla says. "....We should probably burn the body, just to be certain."

"Yeah," you say. "Bring any matches?"

Teyla responds by snapping her fingers and spontaneously generating a fireball above her hand. "I believe this will suffice."

"...Yeah, that'll do it," you agree.

Chapter End Notes

Once again, The simple fact that this version of events is taking place *years earlier* means that things are different. Ronon's joining the team was rigged by Ford to be the same general series of events...

But this particular two parter? HAH. HAHAHAHAHAHAHAH. No.

See. In SGA proper, The Wraith Girl started feeding as a Wraith *TWO* years prior to that episode's start time. By the simple fact that this timeline has the episode in *2001* and not 2005-2006... Well...
***YEAH.*** That's a thing that's changed now! HAH!

Next Chapter: BA'AL IS RELEVANT AGAIN!!!!
AAAAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAAAA!!!
"...That's not good," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you stare blankly at the photo of of an armored Jaffa who had been hit by a pick up truck.

"The body was discovered this morning in a remote road off Interstate 77 in Virginia," Jonas reads off the incident report. "It was spotted by a passing motorist. Local authorities say he'd been dead about a day or so, probably the victim of a hit-and-run driver."

"Given most Jaffa who pass through Earth these days don't wear full armor, and get screened by us when they wanto go off base," General O'neill starts, "who's this guy, and why the hell was he in the middle of nowhere decked out for battle?"

"Not quite middle of nowhere," Jonas corrects, "more about three miles north of a town called Edison, population three thousand and twelve."

"Teal'c?" Jack asks, glancing to the Jaffa who'd remained silent so far. "Any insight?"

"The mark on his forehead indicates he was a servant of Lord Yu, many of whom now follow Gerak," Teal'c says.

"So... the chances of Gerak doing something shady have sky rocketed, I guess," O'neill massages at his temples. "Great. I guess Landry's going to fill in for a couple of days because there is no way I'm getting out of the nightmarish long debriefing the Pentagon is going to want out of this." He shakes his head. "Teal'c, Mitchel, Jonas, go see what you can dig up from the rest of the Jaffa who used to work for Yu just in case they're missing someone. I'll... go call Cassie and Jude and see if they're willing to dig up what they can on 'Edison, Virginia'."

---

Your name is Samantha Carter, and some days, you wish you'd not taken up an offer to work at Area 51. Oh, sure, it kept your mind busy during the long weeks that Jack was off doing promotional work and you couldn't spend much time together...

But then there were days like today.

Situated out in the Atlantic Ocean, in the middle of nowhere, there seemed to be some excessive Zillyum readings similar in nature to the ones Callie had recorded when they were hunting the
Mofang Cruiser.

Similar, and yet different.

There was the excess of Zillyum, yes, but there was also... something else.

Something different about the rest of the subatomic makeup was off.

Was someone in another dimension attempting to breach through to this one?

And then the readings abruptly cut off, leaving you only with the readings to look over.

You run a background check to see if there are any familiar quantum signatures involved in this burst of data...

But almost immediately there's a partial match, to be confirmed with further searching of the database, however.

"What the hell?" You squint at the data on the screen, daring it to force itself into focus. "Jenifer? Are you reading what I'm reading here?"

Your assistant, Jenifer Hailey, comes over to look at the screen. She starts to talk, stop, starts and stops again, and then finally says, "That can't be right."

"We need to visit the SGC to borrow the Quantum Mirror," you decide.

"Farrow-Marshals?" Your name is Jude Harley, and you blink as you read the headline [FARROW-MARSHAL CLOSES EDISON PLANT]. "Huh. Aeronautics firm in Bethesda... DoD's biggest client..." You frown. "Their plant in Virginia employed about eight hundred people from Edison until it closed down..." You blink. "Three months ago. It's located about a mile and a half from where the dead Jaffa showed up."

You spin in your desk chair away from your computer screen and turn to Cassie as she holds Penny in her arms, and away from your desk keyboard- which she's reaching out for to mess with.

"That can't be a coincidence," Cassie says. "What else is there?"

"Lemme see," you turn back to search some more about the company. "Ah. Here we go. Their Vice President, Alex Jameson, went missing yesterday morning."

"Right around when the Jaffa got killed," Cassie muses.

"Yeah, it looks like according to his wife, he left for a business meeting in Richmond and didn't come back." You muse on that. "Definitely not a coincidence."

"We're going to need to talk with the wife," Cassie says.

"Yeah, definitely," you say. "Standard babysitter?"
"Yep," Cassie agrees.

You're now Cassandra Fraiser, and a couple of phone calls and a few bursts of Asgard-based transportation later, you and Jude are in BETHESDA, MARYLAND, speaking to SHEILA JAMESON, the wife of the man who'd gone missing, at a coffee shop.

"Hrm, he started acting strangely about six months ago," Sheela recounts.

"How strange is 'strangely'?

"Cold and distant. At first I thought it was just Alex being incredibly devoted to his job and that he had a lot on his plate, but after a couple of weeks I realized there was something more. And I worried if maybe he was having an affair so I hired a PI..." She shakes her head. "The Investigator returned scared a couple of days later, returning my money and heavily implying that I 'drop the matter' entirely. No explanation." and then she offers you and Jude an envelope. "Here are the photos he'd given me. He also asked for them back after he turned down the case, but... Yeah. Even the police didn't think it was relevant to the investigation."

"Do you mind if we keep these?" Jude asks.

FWAAASH!

Your name is Samantha Carter, and you steady yourself in what should be the matching Mirror Lab of an alternate SGC. But Jolinar picks up on some differences.

[Oh my. The gravity is slightly weaker here. This is the Alpha site!]

Interesting.

Joey Harley and another Cassandra Fraiser stand to attention upon your appearance.

"Colonel Carter?" this universe's Joey asks. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh no," this universe's Cassandra answers in your stead. "It's the Venjix Virus, isn't it?"

"I think we've got some stuff to talk about, Joey, Cassie," you say.

Research, research, research, and hours later after even coordinating with Kerry Johnson in the CIA investigation, faces in the photographs had been identified.

All of them CEOs of very prominent companies, and almost all of them arrested thanks to intelligence on the Trust secured in Atlantis by a former operative.

Save for two, who went missing six months prior.
Your name is Jack O'neill, and you frown as now Teal'c, Jonas, and Mitchel return from their investigation as well.

"Ba'al is on Earth," Teal'c reports, "and he has been here since he fled the battle of Dakara, and yet, at the same time... My information also suggests that Ba'al is hiding in the Archeva System- having been sighted there as recently as a week ago."


"No," Mitchel shakes his head. "We think there's something more. While we were looking around, we caught up with Jake Harley for a few minutes. While he was tracking down his sister, he was in a run down cafe and he spotted a guy who looked like Ba'al talking with, get this, another Ba'al look alike."

Jonas takes it from there, "Now, Jake thought it was just a coincidence they both looked like Ba'al and brushed it off, but... when we brought it up we got thinking."

"What if Ba'al summoned a whole bunch of himself when the Rift happened?" You take a wild swing.

"Either that, or he developed spontaneous temporal cloning powers like Major Strider," Jonas says.

"Oi," you grimace. "Either way, we've got a hand full of Ba'als to juggle, and if Gerak's after one that's on Earth? After the shit he pulled on Dakara? You can bet you-know-who's after him too."

"Indeed," Teal'c nods.

"Still, if Ba'al is here on earth, and he's operating out of the remnants of the Trust?" Jonas says. "There's got to be something to this."

"So... what's our train of logic here?" You ask. "Jameson got snaked by a Trust snake, evaded the purge, only to get captured by Gerak's people because they're after Ba'al?"

And then your phone rings, forcing the conversation to a halt.

"O'neill," you answer...

Your heart skips a beat as you get the information from Landry on the other end.

"Pardon my French, Hank," you apologize, and then swear loudly, because Gerak's Jaffa just shot up an office building.

Your name is Jolinar, and you believe the wild story you were just told for a multitude of reasons.

The first, and most painful one of all, is the knowledge that Jake Harley helped avert this catastrophe in your dimension.

And now Cassandra and Sam are helping console a grieving girl who'd bottled up her emotions for
far, far too long.

This means far, far too much for this girl to handle, and have bottled up for so long to not even turn to her allies for.

'On the one hand, I'm really upset that she didn't tell anyone,' Sam tells you. 'On the other... I'm more upset that she's bottled it up inside of herself so badly.'

[What concerns me more is the possibility that this 'Venjix' virus is attempting to breach inter dimensional walls.] you reply. [If that wasn't a benign aftershock from the Mofang Cruiser... we might be in serious trouble.]

'We'll figure this out,' Sam says. 'Just as soon as I have some words with my other self.'

Oh. That's sure to be fun.

"Those offices were a war zone," your name is Jude Harley, and you make sure to keep your voice low and quiet to keep from waking Penny, sleeping soundly upstairs. "Staff weapons versus semi-autos."

"Who won?" Cassie asks as she sips at some hot cocoa.

"Can't tell. No bodies, security footage got wiped," you answer. "Only witness was a guy working overtime and spent the fight hiding under his desk. Descriptions of three individuals, 'big, tattooed, and chain metal pants.'"

"So, Jaffa," she surmises.

"Basically," you nod.

And then Cassie goes for her cellphone before it even starts to ring. "Fraiser-Harley," she answers. "...Shit. We'll be in asap."

"Although it's a far cry from some of the better worlds I've conquered in my days, this planet is not without its charms," the recording of BA'AL starts talking from the VHS tape he'd sent in to taunt you all. "In retrospect, I'm actually glad we never succeeded in destroying it. That said, Earth is not without its drawbacks." He pauses.

"The foremost being an alarming lack of privacy. My ships have been seized, my armies vanquished. I no longer present a threat to this galaxy. All I ask is to be left alone without having to worry about you, the Jaffa, or any of my former enemies coming after me, so...I'd like to offer the following deal —allow me to live out the rest of my days here on Earth in peace, without interference. In exchange for my, uh... 'freedom,' I will follow your laws." Ba'al's promise sounds hollow, but there it is.

"You will never have cause to fear me again. I hope we can put the past behind us. I... certainly have no desire to harm you or anyone else on this world."
He stops for a moment.

Then, he says that he hid a fucking Naquadah enhanced bomb somewhere in the world.

And then the tape ends.

Your name is Jonas Quinn, and all you can say is, "I really don't like this guy."

"Welcome to the club," O'neill says.

Your name is Cassie Frasier of a parallel, probably post-apocalypse timeline, and you wince as you hear two versions of Samantha argue with each other through closed doors and solid walls.

"I'd thought about asking for help, but what could you do to help us that didn't put your universe at risk? Joey was fairly convincing about how it wasn't worth it..."

"And you seriously went along with that? Didn't you see how much that grief was hurting her!? You didn't even consider warning us about this, did you!?"

"We all considered it, but we figured that since it hadn't happened in your universe, it had already been foiled, and you likely knew already and caught it before it was a problem."

Damn it all, you've been completely useless. Your bad vibes have been all locked in a constant state of "No Least Awful Path But To Wait" so you couldn't figure out what was the best option to take in any of this.

You should have known better than to play along with this pity party. Why didn't you just...

You've got a head full of hurt, a lap full of sobbing friend, and an ear full of a shouting match between two versions of the same woman.

Life sucks, sometimes.

"So, either Ba'al's found a way to shield himself and the bomb both from the Delta Mega's sensors, AND my vibe senses, or he's bluffing." You're now Cassandra Fraiser of our normal timeline, and you're a bit mad.

"Bluffing or not, he's still a threat," Jonas says. "And if he's incharge of the Trust Operations, whatever's left on Earth? He's got the resources and ability to do a lot of damage, bomb or not."

"So, we've got two problems," Mitchel says. "How do we find him, and how do we get him without inflicting collateral damage?"

"Asgard beaming?" Jude offers.

"Tok'ra symbiote poison?" you frown as the vibes reject it. "No, that's too risky."
"Well..." Jonas speaks up. "If the Delta Mega was going to find Naquadah on earth, it'd have done it by now... but what about ships?"

A disturbing thought.

"I'll get Delta Mega searching the solar system," Jude says. "if we've got foreign ships hiding out nearby, I want to find them, fast."

"Agreed," you nod.

There's a knock at your door, waking you up.

It takes a moment before you remember that you're GENERAL JACK O'NEILL of the SGC and you were drooling on paperwork.

You quickly captchalogue the lot and cough to clear your throat- "Enter!"

In walks Sam, along with a Cassie Fraiser who's somehow here and in the conference room- you double check and see that's the case- and a human Joey Claire... or is it Harley? She looks like she hasn't cut her hair in a few years.

"What's up?" You ask.

"We have to talk," the other Cassie steps forwards. "We've been keeping something quiet for far too long, and it's important you know, even if you can't do anything to help."

You look to Sam, and she gives you that "It's a Doozy" look.

"Closed door meeting?" You offer, and Sam quickly closes the door. "So... what's wrong?"

"About two years ago, now," the other Cassie starts, "a computer virus calling itself Venjix took over our world."

Your mind catches on that name, VENJIX, and you raise a hand to pause the conversation while you place it.

Venjix, Venjix...

Wait. You boot up your laptop, dig around and.. AH.

There it is. Jake Harley's transcribed memories of his break in at the former Trust Facility called ALPHABET SOUP that had kidnapped genius kids to do unspeakable things. A Planned Project was a Computer Virus called...

"Venjix, huh?" You look up from the computer, feeling your heart clench a bit.

Jake must never have gotten to it in that world.

"You heard of it?" Joey asks, sounding a bit afraid.
"Something like that," you say. "What happened?"

"I..." Joey falters. "We..."

"We don't know for sure," Cassie says. "One minute we were getting a mission briefing about this sentient computer virus taking over computer systems around the world, and the next thing we know, our own missile silos were firing on us. We had to evacuate. We've avoided sending ships to investigate, not that we've really been in a position to send any to check anyways."

You frown. "So... the status of that other Earth is...?"

"Likely taken over or destroyed by the virus," Sam says. "But, Sir," and the sir makes you take attention. She hasn't used that in a while. The situation must be bad. "We detected a rift this morning over the Atlantic. Zillyum based, but different from the Mofang Ship's rift signatures. We think that this Venjix virus is trying to find a way to jump the dimensional walls."

"So... not just a problem that's going to sit nice and pretty on its own deserted planet," you massage at the bridge of your nose.

"No, Sir, it's not," Sam shakes her head.

"We need recon," you say. "If it was going to sit tight and not do anything, I'd agree, there's not much we could do to help, but if it's going to come knocking on our doorstep...?"

Cassie nods. "I agree. We need to find a way to stop it before it can spread from our dimension. We had enough of that shit with Oberonn's portals when he was looking for Princess Hakase."

You think it through for a moment.

"How hard would it be to get a hyperdrive equipped S-302 packed up and shipped through the mirror?" You ask.

"Not nearly as hard as an F-302 sent through a Stargate," Sam gets that look in her eyes- the one that says her and Jolinar are already plotting out the logistics.

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**EARTH DATE: DECEMBER 22ND, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 07/02/0005.**

It was almost too easy to find Ba'al. After all, he was in two places at once.

Surveillance from the NID and Agent Barrett had him in a hotel room on one side of town somewhere, and he was appearing on a LIVE FUCKING BROADCAST on national TV at the same time- on the exact opposite side of town.

You're Jonas Quinn, and its with no small bit of disgust that you watch a recording of Ba'al pretends to be perfectly human.
"Thank you, that's a very good question. My acquisition of Hammel Technologies and its subsidiaries is just a first step in a long-range venture that will ultimately see a consolidation and streamlining of what is presently a dissolute market. No doubt, most of you have never heard of me before today. Well, I can assure you that over the next few months, you will all get to know me very well, and I look forward to it."

He smiles at the camera, and you feel your stomach churn again as you stop the video for the fifth time.

"I really, really, hate this guy," you gripe.

Of course, the one thing you could only hate more is Gerak's Jaffa planting a fucking nuke-laden ship on the dark side of the moon.

"If you so much dare as to approach our position," the lead Jaffa in command said resiliently, "we will be more than glad to Ascend knowing that your planet will die by its own moon falling onto your heads."

Of course, then Ba'al found out about THAT and sent another Video Tape to you, and a broad wave straight to the Al'kesh on the moon.

"To the Tau'ri, and to the Jaffa hunting me," Ba'al says, "you have chosen not to heed my warnings to either of you, and so forced my hand." For Earth to back down, he said he'd planted a bomb in a tower in Seattle, set to detonate at exactly 1:30 P.M. local time. And then Ba'al concluded with his threat to the Jaffa, apparently finding it easier to record one message at once rather than send two separate customized ones. "As for the Jaffa hunting me? If you do not retreat where you came from, I will have one of my trusted spies in Gerak's ranks deliver a fatal dose of symbiote poison, twisted in just such a way using a secret, patented formula I discovered that will prevent you from Ascending, as I hear you've become fond of attempting these days." He paused, and then he added, "This, too is set to go off at exactly 1:30 P.M., but as to which time zone? Well. That's the fun of this. Have fun figuring it out. I know I did."

And then both Cassandras cry out- "There isn't a bomb in the building- the bomb IS the Building!"

You're Really. REALLY. getting to the point you wish this guy could be dead already.

Your name is Jack O'neill, and the last two days have been a bloody mess.

One of Ba'al's current locations gets raided by Gerak's Jaffa before the SGC and NID could act. The other got taken by your people. Ba'al seemed to have escape from the latter, and got captured by the first, because the Jaffa and their bomb laidedn Al'kesh left within moments after the raid.

That left the building that was about to explode in less than a few minutes. The Cassandras came up with an idea, though, and the Delta Megaship beamed the entire building into space.

The news reports were going wild at the moment, discussing the events that had transpired. The Ba'al thing wasn't going to be touched with a ten galaxy long pole, though, given Ba'al was doing the press circuit. Infact, the bastard had covered his own ass by stating that he'd discovered that the TRUST had built the building with naquadah and had warned the SGC about it to take care of it.
You're going to end up just having to do the PRESS TOUR thing with him at some point soon. Jerk. He knows how much you hate it, too, you'll bet.

Plus, he said he was going to work out a list of "potential bomb sites" that had been built by the Trust and you'd 'sort it out' for him. Good Publicity for everyone.

That fucking Snake.

As for the OTHER thing...

The facility that you did raid had a hidden basement.

Ba'als multiple places act? That was nothing so pedestrian as magic powers or dimensional shenanigans. Oh, no.

The Bastard had gone old school and fucking CLONED HIMSELF using one of Nirrti's abandoned Earth labs, host and symbiote all in one go.

And from the HANDY DANDY NOTE he left, addressed to YOU? The snake knew you'd find it.

"Have fun playing the old 'guess which cup the ball is under' game, Jack! -Ba'al" it read.

He's getting back at you for the plant thing. You just KNOW IT.

As for the whole "Venjix" thing... Well. That S-302 was going to take a few days to get back to that dimension's Earth from its Alpha Site. You'll be lucky to hear anything back before Christmas.

Chapter End Notes

Meet Ba'al, and Ba'al, and Ba'al, and Ba'al Ball Bocci and Ba'al. Did I forget to mention Ba'al?

...Yeah. Ba'al went and did that. He's a bit of a troll like that. Not the alternian kind either.

Tomorrow, a christmas episode. probably. maybe. might do another intermission in the meantime before hand. We'll see.

DIASPORA DATE: 07/03/0005.

There was but silence on the Astro Megaship as repairs were waiting for parts in order to be made and the crew were off doing other things elsewhere.

It was essentially a ghost ship for that moment, and what better time than for a ghost to come visit?

Slipping through the hallways as a flicker of enraged, temporally displaced spirit energy, the Handmaid of Lord English found herself enraged that events had gotten so out of synch.

She had no idea where she'd ended up or even WHEN for that matter, the last thing being remembered was a fragment of the Reaper Crystal from the bracelet impacting her forehead.

Twice.

She wasn't sure why she had that memory twice, or why the events preceding it were so jumbled with two different sets of events at the same time, but surely whatever had killed her had to be the cause of that. Right?

It did not matter.

What did matter was that she had to get out of this ship- whatever and where-ever it was.

She had to return to her mission... Return to... To...

To....

There was the thrumming sound of a Ring Transport, and the Handmaid drifted down the hallways, chasing after the sound.

Sticking to the shadows as hallway lights clicked on, a pair of Trolls exited a room and began heading in different directions.

One of them, a girl, headed with purpose while she stared down at a computer tablet thing.

The Handmaid drifted after her, slowly at first, then rapidly chasing to gain speed.

Still, though, she remained out of sight as the girl entered the bridge room and began running some diagnostic test.

The Handmaid pounced, and the Indigo blood's screams were cut short as her body was possessed... And alas, poor Dallie Rubilx, she would never say another world again.
YEARS HAD PASSED!

YEARS!

The Handmaid grimaced as she ran through the memories inside the girl's skull. Years had passed since her SECOND attempt to get the Bracelet, and failed. Not only that, but her Lord was DEAD. English... English had been shoved into a BLACK HOLE!

Damn it all.

... But.

... That did mean she was now technically a free-agent.

... This would require some time to think things through.

... And fortunately for the Handmaid, she was a Witch when it came to Time.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, yeah. It's her again, isn't it? WELP. This can't be good can it?

Monday, Xmas chapter.
Chapter Summary

It's the End of one year and the Start of another. Eras come and Eras go...

But There's always one constant.

Here? You're now half way out of the dark.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**EARTH DATE: DECEMBER 24TH, 2001.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 07/04/0005.**

The Witch of Time, the former Handmaid to Lord English, Damara Megido, opened her eyes and found herself on a vastly different plane of existence, separated from the body she had been inhabiting mere moments before.

She frowned at the man standing across from her, and demanded to know how he had pulled her out of her body as she contemplated its state of rapid onset decay, and for what reason.

"So..." Dylan Hunt mused, seeing the Alternian before him and ignoring her question. "You are not Ascended, and yet, you share similar traits to ourselves. Similar Enough to enter this plane with little prodding from myself, at least. And similar enough that possessing a lesser quality of a vessel already holding a soul will cause it to decay rapidly while it attempts to expunge you, and fails."

The former Handmaid insisted that she know where she was and why she'd been taken from her place.

"You are in the Ascended Plane," Hunt put his hands out into the air to gesture around. "As for what I want? I have... Need. Of your unique talents."

"Need"? The Handmaid inquired. She'd grown quite tired of people "needing" her powers, she said she'd realized over the last few days- grown tired of it and had not realized it until the chains of enslavement from her former masters had properly been unshackled. She'd never really wanted that bracelet for him anyways. She'd wanted it for herself, if parts of her jumbled memories were anything to go by.

Hunt laughed. "Of course, of course..." And then he said, "But please, do hear me out. I will allow you to return to your business afterwards should you decide not to agree to my humble request."

The Handmaid paused in her response, and then inquired what kind of "job" this was, and was she going to get paid? Because, well, her last job had nothing in the form of payment whatsoever.

"How does a body that won't decay under your very essence being present within its shell sound?"
Hunt offered. "As for the price? A few acts of targeted destruction and a possession that will allow
me to control a rogue element that has decided to not follow the plan I laid out for them originally,
and that they agreed to."

The Handmaid thought on it for a moment.

A new and fresh body was a tempting prospect. One that wasn't decaying on her just from her
presence within it was even more tempting...

And once she was done with these few tasks? She inquired.

"Then you will leave my service with no strings attached."

The Handmaid... no. Damara Megido smiled. No Strings attached, huh? Just a few directed acts of
chaos and a little bodily possession, and being able to leave afterwards with no strings attached?

Hunt smiled, and nodded.

In that case, then? Damara said she was listening.

Hunt's smile widened ever so slightly. Damara, though off put, ignored it as she listened to the
demands given to her...

No, these were not that unreasonable at all. And if he started changing the plan on her? Well... There
was always room for betrayal later.

A jolt awakens you for some reason, and for a moment, you find yourself unsure of where you are or
why you feel like something bad just happened on a time-related tangent...

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you lay in bed, cuddled on either side by John and Jade.

Nearby, little Lizzy rests in her crib, soundly sleeping.

It was just a dream wasn't it? Yes, it had to just be a dream. because everything that's happened in
Milky Way this week, or here in Pegasus just today alone...

Yeah, with what happened tonight with Jade's Dad... That...

Yes, that has to be it.

The tension and unease in your heart and mind winds away and you settle back in.

You smile half-contently as Jade nuzzles her face up against your neck and shoulder in a desperate
need for affection, and purr as John's half-dozing control over the breeze ruffles your hair between
your ears.

Life, for the moment, is peaceful, and for the time of year...?

Tomorrow is Christmas. And it's... it's nothing special except for the fact that almost everyone has the
day off.
Peace. Peace is nice.

Peace is really all you can ask for.

You fall asleep happily, knowing that your bad dream was just a bad dream.

YOU ARE NOT A SEER, after all.


DIASPORA DATE: 07/05/0005.

Your name is Davis Strider, and you feel a little unnerved by something TIME ASPECT RELATED. Did you mess up a time loop or something and didn't realize it?

No, you think it's just that you forgot where you put all the Christmas packages. God damn it. So many gifts all misplaced.

It takes you an hour of frantic searching and muffled swearing before Karkat wakes up and reminds you that you got everything in your sylladex.

And.

Oh.

Right.

Dummy!

You kept it there because Nepeta was being SNOOPY and SNEAKY trying to find her own gifts-not selfishly, mind, but just to share them with her name-sake from the Alternia Galaxy that got her arm broken.

Those two kittens are going to be so much trouble some day, you can tell that much already.

"I know it's probably really late of me to ask. But. What's Christmas?" Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you strangely feel out of the loop as you brush your hair free of tangles.

"Oh, it's an Earth Holiday," your teammate/hall neighbor/boyfriend/matesprit, Mallek Adalov, answers from his resting position in bed next to you. "Equivalent to Alternia's Twelfth Perigee's..." He stops. "You don't know what that is either. Right. Uh. Basically it's an 'end of year' middle of winter sort of festival."
"Ohhhh," you blink and nod as understanding comes to you. "Gotcha. The Half Way Out of The Dark Festival. We didn't really have weather seasons on Aincrad when it was still in the sky. Just different floors with different environments. But we did have shorter and longer days from the outside sun."


"Zelenka's focusing on the Jumper that got shot down," you answer. "He thinks whatever's wrong is something we're just not seeing because we don't have the right experience with it. And honestly? Atlantis' engines are a relic. They're nothing at all like what we had on Aincrad. Ten thousand years of modifications and upgrades and replacements adds up."

"Well, good luck with that, I guess," Mallek muses.

"Hopefully we'll get it working, then we'll get the city working again and we can leave this planet before the Wraith decide to check on us again," you say, hopeful.

"Suppose so," Mallek says, glancing out your room's window. "Hopefully today goes good for everyone in every galaxy and dimension."

You frown and glance back at him. "You realize that just by saying that something is going to go horribly wrong for someone today, right? And that's probably going to affect us too, right?"

A look of muted horror flashes across Mallek's eyes. "...Shit."

---

"Hey! Doctor Kae! Wait up a moment!"

Your name is Gina Kae, and you pause in your stride down the Atlantis hallways to allow an energetic Cameraman to catch up. "Yes, Mister Grover?" You ask.

"So, I heard that Roxy Lalonde is planning something BIG down at the swimming pool," the excitement in his voice is evident as he hefts a camera. "I was going to go down and film it. You wanna join me?"

"I really don't like swimming pools that much," you say. "But I'll admit you've gotten my curiosity piqued. Miss Lalonde's abilities to spontaneously generate matter out of thin air have given me many old theories to re-evaluate. Do you know what it is she's planning exactly?"

"Something to do with Lime Jello and a Prank on her other self, I think?" Mister Grover says, frowning. "Well! At any rate, Mister Bregman's given me permission to go and film whatever I like today given that he went back home to visit his family and Dillon and his Sister are out doing who knows what on the Alpha Site. Sooo... Pool Pals?" He asks, extending a hand towards you with a hopeful, friendly grin.

....

"Very well," you shake his hand. "Pool Pals it is, Mister Grover."

"Great! Now c'mon, this way!" As he leads the way, he pauses to add, "Oh, and since this is pretty
much just a fun day off of goofing around. You can call me Ziggy."

"I'll keep that in mind, Mister Grover," you say- stop, then realize what you just say, and correct, "Ziggy."

Somehow, the grin he gives you makes you think you've fed a wild shark one too many times and now it's infatuated.

"Teyla," your name is John Sheppard, and you stop your friend in the hallway for just a moment. "Have fun with everyone back on New Athos," you say.

"Thank you, John," she nods in acceptance of that. "And I hope you have a fun day as well."

"Will do," you nod. "Say hi to the kids for me."

"I'm sure Jinto and Wex will appreciate that they are still being thought of," Teyla smiles, and with a brief farewell, you head your separate ways.

Teyla to the stargate, and you to the Cafeteria to grab some grub for the girls back in your apartment.

You pause to sort out the people there before you get in line to get food.

Mikari is chatting with Ronon about something as they watch O'neill and Carter playing chess- a lot more enthusiastically than another common lunch-room pair of Chess dueling scientists you're aware of. Aradia and Roxy are busy exiting the line and heading for a table to eat at. Tyzias, Daraya, and Barzum are off in their own private corner working on one of Tyzias' law books.

Hrm... You don't see anyone else you're too close to getting breakfast right no- Wait. No, never mind, there's Doctor Jackson and Doctor Gardner entering the room now. There's a whole can of worms you don't want to get into...

Thankfully, you're spared any current interactions by way of Tagora and Galekh getting into line behind you, carrying trays already once filled with food, and apparently either seeking desert or seconds. Either way, they're arguing quietly loud enough to serve as a buffer as those other two get in line.

"Now, seriously, the differences between our two universes simply cannot be that great," Galekh is saying when he suddenly drags you into it. "Colonel Sheppard, please tell him that I'm not exaggerating when I say that Mecha Pilot Alguard Haruka Sanjii is best suited as a Moirail for Kazuma Kotomi and not his former teammate Satsuka Shiron."

You blink, processing that insane question that you have no idea what the hell he's talking about because... "I haven't watched that show. So I have no idea what you're talking about."

"See?" Tagora counters, "I TOLD YOU he'd have no idea what we're talking about!"

"Yes, yes, I can understand that, but please, let me elaborate so you can get the full picture," Galekh starts to explain the various ins and outs of the differences between your universes of "Mecha Pilot Alguard G" and Tagora's universe's version of the same show, except called "Mecha Pilot Alguard Z."
You really don't pay attention much to it beyond nodding and going "Okay, I get that" for the immediate moment. Thankfully Jackson and Gardner are too into each other to be paying much attention.

Though, as Galekh pauses only to let you give your meal orders to a casually smiling Boldir, you realize you've heard enough to decide and say to them, "You know what? I actually kind of like the sound of this show. You got any spare copies of it I could borrow?"

And then Galekh and Tagora get this eerie, shared grin that makes it seem like you just bought a used car from Tagora, and a library of novels from Galekh as they chime in with a synchronized, "Of course we have copies to spare! Whose do you want to watch first? Mine is undoubtedly the more superior version! What?! No! Not yours! Mine! Mine is the better one!"

Saving you from answering, from behind the counter, Boldir Lamati then interjects herself into the conversation with, "Mech Pilots OT3 Moirail, Matesprit, Kismesis Vacillation Triangle, end of discussion."

You don't know what that means just yet, but it gets Galekh and Tagora arguing with her now, leaving you free to move up in line and get the food you ordered.

You captchalogue it all and abscond for your apartment with a hastily promised, "I'll Talk more later!"

You're probably not going to talk about it at all.

"See what I said about it effecting us?" Keiko asks.

Your name is Mallek Adalov, and you do indeed see a whole lot of plan wrecking in the form of Roxy Lalonde dumping who knows what into the Atlantis Swimming pool.

"Why did I open my mouth for?" You lament.

Your name is Jade Jackson, and you're a little miffed at your Dad.

"Can you believe he blew off dinner last night?" You ask Argo as you pace the floor of your room.

"It happens," Argo says, shifting Lizzy in their arms. "I mean, he did say me might not make it when we asked him."

"Yeah! But he went to the cafeteria at the SAME TIME we were!" You huff, wolf ears standing straight back, fur on its ends in annoyance. You can feel tiny sparks of your powers darting between the gaps between the individual strands of hair and fur. "And he was on a date with Sarah and he Didn't Even Notice We Were There!!!"

"It sounds like he just forgot?" Argo offers.

"But we were Right There!" You want to stomp your foot, but you know that'd make Lizzy fuss. So
you don't. "And... Gaaaaah!" you run your hands through your hair, grabbing at the errant electrical sparks from it and into your hands. You smush it all into a tiny ball and then just hurl it out the open window.

Distantly, you see a tiny flash of green in the horizon, and you try to steady your breath.

"I'm just mad, Argo," you say.

"I know, Jade, I know," they say in turn.

You... You....

"I know, but it happens," Argo continues. "It happens, and sometimes family isn't the best. But... We don't have to stay on Atlantis all day today, you know? We could use the Books Joey left to go visit Diaspora early? I mean, the party's not for another few hours so..."

You take a deep breath in, and then exhale slowly.

You feel all the anger and upset you were feeling before fading away.

Argo's right.

"You're right," you say. "So what if Dad's gotten himself a new girlfriend? He's not the only family we have. Not the only important person in our lives, either..."

And then speaking of important people, John returns with breakfast.

You'll eat, and then you'll get ready to go.

Your name is Kohiru Karren, and you're in a deadlock speed-race with your mecha-pilot partner across the City's seldom used attic-space hallways.

Rhubeexaolon laughs and laughs as your both race through the city- you don't know how she has it in her to do that while running, but, you'd be sad if she didn't.

Your partner's carefree attitude gives you a lot to remind you about all the good in the world when things aren't going to hell or a day needs saving.

You're having a fun, sugar rush run of a day, and nothing's wrong with that at all.

Best to take your happiness where you can, right?

"John."

"Rose."

"Yes, that is my name," you are Rose Lalonde and you smile wryly as you join your brother, Jade, and Argo outside what's become Atlantis' LINKING ROOM- home to a few high security safes and
where a pair of Linking Books to the City itself had been written. "Going to visit family?" You ask.

"Yup," he nods. "You too?"

"Roxy asked me to deliver a present to Mom," you hold up a captchalogue card. "I don't quite know what's in it, but knowing both versions of them..." you smoothly lie about the not knowing what's on it part. "Just between you and me, one of us is getting quite the exchange on this prankster's gambit."

With that said and done, Argo unlocks the book safe, and sets it to relock after four link-throughs.

Jade with Lizzy goes through first, John next, you third--- VRRRMMMSHHH! -- and then Argo arrives last on the other side.

Linking is no weirder than your own wormhole warping powers- just stretched across a vast, longer piece of yarn than your usual leaps.

You've arrived on Diaspora, in the yard outside Joey's hive.

"Hey!!" Mierfa greets you. "Didn't expect to see you guys so early! Come for the party?"

You ask if Roxy Egbert will be here, and get an affirmative, so yes, you say, you've come for the party.

Inside, you find Joey and Xefros are working to get lunch going and that Jude, Cassandra, and Penny are already here as well, unsurprisingly.

What's more surprising is that Okurii and her Nepeta are here, and so are Major Davis Strider and his Nepeta- the younger-alternate self to Argo. Argo immediately bee-lines over to talk to them while Jade heads over to Jude and Cassie to talk there, leaving you and John to-

Wait, no, a Wild Polypa appears from outside and quickly requests John's assistance with something also outside. You follow because you've got nothing better to do but wait.

"What's up?" John asks as you both follow Polypa outside to a tree with a couple of recently fallen branches. Hefty ones, at that.

"This!" Polypa points at it. "This tree has dropped three branches so far, and one of them broke Okurii's Nepeta's arm. We thought it was fine but then it dropped two more this morning. So we need to take it out for everyone's safety. I'd do it myself, but Joey made me promise not to use explosives this close to the Hive. Spoil sport. It's not like I'd use quarry buster explosives or anything."

"Well, I'll see what I can do," John says, rolling his shoulders.

You can't help but laugh at the show of force implied to follow.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you stare at the emptied and stained green tile of the Atlantis City Swimming Pool.

"So... Where is the water, exactly?" You ask, turning to Roxy Lalonde, the culprit behind this.
"Would you believe.... accidentally flushed out into the ocean again?" Roxy asks in what you seriously hope is a joking tone.

"No," you say. "No I wouldn't!"

"Ah, geeze. Thought as much..." She looks embarrassed.

"So... where's the water from the pool, and WHY is the tile stained green?" You ask.

"I believe I can answer that, Miss Aiikho," and then Doctor Kae steps up. "I observed the whole experiment."

Oh, this ought to be good.

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and life can be rough.

But, here you are, sitting among your friends, and chilling out as the lunch hour rolls closer.

An Arai Beetle scuttles onto your shoulder, and you give it a passing scritch on the jaw before settling in to listen to the conversations going about.

Daraya sits next to you, her hand clasping yours, and you can't help but feel that as much as you've lucked out with life... somewhere out there, you've missed out on something. But as for what it is? You have no idea. But it's not something you can mull over much when there's so much else to focus on.

Your name is Jack O'neill, and you find yourself arriving stylishly late for this year's Christmas Party, if only because you had to wait for Sam to finish some last minute email that just COULDN'T WAIT.

It's Christmas, and the Claire-Durgas-Goezee hive is in full noise mode from the inside, as expected.

What's less expected is seeing the Lieutenant Colonel John Sheppard dragging an entire uprooted tree through the forest- to be 'safely exploded into firewood', according to Polypa.

...It's Christmas, and what's Christmas without some random ass task that needs accomplishing?

With a smile to Sam, you head on inside and join the party. SG-1's here, pretty much everyone from the Alternian teams that wanted to be here is there, even the people who'd gone to Atlantis to work.

It's crowded.

Kids are screaming left and right, or playing games or- well. Just about doing everything they can.

The Striders and the Vantases are here too, and it's all so...
It's homey.

It's everything you've ever wanted and thought that you'd never have after Charlie died.

Sam's hand wraps around yours and gives it a squeeze, and you can't help but feel blessed somehow.

If someone asked you where you'd be seven years from now that day before you stepped through the Stargate, you wouldn't have said this at all.

And you're happy for that.

Your name is Joey Claire, and after a successful lunch after everyone arrived, the kids start clamoring for it to be time to open presents. "Alright, alright!" You clap your hands. "We'll get to presents in a bit, but before we do that..."

On your cue, Xefros decaptchalogues a plain box, opens it up, and starts handing out CD Boxes to everyone except for Dammek, who was the one who gave Xefros the box to begin with and already got his copy.

"First! An advance copy of the Grubbel's album set to come out on New years," you announce.

"We weren't sure how many of you guys were coming or not so I divvied this run's count up by household," Dammek elaborates. "If you want a spare copy, let me know and I'll get one to you later."

"Thank you guys," Roxy Egbert smiles as she clutches her copy of the CD to her chest. "I'm so happy for you all!"

"It's fine, it's fine," you say, taking your own CD copy, and moving over to the CD player. "You guys are going to get to hear the whole album before anyone else, so let me get that going, and then we can start opening presents."

The kids all yell out an excited "YAAAAAAAY!" or there abouts. Heh, how adorable.

You pause to look at the CD cover- a stylized spraypainted logo image of "THE GRUBBELS" at the top, a stylized "HAVEN" at the bottom written with heavily modified versions of your signs, and a stylized rendition of the Astro Megaship in the center. All of that framed atop of a pink glowing Althernian Stargate. Short simple, and to the point. You remember going through a lot of back and forth to make Xefros' sign look as close to an "H" as Humanly and Althernianly possible. Your sign, using the Earth Point of Origin as a base, handily and easily served as an "A" and Dammek's wasn't too hard to make into a "V." The "EN" part just ended up being some jagged, faux penstroke effect looking font.

You pop open the case, open the player, slot in the CD, and press play.

As you sit back down, the first song of the Album- the song you'd shown to Xefros and gotten this whole band thing revitalized- begins to play. All at once, memories of your visit to D'ni come rushing back- but you put it aside and instead focus on the here and now.

And so, you let your own voice play back to you, expressing all of those emotions for you.
Meanwhile, in another dimension, an S-302 exited hyperspace and began its slow approach towards the planet Earth.

It stayed well out of the scanning range of the satellites that remained in orbit, and began scanning the planet's surface.

"Once and for all, / We're gonna break free. / Once we can See / The End of Days / YOU'RE NEVER GONNA BREAK ME!"

What it found was a planet turned wasteland, with only a few isolated pinpricks of lifesigns scattered across the planet- at least one major cluster per continent- but the largest to be found was the one in the United States, centered over what would have been Boston, but anything more was hard to determine thanks to the dome over the city.

What was more disturbing was the nearby location of a large production facility pumping out an obscene amount of smoke and harmful pollutants into the air. Not just chemicals, but nuclear residue. Whatever power source this facility was running on, it was running with an intentional lack of core containment. Suicide for any humans who'd dare to run it, but...

There didn't seem to be any real lifesigns in the facility at all.

Was it entirely machine operated?

"Once more at war~"

The S-302 then proceeded to record a massive explosion from a smaller facility between that production facility and the Dome.

"We're gonna ramble through."

A large space faring vehicle began to trace its way towards the Dome, blasting away at it, and breaking the shielding.

"Once Down the Hole/ The never ending reality will face me!"

It began to enter the City and attacking before... suddenly... It stopped. And it Transformed.

"Come to My Heaven! Lay your Heart Down!"

A massive burst of a bio-signature occurred on that spot, and the war vehicle became alive in some manner- themed after a WHALE of all things- and was promptly turned against its former masters, one of whom became giant sized to combat the transformed weapon.

"Puzzles of Reason/ Leave them Unsolved."

And then the WHALE ZORD was observed to be combining with two smaller bio-vehicles into a Megazord.

"Cave into Heaven / Bow to Wisdom!"

The giant robotic machine was silenced with an arrow attack, and the S-302 turned to return to the Alpha Site, its mission of observation done.
"Righteous People/ You will see My Dawn!"

The resistance was alive and well on this planet Earth.

Back in our home Dimension, at the SGC, General Hank Landry knocked on the office door of Doctor Carolyn Lam. She opened it hesitantly, frowning slightly, but, upon seeing that he'd brought a coffee tray with either coffee or hot chocolate contained within the festively decorated cups, decided to allow her estranged father in so they could- if not start on the road to amending things- at the very least not spend their Christmas alone.

"Like Once Before... We meet on Common Ground."

Down in the Cavern of D'ni, people celebrated various holidays, both Earth Born and D'ni made, for this time of year.

"It's History / Repeating Once More / We turn our backs and Reform!"

In a certain Baron's Office high above overlooking the city plaza, Douglas Sharper smiled as he leaned against a wall, and watched the lights from his heavily decorated tree reflect against the window's glass.

On a certain Tokotah Building Rooftop, a gaggle of Explorers and DRC staff held a pot luck dinner of sorts- decorations of various Holidays were placed where-ever there was room for them to safely reside.

"Never again. / We're gonna close our eyes."

Near one table that had a bunch of various different variations of religious candlesticks set up on it Mike Engberg sat, discussing with Marie Sutherland the longer lasting implications of the effects of spatial rifts on the Cavern's population.

"Wishes remain... Unfulfilled!"

Meanwhile, Mike's biological daughter and recently adopted cat-kid played some Monster themed Card Game in a nearby corner of the walled in rooftop with some other kids whose parents had brought them down to D'ni for the holidays.

"We bury pride and rebuild!"

Meanwhile, high atop the island of Ae'gura's highest point, Victor Laxman spent his day toiling away to re-activate the Cavern's massive hybrid religious-decorative-slash-GPS-like-serving device, the GREAT ZERO. If he had his way, it would be working again by the new year.

"Come to My Heaven! Lay your Heart Down!"

It was at the end of the present opening spree when Roxy Egbert finally received a gift from Roxy Lalonde.

It was a captchalogue card, within which was contained a giant blob of LIME JELLO, molded into the shape of Atlantis' Swimming Pool.
"Puzzles of Reason/ Leave them Unsolved."

Needless to say, Roxy Egbert decided to dump it out into a nearby stone pit that Mierfa and Polypa had mentioned planning on making into a swimming pool. A wise move, considering that upon decaptchaloguing, Roxy Lalonde's summoning of a fuck tone of Lime Jello Powder had become undone, and all that remained was the water from the City's swimming pool instead.

"Cave into Heaven / Bow to Wisdom!"

Roxy Egbert had Rose return a candid photo to Roxy Lalonde later that night, of the Egbert woman giving a thumbs up with the filled pool in the background.

"Righteous People/ You will see My Dawn!"

Needless to say, Roxy Lalonde was quite flummoxed, and more than a few Atlantis citizens were annoyed by the wait time before the pool would be refilled.

Stelsa Sezyat paused in her work as she saw an Indigo Blooded troll standing in the doorway to the Delta Megaship's bridge.

"Dallie?" She asks, "What are you doing here? I Thought you were working on the Astro Mega's repairs?"

The indigo blooded girl said nothing, instead just continuing to stand there, creepily. Watching, and waiting. Stelsa could swear that if this were a comedy, she could hear a clock ticking musically.

"Come to My Heaven... Lay your Heart Down..."

No, this wasn't right. Dallie Rubilx wasn't the kind of girl who'd just stand there and watch. Creepily. Waiting. As if for...

"...Dallie?" Stelsa asks, frowning. "Is something wrong?"

"Puzzles of Reason... Leave them..."

The girl started to grin, and in that moment, Stelsa saw something off in the Indigo blood's eyes. Something rusted, standing in sharp contrast to the blue hue that usually rested there.

"Come to My Heaven! Lay your Heart Down!"

And then that ticking sound stopped, and Stelsa found she couldn't scream out because as much as she wanted to because the other girl rushed her and shoulder slammed her into a wall.

"Puzzles of Reason/ Leave them Unsolved."

Stelsa reeled from the impact, forced to watch as Dallie Rubilx grabbed at the console and tore it free from the floor, unveiling a mess of wires and cables beneath. Dallie then tore loose a large cable, and the whole room's main lighting went dark as alarm sirens blared.

"Cave into Heaven / Bow to Wisdom!"

Stelsa could only watch in horror as Dallie raised the live cable, and then dropped it towards the
metal floor-- the metal floor both of them were touching, and ran throughout the entire deck of this ship.

"Righteous People/ You will see My Dawn!"

Stelsa MOVED like she'd never moved before, pain from being thrown across the room ignored because it was nothing compared to the pain that would happen if that wire hit the floor.

She caught it, and before the pain of being severely electrocuted could kick in, crashed into the Indigo blooded girl, sending them both toppling into one of the control chairs.

Stelsa had little time to process what a good move that was, or anything that happened after that.

She was lucky to still be alive when the ship's emergency systems finally shut off power to that disconnected wire, and the medical crew rushed in to find her convulsing on the chair.

As for Dallie Rubilx? A coroner's exam would discover that her body had been covered in decay that nobody had ever seen before, and was essentially in the final stages of life before death overtook it from total cellular collapse.

Her brain had basically already been turned to mush before the electrocution that had finished her off.

Needless to say, a quarantine was called for immediately there after, but no contagion could be found by the time it lifted some time after the new year.

After all, there was no contagion to be found, when the sole cause was a wayward soul possessing bodies.

Chapter End Notes

SO. YEAH. Damara just did that.

Next Chapter: SG1:09X08: Babylon Reprised. [Part 2]

Yeah, that's right. It's another cross-series two parter. Been a while since we did one of those.

DIASPORA DATE: 07/05/0005.

Your name is Damara Megido, and you re-appear in the ascended plane of existence after completing your first major task of directed violence.

The rest? You'll carry them out as someone else. But for now, you report on the job done.

You don't know why destroying a ship's navigation console in such a way as to make it be forced to take repairs like that is important. Hell, to be honest, you'd rather have just blown the thing up entirely, but apparently that's the wrong mission statement to make.

You don't even bother reporting about the Teal Blood who tried to stop you from shocking the whole floor of that ship- which wasn't part of your job's questing parameters even, but it's sure as hell going to delay fixing navigation- mainly because of that aforementioned deviance from the job description.

Your new... not Master, not Lord, not even a Boss, but rather an... EMPLOYER tells you it's a job well done, and to rest easy here in this plane while his people track down the world were your next target is hiding.

In the mean time, you ask about the fact that this girl's body probably won't last even as long as your last one did. How fast of a time table is Hunt expecting to operate on here?

And then he tells you that the body you will be taking will be perfectly capable of sustaining as powerful of a soul such as your own as long as you maintain contact with the sword CLARENT.

After all, he remarks, he helped design the blade itself.

That makes you feel a little wary about all of this, but hell, it makes sense if it means he can help get you a permanent body after all of this.

You remind him, NO STRINGS ATTACHED. You get your body and that's it, you're out of here.

Of course, he says, smiling in a way that feels hollow just a bit. That is the plan, after all.

...
You know what? As soon as you get this 'body' that he's promising can hold your soul in, you're going to turn it on this bastard the first chance you get. But until then, you'll WAIT.


DIASPORA DATE: 07/13/0005.

Your name is George Hammond, and you feel like you're nearing the edge of what you can consider feasible for your current job.

That is to say.

You're writing your resignation letter while on the phone with Jack O'neill.

"George, look, I appreciate the offer," Jack starts, "but there's no way I can take over for you in Homeworld Sec. I'm too busy at the SGC and with the PRESS TOURS!!"

You say of course he can, because who else do either of you trust to this job?

Jack argues that maybe General Hank Landry could do it?

To which you reply, "Maybe, but maybe Hank could also take over at the SGC more full time?"

Jack groans in response.

"But really, Jack, would taking on my job really be that much of an inconvenience?" You ask as you continue writing your letter.

"Yes. The back and forth to D.C. ALONE...!"

"What if we relocated Homeland Security to Colorado?" You ask.

"Can we even do that?" he asks.

"I think I can manage it," you smile.


DIASPORA DATE: 07/14/0005.

"Oh my God, is that Cameron Mitchel? How the hell--?" Your name is Jane Egbert, and you massage at the bridge of your nose as you see the wounded man brought into the SODAN VILLAGE.

"You know this man?" The Leader of the Jaffa here, LORD HAIKON, inquires.

"He's on a team that my nephew is on," you answer. "What happened to him?"
"He encountered one of our warriors and they shot each other," Lord Haikon says. "Until we know why his teammates took our Warrior, we cannot know what he is truly after."

"Allow me to heal him," you offer. "I'll find out what they want and why they're here. It's possible they just took your man to heal him."

"We shall see," Haikon says. "If it is not as simple as that, we may have to put him on Trial... A Kel Shak Lo trial of the death. You may go with my blessing."

You grimace at that, and quickly go to Mitchel, and offer your aid in healing his wounds.

As you work on that, you reflect on what you know, and tell it to Mitchel in between his fits of consciousness.

The Sodan Tribe are a group of Rebel Jaffa predating Teal'c's defection by thousands of years. They'd worked for a long time as the Goa'uld ISHKUR'S ELITE FORCES... however, the higher they rose among the ranks, the more they learned the truth.

Ishkur branded the rebelling Sodan tribe as traitors, and ordered their deaths. They'd fought, but the odds were not in their favor. They'd ended up searching out KHEB, but instead of finding it, they found a planet that you remember from the SGC database as P9G-844.

In the thousands of years since, they'd raided Goa'uld strongholds to acquire Symbiotes. It was something of a rite of passage for them, it seems. Their culinary culture sure had diverged greatly in the intervening time.

Of course, that's pure luck, really, that you found them at all. Your random Gate hopping with Saber... well. That had wound up with you arriving here by pure luck, and you'd arrived right in time to meet some Jaffa here. They had been wary, until you told them you were on the run from would-be gods on a power trip.

Saber's revelation that she had once been an Ascended being had... not gone over well at first, and yet... her revelation that the man chasing her had been recklessly slaughtering the ANCIENTS in the Ascended Plane for daring to disagree with him had gone over even worse.

The SODAN TRIBE had come to worship the Ancients as actual gods, originally seeking Kheb as a means of granting their souls eternal peace, after all. Given that their gods were being slain by an interloper and a survivor was requesting refuge with them? Well... The Sodan had every reason to want to help you, and take your advice as best as they could. After all, you were essentially MESSENGERS OF THE GODS...

You're honestly just a bit confounded by all of this. But Mordred- well- Saber- seemed to be taking the worship a bit more gracefully.

Still.

At least It's just a staff blast that Colonel Mitchel took and not a full body reconstruction because of crashing into the ground like Saber had.

Eventually, you get him stable, and now to wait for him to wake up.

Your name is Jake Harley, and you feel a bit annoyed that your hunt for your sister brought you to a rogue Jaffa Village in the middle of nowhere... and now that hunt has gotten your escorts- SG-1- stuck in a hard place.
Mitchel's missing, and the Jaffa you encountered is currently being fixed up as best as can be done at the SGC, meanwhile... you're stuck at the SGC waiting for the Jaffa to get fixed up so you can find out what the hell happened.

"Hello," and then there's this golden haired green eyed woman offering you a cup of coffee. "You are Jake English, correct?"

"Pft," you scoff, taking the cup. "No. English is what they called me when I was brainwashed. It's Harley. Jake Harley."

"Ah," She nods. "I am Artoria."

"Ah, you're King Arthur, right?" you say, snapping your fingers on your free hand. "The one they freed from the Avalon Cave?"

"Yes," She nods. "I'm finding I'm still quite unused to the world as it is now, but I've been catching up on its history. I've come across many references to your expeditions and adventures so far."

"So you caught up to the last Century?" You ask. "That was fast."

"I have not had much else to do beyond read and train," Artoria shrugs. "I was wondering if you could answer a few questions I might have. Stuff that might not be covered in the history books."

"I suppose so," you say. "What do you want to know?"

"...Did you ever chase after anything tied to my own legends and myths?" She asks.

Huh. Now that's a question.

"...To be honest," you answer, "When my daughter was born, I'd decided I was going to be saving that one for when she was old enough to come with me on the trip. Of course, life got in the way and I couldn't fulfill that ideal ever. And then my son came along and found you for entirely unrelated reasons to that."

"What a coincidence," Artoria says. "Perhaps fate had its hand to play?"

"I doubt that," you say. "Honestly, before that? For the longest time, I'd had no interest in it. It seemed like the sort of mundane, stereotypical adventure already done a thousand times over by that point. I felt like everything to be found of that line of inquiry had been found. I was wrong, but still... Not like I would have found you, given how well hidden that place was hidden."

"Very true," she agrees. "Merlin's magic was impressive... though, not really magic, in the end."

"No, it wasn't," you sigh. "Technology. Impressive, to the point it feels like magic. But still technology..." You smile, though. "But, in other dimensions. Well. Magic is thing entirely separate from it."

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DIASPORA DATE: 07/15/0005.

"Look, this whole thing is a big misunderstanding. We were just looking for Jane Egbert because she never told any of us where she was going, and your guy attacked me before I could explain that,"
your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you're a bit frustrated by this turn of events. "I'm sorry I shot him, but if he's still alive, they took him to the SGC to find out what the hell happened to me."

This guy named Haikon muses on that, while the other Jaffa stare at you with a swiftly promised death in their eyes.

"We will train you in the art of Kel Shak Lo," Haikon decides. "If Volnek is not returned to us within the week, we will assume he is dead; you will fight and you will either live or you will die in recompense. If he is alive, he will explain this to them."

"Hopefully," you say. "Hopefully he'll explain it and not be stubborn to the point of staying silent because he thinks I'm a bad guy."

"...Yes, hopefully he is not that stubborn either," Haikon says, and then signals to his men that he and they are leaving.

As they exit your gracious accommodations, Jane enters, and...

"...Artoria??" you do a double take at the woman that follows.

"No," she says, curtly. "You may call me Saber. Artoria is my father."

...But she's her what now?

Wait.

"Mor-?" you start to ask, and Jane plants a hand over your mouth with a motherly gaze that'd make even your Nanna proud.

"That is NOT her name," Jane says, motioning her head at the door. "Got it?"

Ah.

Gotcha.

You nod, and Jane removes her hand from your mouth.

"...What exactly happened?" you ask, glancing between the two of them. "Last I'd heard she was trying to, ah, rent one of our boats."

"I'd..." Mordred- Saber- whatever her name is- starts. "Just been confronted by one of the people who had recruited me to be an Ascendant. I'd just killed them, in fact. I was... a bit overly eager to get off world, and I thought that ship would do the trick."

"And then you got knocked off the top of it and survived a several mile high drop?" You ask because why the hell not.

"My body's constitution is very tough," Mordred says. "I managed to crawl my way to the Stargate, and go through the first address I could remember."

"I found her there, and started healing her," Jane takes it from there. "Then, we were chased by these Andromeda Punks, and we had to keep running until we found the Sodan here."

"Sodan.... right," you blink. "So... what's this about me having to die?"

Jane tells you, and you don't like it one bit.
"Why did I even ask?" you lament.

"...Lady Saber?"

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you look up as the Jaffa who remained stubbornly silent up until this point actually speaks, and stares at Artoria as she enters the infirmary.

"...I... excuse me?" She asks. "I don't follow."

"You..." The Jaffa blinks. "Are you the Lady Saber's Sister?"

"...Saber...?" You quickly stand to join Artoria and ask the Jaffa, "Excuse me, but does the girl you're speaking of look just like her, except... well, a bit gruffer around the edges?"

The Jaffa nods. "She has been on the run from the Usurpers, Hunt, and his followers, who have betrayed our gods and begun slaughtering them!"

You turn to Artoria, and see a matching look of recognition in her eyes.

Together, you say a single name- "Mordred!"

Your name is JANE EGBERT, and you blink as you watch SG-1 and the injured Jaffa, Volnek, enter the village. This is not a blink worthy surprise. What is, that your brother JAKE is with them, and there's... another woman who looks exactly like Saber accompanying them too.

Artoria, you realize.

"Jake? What are you doing here?" You ask.

"Jane!" He runs over and hugs you. "Oh thank goodness, you're alive. What happened? How are you even here!?"

"It's a long story," you say, eyeing as Jonas and the Mordred-look-alike move over to join you, while Volnek, Cassandra, and Jude talk with Haikon. "Why are you all here?"

What comes next is a series of rapid fire half-comments from both sides that leaves you talking to Haikon and requesting a large private room for you all to talk in.

He nods, stating that he will allow Mitchel to join you there, and within minutes, you have it.

There's a tense moment of tension as Mordred and Artoria stare off across opposite ends of a room from eachother, and you begin filling in SG-1 and your brother on everything you'd been through.

Then, Jonas takes over, retelling everything about how Hunt had destroyed Dakara in an attempt to call Mordred out and you can feel your own stomach dropping out, let alone how Mordred is feeling, going by the look of anger flashing in their eyes.

"Bastard," Mordred swears. "I should have realized what he was doing. I should have known..." A shake of their head. "I never should have listened to them! I never should have rebelled against you, Father!" With that, they step forwards, and bow deeply before Artoria.

Artoria sighs, and then says, "I will admit that I... reacted strongly to the things you said at first. I should have known it wasn't like you, My Faithful Knight..." A shake of her head follows as well. "I, too, was played though I realized it too late. And for that, I apologize as well."
"But all of the bloodshed that happened because of me..." Mordred starts, stubbornly keeping to the bow.

"No, none of it is because of you nor I!" Artoria says, reaching a hand out to Mordred's chin and raising their head to look in the eyes. "The Blame of all of our woes falls upon Hunt and his Ascendants for our own wars and the trials he has instigated in these days of peace."

"But-!" whatever Mordred was going to say next was interrupted because of screaming and yelling from outside.

"Never a Dull Moment," Jake laments, and the lot of you rush outside.

A pair of Ascended beings float in the sky, glowing brightly, and keep getting shot at by the Sodan's Staff Weapons. As for on the ground? A flickering, sort of ghostly figure who looks like an Alternian Woman stands. All three of them have staff blasts passing through them harmlessly.

"I thought we killed her?" Jude grumbles.

"Whos' that?" Jonas asks.

"The Handmaid," Cassandra warns. "Ghostly apparition who used to work for English before we killed her. And exorcised her ghost. And now she's back. Somehow." She frowns. "Shit. I think whatever brought her back made her immune to me detecting her somehow. I'm not getting anything from her being here right now."

The ghostly Alternian woman laughs, and then points at your group. "My New Body! Come To Me! BE MINE AT LAST!"

"And now she's working for Hunt," Artoria says, narrowing her eyes and decaptchaloging her sword.

Mordred stares, then laughs, and raises her hand to the air- "CLARENT!"

A muted boom of disturbed dirt. A Pause. Then there's a woosh of cut air, and suddenly a blade of crimson slices through one of the Ascended beings in the sky, dispersing them with a shriek of pain as the weapon lands in Mordred's hand.

"Well that's just showing off," Mitchel says, and then decaptchalogues a-

"When the HELL did you get a Lightsaber!?" You ask, staring at the blade of light that emerged.

"Hide now, questions later," Jake says, grabbing you arm and dragging you to the side as Jude and Cassandra start ordering evacuation orders for the Jaffa to take cover and get as far away from the village NOW- just to be safe.

...This is going to get messy, isn't it?

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you feel oddly disconnected from the world.

Your vibes are only triggering on the potential deaths of the Jaffa here in the village- and only then from the Ascendant above you that didn't get wrecked by Mordred's sword.

Said sword is now being swung, one of three, against the freaky psychic blasts that the Handmaid is throwing out.
A tree explodes and you didn't sense it about to happen.

You'd forgotten what it was like to be blind to these things.

Your vibes ALSO are triggering off of those sword strikes as if they would hit something that isn't there- but then stop when the swords actually make contact with their intended targets that You Can't Sense.

Whatever the hell happened to the Handmaid after the last encounter with her, it completely removed her from your ability to sense her at all.

You feel so brutally disconnected it hurts on a level that isn't physical pain, but probably should be.

You can only watch as the Handmaid continues to fling bursts of energy at the three sword-wielders and their insane attacks.

"CLARENT HEART!" Mordred swings a blade of dangerous pink energy that your vibes warn would strip your soul from your body if you were hit by it.

But instead the fucking Handmaid absorbs the strike and LAUGHS as her physical form somehow stabilizes somewhat- flickering glitches fading away to a noticeable degree.

"I see now," The Handmaid grins. "I see why he wants this power back under his control."

"You won't take me back to him!" Mordred yells at just about the same time Artoria yells, "I won't allow you to take Mordred away from me again!"

There's a swing of that holy sword EXCALIBER, and a burst of golden light smashes against the Handmaid, also strengthening her form.

The Handmaid's eyes flicker, and she laughs. "AHAHAHAHAH! You are cute too. Maybe I will take you instead, hm? If you are so determined to Serve."

And then she summons a whip of energy that you still feel nothing about, and swings it at the ground between her and Mitchel, Artoria, and Mordred.

BOOOM!

Dirt flies upwards in a massive explosion that almost looks like magma before receding to dust.

You get hit by a clump of dispersing dirt in the face, and you tumble to the ground, unable to see until you get it clear.

Before you try to get to your feet, Jude throws himself down on you and Artoria's sword flies through the air where your head would have been- embedding itself into a nearby wall.

You barely hear the scream of the other Ascended Being that came to this brawl being disrupted after the sword passed through them.

"...I'm going to stay down," you whisper.

"Good!" Jude says with a firm nod.

You turn your attention back to the fight and watch as the Handmaid kicks Mitchel into the side of a well- and his laser sword falls down it. ("Aw-crap!" He exclaims.)
Then Mordred swings, blocking a whip strike attempting to hit a disarmed Artoria.

"NOBODY HURTS THEM BUT ME!" Mordred yells.

"HAVE IT YOUR WAY THEN!" And then The Handmaid explodes into a burst of flickering crimson light and throws herself at Mordred, aiming for a possession.

But then Artoria shoves Mordred out of the way, and then screams as the spirit possesses her, falling to her knees.

...And you still can't sense any disasters incoming. This is NOT GOOD.

"FATHER!" Mordred yells out, dropping Clarent to the ground and moving to touch Artoria--

A Vibe Strikes you, and the impression of someone falling down a well surges in the back of your mind.

"WAIT!" you yell out-

Mordred hesitates and then there's an explosion of crimson energy from Artoria's body that sends them flying backwards- right into Mitchel's awaiting arms, and thankfully the vibe fades.

Artoria gets to her feet... except. No. You're quite certain Artoria isn't home now because you're not getting any vibes from her at all now.

"Heh..." And then she laughs. Except there's a faint echo to her voice. "Hehehe... Oh. That's good."

With a single kick of her foot, Mordred's sword spins up into the air and into "Artoria's" hand.

Mordred growls- throwing her hand out- "CLARENT!!"

...But the sword doesn't move.

"Funny thing," The Handmaid says. "This weapon was crafted with a genetic lock rather than a mental lock. This body is your relative, and so the genetics match." A flick of the wrist, a twist of the handle and the blade glows a void-hued BLACK.

You don't need a vibe to yell- "HIT THE DECK!"

"CLARENT VOID!"The Handmaid swings, and a burst of pure black energy rushes out, slicing through everything in its path and making them vanish from sight entirely.

Thankfully, Mitchel and Mordred did what you yelled and ducked.

"Funnily enough," The Handmaid says, "It doesn't matter who I possess as long as I have this weapon. I truely couldn't care less as long as I have what I came for. And now I have it." And then with another twist of the blade, "CLARENT-" Crimson Light flashes and suddenly she vanishes.

Also.

The sky has gone from mid-day to twilight in the blink of an eye.

"...What?" You ask. "What just happened?"

"She must have frozen us in time," Jude grumbles as he helps you to your feet.
The Jaffa all come out of the woodwork, and before any conversation can happen, your radio buzzes.

"SG-1, this is SGC. You're two hours overdue for check in. Please respond?"

"Yeah," Mitchel takes to his radio even as Mordred gets to her feet. "We're here. Just... lost track of time."

"That wasn't good," Jake says as he and Jane emerge from hiding.

"No," you agree. "It wasn't. Whatever Hunt needed Mordred for... I don't think it was for her exactly. Just her blood and that sword."

"And now we've got the fucking Handmaid holding a sword shaped key," Jude says. "Why is it always some uber-powerful macguffin like this? Why couldn't it just be because someone wanted fish-sticks for dinner for once?"

"Agreed," Jane says. "I happen to think fishsticks are a particularly pleasant meal all around. Why couldn't it be about that? I could resolve that by making some easy as pie."

Your name is Jack O'neill, General of the SGC, and probably Hammond's replacement at Homeworld Security.

...You lost King Arthur, and got his traitorous son Mordred instead.

Not only that, but the sword EXCALIBER got itself wedged firmly into a wall. Made of stone blocks. Nobody who tried had managed to pull it loose, and so the stone block had been removed from the wall, and had been transported to the SGC for study and "recovery."

Fucking Hell. Why is it never easy around here?

You don't envy Hammond, not one bit.

What a way to start the new year.

Chapter End Notes

**THIS WEEK'S REMAINING CHAPTERS:**

Wednesday: A short Intermission/breather.
Thursday: SGA: "Aurora."
Friday: SG1/MINISODE: "Prototype"
MONDAY: SG1: "The Four Horsemen Combined"

Reader Question: I should probably tag in the Fate franchise at this point. Do you think I should add it or just leave it be to keep Tag Bloat from growing?

ALSO. Because it's April 1st technically still.... I present the following line out of context:

[SNIP]

"Alright," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you've always wanted to say this.
"Autobots, let's Transform and Roll Out!!"
INTERMISSION: A Child's Lament.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Your name is MORDRED and you feel so conflicted within your own heart and soul.

You don't even know where to begin with untangling ALL OF THIS.

You were used. Not even just because you were special but because someone needed to field test a magic sword- you GUESS.

Why did Hunt even really want you anyways? You don't know, you can't possibly know. Everything you thought you knew was almost certainly almost all a lie!

All you ever wanted was to challenge the SWORD OF SELECTION and try to become KING... But...

What motivations did you have in life that weren't manipulated by Hunt and his Andromeda Ascendents?

What motivations do you even have now that don't relate to his actions?

You....

You feel UN-MOORED.

You have a name that you have no real sense of connection to, and you are a SABER without a SWORD.

You might as well be nameless.

Some son of a king you turned out to be.

...What do you do?

You want to yell and scream and curse the heavens but...

...

...You don't have anyone to blame but yourself... But the question is...

WHO ARE YOU?

Your name is Damara Megido, and you do not take kindly to being called--

"You Blundering IDIOT!" This Jaffa guy, Gerak, paces the floor of the ship you Gated onto. "Lord Hunt will not be pleased when he finds out you grabbed the MOTHER instead of the Daughter! How such a mistake could be made is beyond me-GRK--!"
And then you hold Clarent's sword tip up to his throat.

"You understand nothing," you tell him, eyes narrowing. "Impudent Child. Silence your anger or I will silence it for you."

"Yo-You do not even believe!" Gerak growls over the point you're making. "Why do you even-"

You don't even bother using the sword as anything other than a sword.

Gerak's body erupts into blinding white light before his head even hits the ground, though, and it vanishes, but reforms into that of an Ascended being. (Oh. Good. Now he's even more vulnerable to the blade's edge.) Left writhing in the remains of his clothes is a screeching, crying snake thing.

You stab it with the sword, and the snake thing dies a pitiful death.


Yes, you answer. Those two seconds of blessed silence were an eternity to your mind.

And then there's another burst of light, and Hunt arrives.


Yes, yes. You have returned. That is you, Witch of Time Damara Megido. Better title than "Handmaiden" at any rate.

"Nicely done, collecting Mordred and her Sword," Hunt praises- not even noticing of your collection of the wrong blonde haired green eyed girl. "I approve of your efficiency."

Gerak starts to say something about that, but you disperse him with a sharp glare and a tilt of CLARENT'S EDGE. Hunt doesn't even bat an eyelid.

Good.

You smile, and take the praise.

You are so going to stab this guy the first chance you get.

Chapter End Notes

Whee. There's a short chapter.

NEXT CHAPTERS:
THURSDAY: SGA: "Aurora."
FRIDAY: SG1/MINISODE: "Prototype"
MONDAY: SG1: "The Four Horsemen Combined"
TUESDAY: SG1: "Ripple Effect"

RE: Yesterdays Reader Question: Gonna leave FATE/ off of the franchise list for the time being, it's not as firm of a crossover as it could be comparatively.
Today's Reader Question: Have you had moments of identity crisis where you wonder who you even are? You don't have to answer if you don't want to. But... I know I've had those moments. Modred's facing one of those moments now.
In which someone makes a mistake.

DIASPORA DATE: 07/20/0005.

"So... Chess," your name is Ronon Dex, and you stare across the food hall at a couple of different groups of people playing chess while eating their breakfast. "Is it really that fun of a game?"

"For some people it's all about the strategy, and the challenge, and the winning," Mikari says, poking a utensil thing around her plate at her own meal. "For others, just the act of playing with someone else is all that's needed."

"But why do so many people play it Here?" You ask, motioning out at the room with what you're told is called a 'spoon.' "Why not find somewhere else?"

"Time Management," Mikari answers. "It's easy to multi task eating and chess more than other activities, like talking and eating. That's usually not done so easily. Lots of uneaten food by the end."

"I suppose that makes sense," you pause to watch as a flighty looking lady in pink comes strolling into the room, teasing someone who could pass as her twin, or her daughter or mother or something weird like that, in purple about something. "So what's their deal?"

"Roxy and Rose?" Mikari muses. "That's a rather long story. How much time you have to hear it?"

You check the "WATCH" that Sheppard gave you to keep track of the time. You're still getting used to using this EARTH-BASED TIME SYSTEM given that the hours don't even match the planet's day/night cycle... Let's see, carry the five, subtract the two...

"I'm leaving," you state, getting up from the table.


"Thanks," you grunt, and head off to do who knows what who knows where.

There's a pause, then suddenly, Mikari is chasing after you with - "Wait! I'm supposed to be at that briefing too!"

O<--STARGATE: ATLANTIS-->O
Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you grin as you plaster a star chart onto a screen in the briefing room with a click of a mouse button.

"Alright, is everyone here now?" You ask, even as Ronon and Mikari enter the room. "Okay! Cool! AR-1, AR-2! Our mission today is this!" You point at the starmap. "We're going to catch ourselves the Aurora."

"Don't you mean 'An Aurora'?" Teyla asks.


"Battleship?" John sits to attention. "Okay. You've got my interest."

You and Carter then layout the basics. The Aurora was an Ancient Battleship on a RECON MISSION to find a WRAITH WEAKNESS and had gotten lost before the end of the war with the Wraith. Before Atlantis had jumped to space again. It was incredibly likely that with whatever knowledge was on that ship, Atlantis could have won the war.

"We've been toying with the subspace sensors ever since we fully powered the city," you continue on, "but we finally found something interesting. A Subspace Recall Beacon Receiver Array. Triggering it let us locate specific Ancient Ships that the recall beacons hadn't flagged themselves as destroyed yet. One of the first ones we were able to find is this beauty, the Aurora, far outside the edge of the Pegasus Galaxy, slowly puttering along at sublight on its way back to Atlantis. About 'A day's flight by Daedalus hyperdrive' outside the galaxy, actually. Opposite side of the galaxy from Milky Way and Altemia. Our Subspace trackers were able to pick it up thanks to the three ZPMs we're using. It would've been years before we'd detected it otherwise, or even with just one."

"So... what was it doing all the way out there?" Daraya asks.

"More importantly," Tyzias starts. "This signal that let us track it... Can the Wraith track it too?"

"Likely," Carter nods. "But it only just entered Atlantis' scanner range with three ZPMs. Given that the Wraith don't have access to that... Well. We're probably going to beat them to the punch of getting to it first even if they did detect it. The distance is the key thing here. We can reach it faster and they can't."

"I'll let Colonel Caldwell you'll be commandeering the Daedalus," Mikari says. "Let's see if we can find out this Wraith Weakness or not."

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**EARTH DATE: JANUARY 10TH, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 07/21/0005.**

With a burst of a hyperspace window, the BC-304 DAEDALUS emerged from Hyperspace, and began its approach towards the slowly moving AURORA.

"Well, that explains the slow trudge back to Atlantis," your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you frowned at the view out the window. "Looks like their Engines took some heavy damage." You turn to the scan results... "Not seeing any signs of actual battle damage, though. All the damage looks like it was an internal-external directed event."

"Hull breach, engineering section," Carter speaks up from another terminal. "Looks like the same
"Do you think they had a Hyperdrive accident?" You muse. "Tried to rush back to Atlantis and ended up going the wrong direction?"

"It's possible," Carter says, staring out the window. There's a pause, and then she speaks with Jolinar's voice.

"We do know a hyperspace jump, properly calibrated and with enough energy, can hurl a ship across vast distances of space within the blink of an eye. Improperly calibrated, though? The results could be disastrous."

"So," you muse. "Shall we take her in and see what we've got?"

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you look up as there's a knock at your door. Chuck stands there, a computer tablet in hand.

You nod to Argo, and they open the door to let him in from a button on their own desk.

"What is it, Chuck?" You ask.

"Text-based broadwave from Daedalus," he reports, handing you the tablet.

"Thanks," you nod, and peruse the data on it.

After restoring life support to the ship, and sealing off the breached hull, AR-1 had found that the Entire Crew of the AURORA had been put in suspended animation, and were presently locked into some kind of VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATION to keep their minds active. AR-2, keeping the Daedalus idling nearby and on the lookout for any incoming Wraith, were suggesting using a rarely used function of the Asgard shield systems to tow the derelict ship back to Atlantis through hyperspace.

You immediately hand the tablet back to Chuck and say, "Tell Daedalus they have permission to tow the Aurora back to Atlantis. And make it snappy before any Wraith show up to try and cause problems."

"Yes, Ma'am," Chuck nods, and turns to leave, pausing only to sidestep Colonel Caldwell, who looks none too pleased that you cut him out of this mission.

"You're TOWING an Ancient Ship back to Atlantis?" He asks.

"We will be, yes," you say. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"More that you've cut me out of this mission," He says. "The Daedalus is My Ship. I'm its commander. To have it commandeered like this is-

"Is entirely because I dislike your attitude, Colonel," you say. "Even when I asked you to check in on Doctor Mckay's failed experiment, you were combative until I mentioned the military applications for such a weapon." You lock eyes with him, and say, "Given that track record, I felt it prudent to have you stay behind lest you decide to order the entire destruction of a potentially valuable resource with My. People. Onboard."

"I wouldn't do that," Caldwell counters.
"I have my doubts about that," you say. "And those doubts are exactly why I pulled you from this mission."

"You're overstepping your bounds, Miss Aiikho," Caldwell growls.

"No, Colonel Caldwell," you counter, keeping your tone of voice level. "I'm perfectly within my rights to assign missions using the assets at my disposal as written into my contract. As was written into WEIR'S contract. Generals O'neill and Hammond, not to mention the IOA, have more faith in a civilian commander making the right decisions of asset use than a military commander like yourself. Especially one who has been clearly vying for power this entire time."

"I'm not vying for power," Caldwell starts. It sounds like a lie.

"Of course you're not," you say, a little bit of condescension leaking into your voice. "You just wanted to pick and choose every single member of this expedition with people of your choosing just like Colonel Sumner did."

That makes Caldwell flinch, and he growls out, "I. Am. NOT. An Agent of the Trust. And need I remind you that you let Bates of all people run security here!"

"You're mistaking me for Doctor Weir and Doctor Jackson, Colonel," you say. "And Bates was left to run security only after he'd proven his loyalty and helped bring all the other Trust Agents Sumner brought along on this expedition into the fold and working WITH US. Not Against Us."

"But-"

"But Nothing! Need I also remind you that during that time contact with Earth was cut off?" You ask, rhetorically. "They had to make do with what they could. The ONLY former Trust Agents who have returned to Atlantis after we restored contact are those who were coerced into working for them and have been cleared by a full military investigation and trial. And Bates would be one of them too if not for the fact that he chose to resign from the Military and return to his family after the injuries he sustained during the Siege."

Caldwell bristles. Then, he growls, "This isn't over, Miss Aiikho," and then storms out of your office, not even pausing as Jade Jackson tries to approach- forcing her to step back and let him blister on by.

You sigh, tiredly, as Jade finally enters the office, and asks, "...What was that about?"

"Caldwell being something of a stuck up military jerk, is what," Argo answers, massaging at the bridge of their nose.

"Politics, is more like it," You shake your head.

"...Um..." Jade starts. "Hrm..."

"What is it?" You ask.

"...Nothing," Jade turns to stare out the way Caldwell had stormed off. "I just swear I felt something off about him when he brushed by me, is all."

...Something off?

"Something off like what?" You ask.
"I'm... I'm not sure," Jade shakes her head. "It can't be what I think it is. Atleast... I don't think it can?"

Argo then asks, "What is you think it is?"

"It's..." Jade pauses. "I'm probably just hallucinating it since you're both in here and you both had Jolinar in you at one point or another, but I swear I felt like Caldwell had a Symbiote in him."

... "Oh Shit," you whisper. Then, you turn to Argo and Jade, "I need you to write a coded message to John. Now."

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**EARTH DATE: JANUARY 11TH, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 07/22/0005.**

Your name is John Sheppard, and you feel the Daedalus slow to normal, non hyperspace speeds as you wait in the ship's brig.

"Ready for this?" You ask Ronon.

He grunts an affirmative.

You radio, "Sheppard to Bridge, got a lock?"

"Yep," Keiko answers. "He's in his room working on reports."

"Good," you say. "Beam him chair to chair."

"Roger."

And then the room lights up with a white glow and a **PVVVVMMMM-SHING!**

And then Colonel Caldwell is sitting in the chair on the other side of the table from you.

He stands immediately- "What is the meaning of this!?"

"Security check, sir," you answer. "We found some suspiciously modified entries in the Captain's logs and security tapes made with your command codes. We just need to ask what was there and why the changes were made."

Caldwell's anger simmers for a moment, and then it fades quickly. And he starts to laugh, and as he laughs, **his voice starts to Echo.**

"**What gave me away?**" He asks, looking at you as his eyes FLASH.

Ronon draws his gun immediately, you just decaptcha a ZAT.

"**It was the Jackson girl, wasn't it?**' Caldwell' continues without prompting. "**I got too close to her proximity sense and she identified me.**"

"Something like that," you answer. "So. Who are we speaking to here exactly? The snake that was in Kinsey or someone else?"
"Someone else, for sure..." 'Caldwell' casually sits back down into the chair with a sort of casual flippance that seems familiar somehow. "Oh, and here I thought that O'neill's clone would be the one to confront me. I have so missed our casual conversations."

"Sorry to disappoint," you say. "But I still don't have a name beyond the fact that you're not the snake that got loose when we captured Kinsey. So. I suppose I have to ask how many of you infiltrated the Daedalus crew?"

"Just the one," 'Caldwell' answers in what's probably a lie. "Me. Ba'al."

You fucking Zat him before he says anything else because HOLY FUCKING SHIT.

"Ba'ål?" Your name is Jimmyy O'neill, and within the privacy of your own room, you say, "Carter, I need to borrow a hand here." You grab her hand and place it on the side of your head, and then plant both of your hands against your forehead for a marvelous 3X FACEPALM COMBO as you exclaim, "DOH!"

"Yes, I'm fairly concerned about this too," Lantash speaks next, removing Carter's hand with a faint smile. "How long was he possessing the Colonel for?"

"As far as we can tell?" Carter sighs, "Since the first return trip to Earth, sometime during those two months, if not before hand."

"So, let's just assume for a moment here that Kinsey's snake went and jacked someone on the Daedalus, then went and got Caldwell jacked with a Ba'ål clone or something like that!" you say. "So, Where the hell is Kinsey's Snake NOW?"

"We're searching the Daedalus crew, past and present, for signs of possession, but there's no telling where it could have gone," Jolinar answers. 

Fucking hell.

Ba'ål, within Caldwell, sits cozy and comfy on an Atlantis Infirmary bed despite being restrained to it with some heavy duty metal shackles that Roxy Lalonde conjured from the void.

Your name is Lantash, and you feel unsettled as your Host/Partner stands across from his apparent rival.

"This is payback for the plant thing, isn't it?" Jimmyy asks. "I didn't even send you that fucking plant and you still came all this way to pay me back for it."

"Oh, no," Ba'ål says. "Nothing like that. This is a plain and simple power play. My chance to take over a whole other Galaxy and rule it like the Self-given God's Gift that I am."

"Oh shut up," Jimmyy counters. "We both know you don't buy into that crap and it's not fooling me any."

"A guy can try, can't he?" Ba'ål asks, smirking in a way that doesn't fit Caldwell's demeanor at all.

"So what," Jimmyy asks, "the whole 'Rawr, I'm the big mean colonel trying to make people hate me' thing was what? Some kind of psychological trick?"
"To have a reason to avoid those who could detect me, yes," Ba'al answers. "Do you KNOW how frustrating it was to keep being so aggressive? I was seriously reconsidering changing tactics just because I was getting so tired of acting like that. It's SUCH a headache, you know."

"I can only imagine," Jimyyy says.

[This is getting us nowhere.] you say.

'Not yet, no...' 

"Look, Ba'al. Buddy! Amigo!" Jimyyy starts. "You gotta tell me. What exactly was your game plan here? Because it honestly doesn't make any sense."

"A Gloat, hm?" Ba'al considers it. "Mmmh... No. I don't think I will."

"Ba'al. C'mon. I know you guys love a good gloat," Jimyyy starts.

"From when I'm winning? Sure, but I'm not exactly on the Throne of Thrones, here, now am I, O'Neill?" Ba'al asks, briefly struggling against his wrist-bindings.

[May I?] you ask, and Jimyyy lets you take over.

...You suppress the voice echo because you want to try tricking him.

"So..." you start. "If you're not going to, may I take a wild guess?"

"Oh, sure," Ba'al says. "Go right ahead and try."

"Let's see. You're running the Trust now, so this is a Trust operation using Trust Resources," you start. "And this means you are... trying to take advantage of Atlantis as a means of exploiting this Galaxy, right? But you have to play nice because of the Wraith. Am I warm?"

Ba'al blinks. "Hm. Lantish, I presume? Or, no, wait. LanTASH. That's it."

Damn it.

"Ah, I see," he smiles. "Yes, little Tok'ra. You're fairly warm. Though, to be honest I don't really need much but the Daedalus. That little Hyperbeam cannon of yours is quite overpowered. I've been itching for a chance to go out hunting Wraith and blowing their ships up with it."

Jimyyy has a one liner, so you let him speak. "Well, sorry, Ba'al. But you're not going to get that chance."

"I know," he answers. "And honestly, while I'm sad I'm never going to do it with this instance of me... Well. There's always another me just waiting to bounce into frame." he smirks.

"...Was that a Ball pun?" You ask.

"Why yes, yes it was."

‘God, Fucking. Damn it. I really hate this guy.’
Later that night, a successful Asgard Beaming Operation was performed to remove the Symbiote from Colonel Caldwell’s head.

Steven Caldwell was not amused at the wreck to his reputation that the conniving Goa’uld had caused to him both here at Altantis and back on Earth as well, and he relished in ripping the fucking snake in half with his bare hands.

Not too much longer after that, a SECURE COMMUNIQUE saved to the AURORA’S DATABASE would unveil a surprising genetic flaw within the Wraith GENETIC CODE that also applied to their SHIPS as well as to their people.

Doctor Beckett began working double time in an attempt to find a way to exploit it.

Chapter End Notes

Reader Question: To those of you who have seen Atlantis: You didn't think I'd actually play this twist to canon, did you? :P
Alternatively, and to those who haven't seen Atlantis: Do you play Chess? If so, do you prefer to play in person, or online?

NEXT CHAPTERS:
FRIDAY: SG1/MINISODE: "Prototype"
MONDAY: SG1: "The Four Horsemen Combined"
TUESDAY: SG1: "Ripple Effect"
WEDNESDAY: Intermission: Tee-Time.

DIASPORA DATE: 07/21/0005.

On a PLANET DESIGNATED P3X-584, The Stargate activated, and SG-1 and SG-5 step through the Gate after several attempts at reaching the planet- an oddity of a planet featuring a gravitational disturbance the Tok'ra had detected at long range.

Fearing the Mofang Mech was doing some shady things, SG-1 had been sent to investigate.

The Gate itself had "call forwarded" them several times, which forced Jude Harley to figure out the cause.

Said cause was attached to the DHD- a CALL FORWARDING DEVICE- which Jude quickly removed.

Soon, Jonas finds a ring transporter, and SG-1 finds themselves in an ANCIENT LAB, home to a DNA RE-SEQUENCER and a man frozen in an Ancient STASIS POD.

Cassandra took one look at the man, thawed him, drew her handgun, and shot the bastard in the head and heart before he even fell to the ground.

"What the hell was THAT for!?' Cameron Mitchel asked.

"Unless you WANTED another Anubis wandering around the Galaxy, I think you'd agree that shooting him was the right idea!" Cassandra counters.

Sure enough, a check through the nearby computer logs reveals that the man in the stasis pod had been a clone of himself that Anubis had made, and the call forwarding device was a means of protecting the planet from people TOO CURIOUS FOR THEIR OWN GOOD.

Needless to say, the body was quickly thrown through the opening stargate's Kawoosh just to ensure that the bastard didn't miraculously heal himself and come back to life. Again.

The Re-sequencer was being packed up and sent to ATLANTIS to help with the WRAITH GENETICS RESEARCH.

Chapter End Notes

Short chapter. But really, what's there to be said when you can just end it right then and there? Nobody wants to deal with Anubis again, least of all me. Besides, you're getting a huge feast of story content next week anyways. Have some breather before we take the plunge next Monday.

Speaking of, NEXT WEEK'S EPISODES, which I'm jokingly calling, right here and
now making it up on the spot, the "Explosive Tank in a Glass House" arc.

MONDAY: SG1: "The Four Horsemen Combined"
TUESDAY: SG1: "Ripple Effect"
WEDNESDAY: Intermission: Tee-Time.
THURSDAY: SG1: "Collateral Damage"

Friday's episode still yet to be determined, and Thursday's is only just being written, so...

uh. Anyways. Yeah. How about that, it's Reader Question Time!

Do you guys like having a list of more than one future chapter posted ahead of time, or do you prefer being a bit surprised by it?
"Bang!"

2 Part episode in one chapter because I didn't want to break up the flow of the sequence of events too badly. Make sure to take a biobreak at the commercial break. Get water and such if you need it!!
"Probably!!" Cassandra agrees.

You arrive in the control room just as a broadwave gets put on screen.

Standing before you on screen is the possessed form of Artoria Pendragon, eyes a startling crimson and face looking slightly paler than usual, as well as the Ascended being Dylan Hunt.

Hunt says nothing, but he has the Handmaid speak for him through Artoria.

"That witch stole my armor too!" Mordred yells out. "I thought that was bound to my soul, not the sword!!"

"And so we challenge you!" The Handmaid declares. "Earth, send us your mightiest warrior-machines! We will challenge our mights on the honorable battlefield, lest Hell's fire and brimstone descend upon your world!"

"Well, like hell we're going to let her get away with that," Mitchel says.

"No, we won't," O'neill says, moving to pick up a phone. "This is General O'neill, put me through to the 304 Construction field manager ASAP."

Your name is Tegiri Kalbur, and you massage at your forehead for the headache brewing within it.

So many repairs to be done so quickly on both ships and damn it all you feel like there was a ticking clock counting down you weren't aware of.

You just...

You want it to end. The constant stress. The Astro was going to be DONE but then... THIS. This whole act of sabotage with the Delta. Just getting that fixed was "EASY" enough- just a single console and displaced wire. And yet...

There's no time left to test everything and make sure it's all working right.

A fleet of Ha'taks and the four Mofang Mecha Ships are hovering out at the edge of the solar system.

Waiting.

Challenging.

All Threatening.

And that bastard, Hunt, announced his presence to Earth by having the possessed Artoria issuing some broadwave to preach some nonsense of the battle to come...

To be honest, you tuned it out. You had better things to do than listen to this guy's philosophy proclaim that he would challenge Earth's mightiest, and if he won or lost, blah blah blah, impossible promises. The bits you heard made you sick. And apparently you weren't the only one.

Out of all people, it ended up being Ba'al who issued the first retort using his fucking average-human-businessman persona.

You didn't pay attention to THAT either. Oh, sure, they were inspiring words to some people, but they're coming from a fucking Goa'uld System Lord being a hypocrite. Also, you're pretty sure he ripped them out of one of Troll!Fate/Zero's Kiritsugu Emiya's speaches.
War's a hellish environment. Yeah. Sure it is. There's no doubt about that. But...

"Hey, Kalbur," your co-pilot knocks you on the shoulder with her hand. "Stop over thinking it and just get ready."

"Right," you nod, and get ready in position. "Astro Megaship, online, and taking off."

You just hope that all the structural fixes to the front nose/foot are properly in place. You're still missing the stupid fins. They'd arrived, finally, but there wasn't any time to put them on.

At least the fucking laser canons are working agian.

It's time to hack some Mofang to pieces.

Your name is Ashler Dering, and you're focusing your mind on keeping things steady with your co-pilot/moirail to make sure this fight goes smoothly.

The Astro comes up to orbit next to the Delta, and you continue together to head towards the edge of the solar system.

Delta's pilots open up communication, and surprise surprise, you've got Cameron Mitchel of SG-1. That was sarcastic. The "surprise surprise" part. What's actually a real surprise is his co pilot- Mordred, the girl who you had to scrape off the Delta by blasting her off.

"Oh what the hell are you doing here?" Tegiri asks.

"Oh Relax, would ya!?" Mordred glares at him. "I just want what's mine back and there's nothing wrong with that!"

"Easy now," Mitchel intercedes. "Cassie and Jude think we can use her to get onboard the Mofang Megazord. If it was really meant for her to begin with, we can wrestle control away from Artoria and Hunt and stop this fight before it escalates too badly."

"So what's the plan?" you ask. "We go over and play distraction while you guys get onboard and do what you can to beat them?"

"That's about it, yeah," Mitchel nods. "Though I'm staying here. Mordred's going with the Rest of SG-1."

"That's Fine by me," you say. "But who else is piloting Delta when you're on your own, Mitchel?"

"That'd be me!" From off screen, leaning in is a human version of Joey, looking a bit determined, and a lot more long haired.

"Harley?" Tegiri asks. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

"My Cassandra said I needed to be here so I'm going to be here," she answers. "She's starting to be able to tell where bad events are flowing again, so..."

"Funny," you remark. "Ours loses the ability to sense when things are going wrong here, and yours gets her mojo back? The universe has a fucking weird sense of humor, that's for sure."

"We Know!" The resonant tones of two Cassandra Fraisers retorts from off screen.
"Right then," Tegiri shakes his head. "Let's just make sure this fucking works, right?"

Your name is Mordred. And your hands twitch for a sword hilt that isn't there.

Why didn't you try to challenge Excaliber before you left? Damn it. That's something you've wanted for so long. Challenge the Sword of Selection. But no. You've been too much of a coward to even try just yet.

Damn it. You feel so useless.

But...

But....

"Hey, Mordred," Quinn says, approaching. "I've got something for you to see, before we arrive."

"May I?" You ask, looking to Mitchel.

"Yeah," he nods.

And so you follow Quinn to a small storage room where...

"You brought Excaliber up here?" You can't believe it. "Why??"

"Just a hunch," Quinn says, staring at the blade. "Even if you can't use it, that doesn't mean Artoria can't if we can free her."

You frown. "...Okay. Fine. Fair enough." You say, and...

You stall.

"What if it doesn't like me?" you ask.

"It's a sword," Quinn says. "A Magi-tech sword, sure. But it's still just a sword... and even if it doesn't like you and is sentient enough to know that, I'm sure it's also sentient enough to know you're going to help get its true master back."

"...Okay," you shake your head. "Fine. Alright. Here goes nothing, right?"

You step up to the blade, and think about your life, afterlife, and after afterlife.

Are you even worthy of this?

You wrap your hands around the hilt.

Damn it, there's only one way to even find out.

You tug at the blade.
And then Excaliber, the annoying little prick, actually dares to SHOCK YOU into letting go.

"OW!" you step back from it.

"..." Quinn stares, and then says. "I guess it really doesn't like you afterall. That's the strongest rejection we've seen yet."

"Yeah, well," you flex your hands. "Fucking Excaliber. Why is it even 'ExcaliBER' anyways? The original sword was Caliburn so it should be ExcaliBUR..."

"Well, atleast we tried," Quinn sighs.

"Yeah, well... I guess I'm just not worthy of being King afterall," you say, frowning.

...You didn't think it'd hurt this much. Actually, physically hurt. Ow. Emotionally? Yeah, that stings too but. Seriously, Sword? Did it HAVE to shock you??

"Sorry about that, Mordred," Quinn starts.

"Don't," you say, closing your eyes. "Don't call me Mordred. Clearly... clearly if I'm to be any better, I can't wear the name of a traitor. And I'm... I'm not a Saber without a Sword."

"So...?" He asks. "What do I call you then?"

So...

Well. You're going to have to ride this wave of insanity through to its end anyways, right? So...

You look him in the eyes, and declare, "Call me Rider instead."

"The terms are simple," Hunt broadcasts locally once you arrive. "Round one will be ship to ship combat. Defeat, Cripple, or otherwise defeat the Ha'taks. Round two, should you manage that, will be a duel against our combined Clarent Victory."

And with that, he cut off the message, and the Ha'taks begin to move in. A quick scan confirmed that they were all un-piloted, or at least, if they were manned by any crew, they were Ascended and would probably survive their ships blowing up on them.

"Alright," your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you've always wanted to say this. "Autobots, let's Transform and Roll Out!!"

And so the battle begins.

Astro and Delta transform and immeditaely begin blasting and hacking away at the Ha'taks that come after them.

It doesn't take long though for it to become obvious that the Ha'tak's shields have been modified somehow to withstand sword strikes.

"It had to happen eventually," Tegiri growled, and then called out- "'MEGA-PLA SHOTGUN! DEPLOY!!'"
Astro redeployed its shield to tank hits with its left arm while its right arm straightened out and shifted back into hangar bay mode briefly, the port on the top of the arm opening out and jettisoning two small MEGA-PLA ships that spun out of range as the arm shifted back to arm mode and dismissed the sword.

Instead of combining into a single smaller robot, the two blue hued halves of the Mega-Pla Shotgun snapped together in the opposite configuration, becoming, well, a small shotgun.

Very small. Too small, almost, as a matter of fact.

And then with a flash of blue-hued light, it grew in size to become a proper shotgun sized for the Astro Megazord.

Hunt's eyes widened. "What?"

Damara chuckled. "Guess they stole a couple of ideas from someone, didn't they?"

With a pump of the action lever on her own replica shotgun within one of the control bridges of the Mega-PLA, Ardata Carmia smirked.

"Boom time," she says, synchronizing the action of taking aim with Tegiri and Ashler on the Astro Megazord, and her own fellow Co-Pilot within a different section of the Mega-PLA.

"FIRE!" Four voices yelled out, and the dual barrels of the laser-shotgun let loose a barrage of green light that smashed into the various Ha'taks and shattered their shields- and then blowing the things up entirely with entirely more efficiency than the Delta Megazord's gattling guns were managing.

CHACK- **BLAM!**

CHACK- **BLAM!**

CHACK- **BLAM!**

CHACK- **BLAM!**

Within moments, the various Ha'taks had been destroyed. Sure enough, little flits of glowing light dove away from the exploded ships back to the remaining Mofang Mecha ships.

And then without so much of a how-do-you-do or a congratulations, the four ships came charging together and began their transformation sequence into a single cohesive whole.

The Clarent Victory was forming.

"Lock Onto Target and Transport... NOW!" Mitchel yells out, and **PVVVM-SHING!** Away SG-1 Minus Mitchel Plus One Tagalong went to the Mofang Mecha as its head materialized.

You are now Jude Harley, and your team materialized within the core of one of the Mofang ships.

The goal was to transport over during the transformation sequence into the chest of the thing- hoping and praying that you'd stumble onto the bridge.
Well, you got transported over, but you're nowhere near the bridge.

If you remember your Mofang Ship Schematics right....

"Cassie," you say, hedgering your bets. "Which way will get us into absolutely no trouble at all?"

Your darling wife blinks, and then starts to grin.

She points exactly the way you were expecting. "That way."

And so you lead the team through the hallways...

Mordred- No. Rather, RIDER, as she wants to be called now- keeps to the front for the most part, ready to brawl at a moments notice.

Not that there seems to be any actual crew on this ship. It all seems vestigial now, somehow.

The mecha rocks from movement, but nothing from direct impact.

If they're being smart, then they're staying uncombined, and Astro and Delta are battling separately.

"FUCKING! STUPID! SHIELDS!" your name Is Joey Harley and you wonder just what the hell Cassandra was thinking telling you to get on a fucking SPACESHIP of all things and fight another giant robot!?

Oh, sure, there's all sorts of hypotheticals you can think of given the report from the S-302 that went to earth- Giant Robots and such are probably a thing you might have to deal with- but still- THIS?

THIS???

How the hell did they make particle barrier shields that can tank the Delta's Laser Blasts so quickly- or the Astro's newly minted shotgun for that matter?

That thing had an effectiveness period of three minutes fourteen seconds and that was it.

So you reiterate.

"FUCKING!!! STUPID!!! SHIELDS!!!"

You seriously doubt any robots VENJIX could come up with are going to be THIS hard to beat. Seriously.

If you weren't supposed to be playing DISTRACTION, this would probably be a lot more frustrating than it was.

"We're going to have to bring it together," Tegiri radios. "Begin Astro-Delta Combination Sequence!"

"Roger That!" Your co-pilot says, and...

URGH.
And then your fuzzy mind link with one person expands with two more.

This. Is. So. Fucking. Weird.

How did the other yous involved with space-mecha ever put up with this!?
Your name is Jonas Quinn, and you stop to look out a window to watch as the Astro-Delta Megazord gets formed.

"We're running low on time!" You advise. "Let's pick up the pace!"

And so your group hurries on down hallways of "No Danger Whatsoever" vibes. You're glad Jude thought of it. Being able to track where the person who your SEER CAN'T SEE by way of tracing the areas filled with A VOID OF DOOM.

Rushing along, you soon find yourselves approaching the bridge entrance.

The door was left open. What a stupid move.

On Jude's signal, you prepare your Zats and peer into the room.

Standing in the center of it all, on a large glowing circular raised platform, is Artoria, possessed by the Handmaid, swinging the sword Clarent around with a savage glee filled grin on her face- atleast, that's how her reflection looks.

Standing- well, actually, more floating nearby is the glowing form of Dylan Hunt, arms behind his back and staring out the window as attack after attack smashes down against the Astro-Delta Megazord's shield.

Cassandra nods, and the four of you barge into the room, Zats drawn.

"EVERYBODY STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING!" You order. "STAND DOWN! NOW!!"

The Handmaid freezes, muttering, "Check."

Hunt laughs, and says, "You will not. Destroy their Megazord."

"If you even dare," Cassandra starts, "you're going to hurt really bad over this! I can promise you that much!"

"You, Seer?" Hunt laughs. "You cannot even sense Damara. I have seen it. Your bluff means nothing."

"Who says I was talking to her?" Cassandra asks.

"What do you mean?" Hunt asks. "I am Ascended. I cannot be defeated by you. Your weapons are useless to me. But I, on the other hand, can very easily hurt you."

"Not If I get My Sword Back!" Rider yells, and Hunt stops- takes a look at her, and-

"Wait. Mordred? But then-?" He turns towards Artoria/The Handmaid and-

"You really didn't realize?" She asks.

Hunt's eyes widened then as the Handmaid suddenly disconnects something from Clarent and swings the blade at him-
"CLARENT HEART!!!" she yells, and a beam of purple-pink lightning strikes out and smashes into Hunt.

He yells out in pain, and with a flash of light, finds himself mortal once again (and naked), writhing and yelling on the floor.

"...Told ya," Cassandra muses before turning towards-

"CLARENT SPACE!!!" The Handmaid swings the sword again, this time aimed at you all.

SPARK-ZAP!

There's a flash of green, and suddenly you're all back onboard the Delta Mega's bridge, Mitchel and Harley stare at you with confusion.

"...What just happened?" Mitchel asks at the same time Harley asks, "How did you guys get teleported back??"

"That bitch teleported us!" Rider growls.

And then 'that bitch' opens a quick broadwave.

"Yes," The Handmaid grins. "I did teleport you over to your ship. Just like I'm about to teleport you ALL to a place very far away." Then, the broadwave ends, and through the viewscreen to the outside world, you watch as the Clarent Victory's laser sword takes on a green tint instead of its previous red one, and then there's another disorienting-

SPARK-ZAP!

-Flash of green light, and the stars have changed around you. Not only that, but you're now within the frozen dust and asteroid rings of a planet that was not there moments ago. The Clarent Victory lays slumped forwards in space before you, as if a puppet with strings cut.

"Oh shit," Cassandra breathes out. "We're fucked."

You're very much inclined to agree.

O<---STARGATE SG-1--->O

"What do you mean. 'They Vanished From Radar'?! Your name is Jack O'neill and you're pretty frustrated by the fact that two of your spaceship-megazords just VANISHED during their fight with another mecha.

"There was a burst of Zillyum energy, and both Megazords vanished," Sam tells you. "We have no idea if they were teleported to another dimension or just elsewhere in ours. But if I had to hedge any bets..."

"I don't want to hear it," you answer. "I just want to figure out where they went to, if they went to another dimension or not. Find a way to reverse it."
"Right," Sam nods. "As for the Odyssey, we've got it rushing to launch just to be on the safe side."

"Good," you massage at your forehead. Why did this have to happen now??

No. A more important question is...

Where the hell are they?

---

**EARTH DATE: ???.**

Your name is Ashler Dering, and you're trying to stay positive, keeping all eight irises of your two eyes focused entirely on that Mofang Mecha.

It's disabled for the moment, but the Astro-Delta is remaining combined just to be on the safe side while Cassandra and Jude try to figure out where the hell you ended up.

Sure, you're somewhere weird and new, but that's fine. That's cool. You've all been through weirder.

"Well," Cassandra reports finally, transmitting from the Delta. "We're in Milky Way, that's for sure, but the stars are off."

"Off how?" Tegiri asks.

"I think there might have been some temporal displacement along with the teleport," Cassandra answers. "If I'm right we got jettisoned about three or four years into the future."

"Lovely," you say. "How do we go back?"

"I think we *Might* need Clarent to be able to do it right," Cassandra says. "But I'm not able to get a transport lock onto the bridge for some reason. Or anywhere else on the ship for that matter. I think-"

A buzzer alarm sounds- and the Mofang Mecha starts to move.

"Put a pin on that thought!" You interject. "Fight's about to resume!"

"Incoming broadwave!" a tech reports, and onscreen comes the angry face of that Hunt guy.

Heh. He's naked, and rather annoyed by that.

"What have you DONE?" he demands.

"We didn't do anything," Rider/Mordred/whateverhernameis interjects. "Your Witch backstabbed you and shunted all of us to who knows where!"

"Mordred," Hunt narrows his eyes. "I should have realized you weren't there. That is a failing I will HAVE to Rectify."

And with that, the enemy Mecha draws its laser sword and ignites the beam. Curiously, you notice, Hunt doesn't HAVE a sword in hand as he makes the motion. Looks like the Clarent sword macguffin thing didn't get teleported with you. So much for THAT idea. Dead before it could even be fully formed.
You and Tegiri tense up, and through the link on the other ship's bridge, you can feel Mitchel and Harley doing the same.

"I will destroy you both, and return to Earth to finish what I started," Hunt declares, and begins to approach.

Another alarm sounds then- "Incoming Vessel! Ori Ring Cruiser Design!" -and out of Hyperspace emerges a familiar ring shaped ship, except painted grey instead of green.

"Oh COME ON!" Tegiri exclaims. "EVASIVE MANEUVERS!"

You immediately begin dodging as the ORI CLASS SHIP begins launching laser beams at the both of you.

"WHAT INSOLENCE!" Hunt's communication ends, and his Mecha begins tanking the blasts, and charging the Ori Vessel.

You're amazed by how many hits the shield can take, given the sheer amount of energy that Ori Ship is putting into trying to destroy him.

The Clarent Victory manages to get in close, and with a devastating swing of its sword, destroys the Ori Vessel.

As it explodes, and that Mech turns to face your retreating form, two more Ori vessels drop out of Hyperspace and begin opening fire on it.

"Behind the nearest moon!" You order.

"Right!" Mitchel agrees. "If we hide there while he takes them out we should be good to hide."

You keep an eye on the fight as you traverse into the ice ring and head for one of the MOONS hidden within it.

By the time you reach that moon, decombine, and power down the Megaships engines to nothing but basic life support, Hunt manages to destroy one of the Ori Ships, and then tanks another couple of blasts before decimating the other one.

And then the machine acts as if its roaring in rage as if he realizes that you've managed to shake him.

He's got more problems, though, because another fleet of five Ori Ships emerge from Hyperspace and start blasting away at him.

"What the hell?" You swear. "I didn't know English had that many ships?"

"I don't think they ARE English's," Tegiri mutters. "Wrong color. Too many of them too. I think those are straight up run by the Ori."

"What?" You ask. "But didn't English eat them all or something?"

"In our dimension, sure," Tegiri blinks. "But I don't think we're IN our dimension. Not anymore."

Oh.

"Well, Fuck," you blink as you watch the Mofang Mecha decimate all five Ori vessels with a round-house, full 360 Degree swing.
Your name is Jude Harley, and you're pacing as the news soaks in.

This is a timeline where English never ate the Ori.

Those ships are an invasion fleet that was already defeated in your world twice over...

And they're hungry, chasing after the unique energy of the Mofang Mecha's power core. They keep coming, and blasting, and attacking. Hunting Hunt and hounding him endlessly.

The Ori- for whatever reason in this dimension- are desperate to gain an advantage.

Maybe they're after whatever dimensional energy transported you here. In which case, smooth move, Handmaid. Dispersing you in a dimension that's going to hunt you down to figure out a way to spread to other worlds.

"Do you think we can chart a course for Earth?" Mitchel asks.

"Not a good idea," Cassie interjects. "If they're tracking us by way of being dimensionally different, we'll just lead them to home, if there's even still a home left at this point in this world line. What we'll need to do is find a Stargate, and check in that way."

"Do you think that we could actually get home that way?" Jonas asks. "That another Earth can help us find a way back?"

"It's a risk we'll have to take," Cassie says. "My vibes are all screwed up right now. I can't figure out much of anything."

"I think whatever we have to do?" Rider ventures, "We have to do it soon. Because sooner or later, Hunt is going to run out of luck, and those Ori creeps are going to beat him."

"...What about Excaliber?" Jonas asks. "If Clarent could send us here, maybe Excaliber could send us back?"

"We'd still have to draw the sword from the stone and it clearly doesn't like me, at any rate," Rider says. "But," she sighs. "You're right. It's probably our best bet towards getting home. What other options do we have?"

"I might be able to reconfigure Astro and Delta's hyperdrives to be able to breach dimensional walls," you say. "But there's every chance we'd get stuck in a rebound loop like Elwurd's experiment and get torn to shreds across time and space. If we really wanted to make it work, we'd have to..." you stare blankly ahead. "...I actually have no idea what we'd have to do. Modify a Supergate maybe? But there's still no way of knowing if we hit our home dimension or not."

"We have the crew try pulling the sword," Mitchel decides. "If we luck out, Excaliber can get us to another dimension, even if it's not ours, and hopefully it'll be one where we're not being hounded by people who should be dead."

"And in the mean time?" Rider asks.

"In the mean time, we get ready to fight," Joey speaks up. "If it comes down to it, we might have to actually destroy Hunt and the Clarent Victory ourselves to be able to win and go home."

"At the very least," you say, suddenly thinking of something. "If we can find an Earth with a
Quantum Mirror, we can find out way back easily enough and figure out a way back to our time and worldline, if we have time traveled, and this dimension simply isn't a few years ahead of ours somehow."

You're Tegiri Kalbur, and you just tried and failed to pull a sword from a stone.

Oh well.

It's not like your name has anything to do with the sword's name anyways. That'd just be way too self-insert-meta-referential and the universe clearly doesn't want that happening any.

You return to the Astro Mega's bridge just in time to hear alarms going off.

"What now?" You ask.

"Hunt's starting to blow up moons searching for us," Ashler reports. "No new Ori ships have come in after him so far, so I guess he thinks its safe to look for us."

"Well, I guess we'd better start our counter attack," you grimace.

Never a dull moment.

Your headache has started to resurface. Damn it,

Astro and Delta power on and take off, accelerating towards the Mofang Mecha.

You have the laser canons lock on and start firing...

Except they fucking JAM, beause something got knocked loose during the detransformation earlier. (Of Course It Did.)

"Fine, Transform!" You order.

Astro and Delta transform and start flanking the Clarent Victory- it throws the laser sword to the other hand and summons another laser rifle.

Fucking Hell, of course they had another one...

And then the fucking laser sword turns into a smaller laser handgun, because WHY NOT.

Dodge, dodge, dodge, dodge...

Fuck it!

"BRING IT TOGETHER!" you yell out.

Your name is Cameron Mitchel, annnnd... you're the last one to try, and you just KNOW it. This stupid sword is going to come loose like every other sword you've pulled from a stone. Because FATE or whatever.

You halfheartedly grab the handle and just tug at it.

You're back to being Ashler Dering, and fuck it all, even combined, the Astro-Delta's absorbative armor isn't doing so well at absorbing the hits and turning them into power.
What the hell did the Mofang make those laser weapons out of!? Seriously!! You're getting so much damage to the hull and-

Fuck, what now!? The bastard's combining the laser guns together and just made them into some fucking huge gattling gun.

And then the thing revs up...

Ah, fuck it. It's pitiful and not going to hold but you raise the Astro's hand shield and prepare to tank this think like a pro.

You run, run run run run run run fucking RUN to the Delta Bridge, glowing sword Excaliber in hand.

The Clarent's Gatling gun fires off.

>S TANK!

The rapid fire burst of explosions strike the Astro-Delta and throw up a massive smoke cloud of crimson energy.

[0:04]

And then Hunt does a double take as a golden aura spikes out through the cloud, dispersing it, and leaving a golden glowing Astro-Delta Megazord standing from a kneeling position.

The golden glow around the whole Mech then recedes and condenses around the sword in its hand, and in the process, reveals all damage done to it, undone. Hell, even the red fins on the Astro's Hips had been replaced.

"But How?" Hunt stares.

On the deck of the Delta Mega's bridge, Cameron Mitchel smirks as he stands in position with the sword EXCALIBER in hand- synching it with the ship with a fancy twirl that Tegiri replicates on the Astro's bridge.

"I think it's time we blow this scene," Tegiri quotes. "Get everybody and the stuff together... Okay, Three, Two, One, Let's Jam!"

[0:25]

And then the Astro-Delta leaps at the Clarent Victory, smashing the blade down with a devastating cut that Hunt has to sacrifice his Gatling gun for to dodge. (The Gattling Gun Explodes.)

The Victory draws its second laser sword, and ignites it to counter attack.

Over the next few moments, the two mechas clash glowing blades of crimson and gold, trying their best to win an edge over the other in the ensuing brawl. But it's not enough just yet.

[0:39]
They're forced to break off the mutual attacks as a piece of space rock drifts past them, and then they play a quick game of hop-scotch across the nearby asteroids and rocks of the ring to come back around and attack each other again.

[0:45]

Blades clash, and clash, and clash, each strike sending shock waves that causes nearby rocks to explode or otherwise dramatically get knocked off course by other exploding celestial debris.

And then one massive explosion of their blades clashing causes both mechs to be flung far and away from each other.

[1:06]

Rocket boosters on their backs ignite, and they begin circling around, dodging exploding or high-speed traveling rocks as best as they can while carving a swath of a battlefield across that poor planet's icy ring.

The field stabilizes somewhat, and the two enemies collide again.

[1:20]

They come together, blades clashing fiercely, and causing yet more explosions and devastation across the battlefield, forcing a brief break off.

But Astro-Delta retaliates faster and lands a few strikes that the Clarent Victory has to block with its shield- carving massive gashes into its surface.

Clarent Victory attempts to do the same- but the Astro-Delta's shield gains a golden glow that tanks the entire strike wholly, much to the former Ascendant Hunt's frustration and rage.

[1:34]

They slash blades against each other again and again, causing more explosions and causing the ring debris to go flying about like a game of stellar billiards, forcing them to break off the attack again and try to survive the after-effects of their own onslaught.

[1:44]

They dive through the ring, starting to take advantage of the environment to fling pot-shots of stellar ice and rock at the other with their shields or swords or even feet.

A sword bat here- a spin kick there- a shield bash for emphasis- no blasters are used, just entirely wholly solid pieces of stellar debris that their enemy then has to dodge.

It could almost be seen as fun, if not for the life and death stakes of the match... or the sheer path of destruction being carved in a long circle through that planet's ring with distantly seen explosions of crimson and golden light.

[2:02]

Unseen from the distance, a few different kinds of ships had come to investigate both the rift energy surge and the multitude of explosions of Ori ships. A few Goa'uld based vessels, a BC-304 classed ship named KOROLEV, even a rather beat up Asgard vessel.
All of them had come to investigate, and what they saw baffled the mind, staggeringly so.

It was such an out of context event for all of them. Two dueling giant robots clashing against each other with glowing swords and rocks of stone and ice.

None of them knew what had caused any of this, but what they did know was that this massive duel destroying a whole planet's icy rings had caused the destruction of at least ten Ori Vessels that they could count. And honestly?

Nobody cared much beyond wanting to get their hands on that technology, hoping to be scavenging it from the loser of this fight.

Hunt didn't care, and the Astro-Delta's crew were too busy focusing their all on the fight to even notice.

Slowly but surely, Hunt's Clarent Victory was taking damage that was slowing it down. Chunks of ice and rock were hitting it and breaking armor and the former Ascended being roared in rage as he couldn't land a single matching blow that would stick.

Their fucking armor would just repair and repair and repair and he couldn't DAMAGE THEM!!!

Whatever cheating trick they had discovered was costing him the fight and it made him rage.

The damage was too great, and he went in for the kill that he wasn't sure he could secure.

He laid in a furious sequence of sword swipes that the Astro-Delta handily stopped and countered, and then took a kick to the Mofang Mecha's groin that damaged some of the hip servos and causes some critical systems to seize up for several moments.

Stunned, and unable to do anything, Hunt could only watch on in horror as at this close of a range, the Astro-Delta raised its sword back...

"EX-CALIBER!!!!!!!!!!" four voices roared out through space and time, and the glowing sword sliced clean through from left shoulder to right hip- tearing through and ripping apart everything in its path.

Even the bridge with Hunt himself in it was not spared destruction.

Astro-Delta swung around so its back was to the Mofang Mecha as it faltered, and gravity took hold of it, dragging it down towards the surface of the nearest large piece of space rock where it then terminated fatally...
By Exploding.

The explosion engulfed everything from sight, and when the light show faded away, the observers of that dimension were left to assume that the explosion had destroyed both of the Megazords.

But the real outcome couldn't have been further from the truth.

With another warping of space time in a wholly different dimension, the Astro-Delta Megazord stood in a wide open field of grass, mountains framed behind them, and a forest off to the side. Surrounding them was a massive field of formerly floating space rocks as well as some chunks of Mofang Mech debris.

And then all of that free floating stuff fell to the ground as gravity took hold and dirt went flying upwards in all directions.

Inside on the Delta-Mega's bridge, Cassandra Fraiser facepalmed. "Of COURSE we'd get teleported to another dimension."

The Megazord stood down to an idle pose, and surveyed the landscape.

There were no immediately identifiable landmarks.

They still had no idea where the hell they were.

Chapter End Notes

So. Uh. Happy 4/8/2019? :P I know its no 4/13 chapter, but hey! 4/13 is on a Saturday this year. I'll make a whole fun week leading into it over missing the day, yknow? :P

NOTES FOR THIS CHAPTER:

HOO. BOY. YES. A confrontation between the Mofang Mech and Astro/Delta was on the table since... well. Since I tore the fins off of Astro Mega, really. :P Anyways. HOO. That was fun to write.

I've been sitting on that Mofang Mech Vs. AstroDelta picture since... *checks*... MARCH 12TH. Not too long in the grand scheme of things, but if you were paying attention to my twitter, you'd have seen I had my banner picture focused on the AstroDelta for a while now. :P Mild spoiler, that. XD

Music Choice: It wasn't going to be Cowboy Bebop's "TANK!" originally. It was instead going to be "Glitter and Gold" but I just couldn't get that song to work with the sequence I had in mind when it came down to it. Sometimes that happens, I end up having to change songs because it just doesn't work. Also, I couldn't resist the pun of the Astro-Delta TANKING that Gatling attack while a song called TANK! plays...

The Double Xros: Let's be real here, Hunt is an idiot and was just begging to be betrayed again. He should have kept quiet that it was the sword that let her possess someone without harm. Maybe she wouldn't have forced him mortal and into another dimension to die that way. Oh Well! Hindsight, eh, Hunt? ... Wait. No, he can't answer. He's actually dead this time. Those Andromeda folk are going to be puzzling over what
to do next, that's for sure. And Gerak... Well. Gerak certainly got what he wanted out of his deal with Hunt, that's for sure.

Theme Music Choice: There was some deliberate thematic choices in mixing up which themesong played where for the individual episodes as well as the commercial break. Given that the next episode is called "Ripple Effect" those of you who have seen CANON!SG-1 probably have an inkling of what I'm hinting at with it. For those who don't get it, or haven't seen CANON!SG-1, you'll figure it out with the next chapter. :33

EXCALIBER VS EXCALIBUR: I've had a friend pointing out to me that I've been using "Excaliber" instead of the correct "Excalibur" but that's been intentional throughout this story. The CALIBURN SWORD from Alfheim got knocked to SG-1 Earth and got destroyed and replaced with EXCALIBER- why the letter difference? Because in Sword Art Online canon, instead of calling the sword EXCALIBUR when it came up in the series, it was EXCALIBER, and some debate was brought up by Sinon in the story about why they might have changed the spelling. The U/E swap here is mostly to nod at the sword's origins in an SAO-Dimension for this fic.

Reader Question: What was your favorite part of this chapter?
About three hours after arrival, the two Megazords had been split apart, transformed back into their individual ship modes, and parked on the ground in between the massive field of chunks of ice and solid rock.

Tegiri had taken the Astro Megashuttle out to survey the planet for the Stargate, in hopes it hadn't been crushed by the crash. In the meantime, you, Cameron Mitchel, and the rest of SG-1 plus the recently renamed RIDER, had gone out to investigate the ruins of the Clarent Victory that had also been teleported here.

You've found nothing of use, really. The whole thing had basically been melted clean through by your Excaliber enhanced sword strike, and that included the bridge.

If the sword Clarent had been inside of it, Hunt had not used it, that's for certain, and if he had somehow re-ascended in that moment before impact, well... he'd probably been left behind in the explosion. Otherwise, it was pretty easy to conclude that he was dead.

And then your radios buzz, and Tegiri reports that the Stargate had been found, intact.

Contacting Earth was going to be the top priority, just to see what this dimension could do to help, if it wasn't your Earth.

Hopefully they'll be pretty easy to get along with.

---

Your name is Joey Harley, and you brace yourself as your brother dials the symbols for Earth.

In goes the last symbols, press the center, and...

There's an odd pause, but it still goes WAAA WAAA! KAWOOOOSH!

It locked. This isn't your dimension, confirmed. That Gate Address to Earth stopped working after
the self destruct. Plus, well... if that wasn't enough, you know this planet. Once you saw the Gate's Point of Origin Glyph, you knew it. You had your doubts, but this confirms it. This planet is the one your Earth chose as its Alpha Site.

"Well, we got a lock," Mitchel says, taking to his radio. "SGC Actual, this is Lieutenant Colonel Cameron Mitchel of SG-1. Please respond?"

There's a pause, and then, you hear an exasperated Walter Harriman reply, "Please send IDC, Colonel Mitchel."

He punches in the code to the IDC.

"SG-1 IDC confirmed. Please be advised, Colonel Mitchel, that unless you're dealing with an active emergency we cannot allow you to cross over through to the SGC at this time," Walter says.

"Well, yeah, we're pretty much dealing with the weirdest of weird emergencies right now," Mitchel says. "We could really use some assistance."

"Please be advised, Colonel Mitchel, that if you step through the Gate at this time you may not be able to return to the planet you left from," Walter says. "Gate Travel is currently suspended due to an ongoing issue with Gate Travel being redirected through our Stargate from other Dimensions."

There's a long pause, and then Mitchel asks, "Please repeat that, Walter?"

"I said, Gate Travel is currently suspended due to an ongoing issue with Gate Travel being redirected through our Stargate from other Dimensions."

You all share a few moments of confused and considering glances, and then Mitchel finally replies, "Well, we're already lost from our own dimension as it is. So. What the hell. What's one more?"

It's Walter's turn to pause before replying, "Okay. Yeah. That's probably related. Opening Iris."

"Thank you, Walter," Mitchel replies, "SG-1 inbound."

And thus, you head through the Stargate.

You emerge into the old SGC gateroom, a familiar sight for you that you haven't seen in years from your own world. Jude's? Sure. But yours?

... You shake it off and look around at all the guns pointed your way.

"Well," Jonas says, "this is quite the welcoming party, isn't it?"

Six SG-1 teams had come through a single Stargate today so far- yours is lucky number SEVEN.

Your name is Jude Harley, and you find it oddly disturbing that of those previous six teams? They're majority composed of Colonel Carter, Doctor Jackson, Teal'c, and Colonel Mitchel. You're the first JUDE HARLEY to step foot in this SGC.

"Jonas?" A Carter wearing Green enters the room you five had been put into to debrief. "My god, I can't believe it. You're still on SG-1? C'mere." She moves in and gives him a hug. "It's been too long."
"Uh, yeah," Jonas blinks. "I'm not dead, am I?"

"No! God no, nothing like that," the Green clad Carter says with a smile, breaking the hug. "You're fine. You're actually serving as something of a leader for a united Langara."

"...I don't know whether or not I should feel lucky, sad, or jealous," Jonas says. "My home planet exploded."

"Oh, God," Green Carter's skin pales considerably. "We didn't stop the Naquadria conversion in time?"

"No, we didn't," Jonas shakes his head.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Green Carter says, frowning. "Did we not build the drill in time or-?"

"Drill?" Jonas shakes his head again with a hollow laugh. "I wish. We never got a chance to build anything like that. Goa'uld invasions tend to spoil any chances at saving things."

"That's..." Green Carter blinks. "Wow. That's so horrible. I'm sorry."

"It happened," Jonas says. "It was really out of our hands at that point. Nothing we could do about it, really."

"Anyways," Green Carter shakes her head, and then peers at the team more. "I... What. Cassandra?"

She stares. "You're on SG-1??"

"Yup," Cassie nods. "That I am!"

"...I have to ask, but is Janet...?" Green Carter trails off, almost fearing her answer.

"Mom's fine," Cassie smiles. "Has to use a cane, but she survived that staff blast, if that's what you're asking about. Ka'turnal shoved her out of the way and took the blast."

"...Who?" Green Carter asks.

"You might know her better as Nirrti?" You offer.

"...Nirrti was...?" Green Carter blinks- trying to process that. "I find that really hard to believe. She wasn't exactly on the best of terms with us in our world. She ended up dying when her hubris got the better of her."

"I get the feeling we're going to be talking about a lot of things that surprises you," Mitchel says.

"Right, yeah," Green Carter then turns to you and Joey. "I'm sorry, but I don't think we've met."

You look to Joey and sigh upon seeing how hurt she is hearing that. "I was afraid you were going to say that."

You stand up, and introduce yourself, "I'm Jude Harley. This is my sister Joey Harley, from another dimension different from the one the rest of us come from."

"You're both from parallel worlds from each other?" Green Carter asks, startled.

"Yes, we are," Joey says, standing as well. "And in my world, you adopted me after my family died, Sam."
"Oh, geeze," Green Carter stares. "I can't even imagine how awkward this must be for you."

"It's alright," Joey says, sadly, "it's no more awkward than having to overhear her and Jude's verses' Sam arguing with each other."

"...I can actually imagine that," Green Carter says. "I've already had five different conversations with myself today over what each of me thinks is causing this."

"Anyways," you say, trying to change the subject. "If you could point us towards your Quantum Mirror we can start trying to find a way to get ourselves back home."

And then Green Carter says the most infuriating, bone headed, egotistical thing imaginable.

"I'm sorry, but we destroyed our Quantum Mirror several years ago. Hammond deemed it too dangerous to keep around,"

And so you reply:

"YOU. DID. WHAT!!?"

"...You're saying you risked keeping it around??" Green Carter asks. "Why!?"

The idiots destroyed their Quantum Mirror, which means getting back home just got a thousand times harder, and they ask THAT?

"Because if we didn't? We'd never have--!" you stop, because Cassie grabs your hand.

You were going to talk about Atlantis. About powering the city with ZPMs.

...

Fuck.

Shit.

She's right. You can't say anything.

Then...

"I'd never have gotten the push to start dating Jude, let alone marry and have a kid with him," Cassie says. "And we'd never have been able to stop an interdimensional monster without help from other dimensions."

"...Married?" Green Carter stares for a moment.

"My Cassie never got a chance with my Jude," Joey says. "She gave her a nudge."

"...And the SGC allows that?" Green Carter asks.

"Our Military Titles aren't Earth Origin, so yeah, they just gotta deal with it," Cassie nods.

"...Not Earth origin?" Green Carter sounds so confused.

"...Since you've never met Joey or Jude," Jonas starts. "Can I ask if you've heard of 'Alternia'?

Green Carter shakes her head. "No. I haven't."
"Question," Jonas says. "Was Ra Male or Female?"

"Male?" Green Carter sounds even more confused because of that. "Why would he be-?" And then she stops, and realizes. "Your Timeline diverged That Much?"

"It's a Long Story," Mitchel says. "A Really, really, long story. Over a Million words if I had to put a number to it."

"That's... a lot to take in," Green Carter says. "I-"

Then, the Gate Room alarms went off.

"Damn it," Green Carter swears. "That's probably yet another SG-1 coming through."

"Maybe it'd be better if we write it all down first?" Cassie offers. "And you can read it all later?"

"That... might be a smart idea, yes," Green Carter nods.

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you're walking a delicate balancing act of honesty and deception.

In this world, so many things didn't happen, and you're dodging disasters by trying to keep this world from finding out about them because, well...

The Ori are around in this Dimension too.

You had to do some preliminary checking with the Vibes, but you're quite certain the true divergence point in this Galaxy was the launch of DESTINY- something they haven't even found out about yet.

If Destiny went Left in your universe, it clearly went Right in this timeline. You can't mention how your universe diverged so greatly because of that without spoiling things for them. And if you bring it up NOW with the Ori about? That's something they'll have to find out after the fact.

The end results aren't good if the vibes are anything to go by.

Also, it doesn't help you get back to YOUR universe either, going by the vibes.

As you work, there's a knock at the door to the office room your team is staying in, and Mitchel opens it. "Oh, hey Janet."

You look up just in time.

"That's the first time in a while I've seen one of you Mitchels actually recognize me," A Janet Fraiser wearing a tan desert uniform enters the room.

"Sorry for the other mes, Doc," Mitchel says. "They haven't had the wonderful experience of meeting you yet."

"I'm glad that there's a me around for you to recognize," Desert Janet says, smiling, before turning to look at you and fixing her eyes on you with a stern gaze. "Cassandra Fraiser what the Hell were you thinking stepping through that Stargate??"

Ah. Geeze.

"Let me guess," you scratch at the back of your head. "Other me isn't interested in ever stepping
through a Stargate again?"

"Not after she nearly blew Earth's Stargate up going near it, no!" Desert Janet says.

"...Ooh. So it was me in your world," you flinch. "Yeeeah. That makes sense. A bit too much sense, but... yeah. That makes sense."

"...It wasn't you in your world?" Desert Janet asks.

"No," you shake your head. "It wasn't. It was one of the other kids who survived."

"...There were multiple survivors?" Desert Janet chooses to sit down across from you.

"What happened in your timeline?" You ask.

"A Plague wiped out everyone except for you," Desert Janet explains. "Nirrti left you as a bomb to blow up Earth's Stargate."

"...Huh," you say. "That's horrible, but... Apophis was the one who attacked Hanka in our timeline. Nirrti evacuated along with the rest of us. Apophis stole her research and triggered a plague scenario so he could start dabbling in cloning technology."

"Plus he used Hanka as a staging ground for his Ha'taks to launch at Earth from," Jude chimes in with that.

"That's..." Desert Janet blinks. "That's really different, and yet not too dissimilar to what happened in our world. But if Nirrti evacuated with you why would she set up a bomb to go off?"

"She didn't," you say. "Apophis did. Thankfully, Nirrti realized what was going on and put a stop to it, half outing herself. She... ah, pretended to be a lab-assistant called Ka'turnal for a time. We only caught on when her ex-First Prime got a taste of the limelight and decided to start pretending to be Nirrti herself. That..."

"Eurgh," Jude grimaces. "That was a whole lot of nonsense I'd really not like to revisit."

"We'll just leave it at Nirrti finally catching and declawing that very naughty kitten," you say. "And then she died saving you from a Staff Blast, actually."

Janet blinks. "That's incredibly concerning, considering I just heard that I'd died in this world because of one. It didn't happen in mine."

"What happened there?" You ask.

"We just stabilized Airman Wells and got him home without trouble," she answers. "I'm honestly shocked to learn how close to death I actually came that day. Twice over, even." She stares at you for a moment. "And Nirrti saved me? Of all Goa'uld, Nirrti?? That's... What the hell even happened in your timeline?"

"A looooot of immersion therapy and being forced to play nice, I think," you answer- then, a thought occurs to you and you fish out your wallet to grab... "Oh! Mom! Here!" You hand her a picture. "I know this is sudden, but. You're a grandma!"

The alternate version of your mother takes the picture and stares, a bit shocked. "She's adorable... What's her name?"

"Penny," you answer, smiling. "And she's the cutest and most adorable kid ever, and she's mine."
"How old is she?" Janet asks.

"Uhh... that's a bit harder to answer," you admit. "See, we were on Abydos and there was a Time Dilation Bubble and... well. She was born in there, and we were in there for about two years before we got out. So... It's kinda relative??"

"...What exactly happened on Abydos to cause a time dilation bubble?" Janet asks, staring. "And, wait, who's the father, exactly??"

You motion to Jude, who raises his hand, and says, "I am, and the reason was we needed to build a huge ass shield to redirect a death laser back at Anubis' mothership."

"....Huh," Janet blinks. "Well, I'm glad you managed to save it in your world too. Though, given we were trying to capture an Ori Prior there..." She gets sad for a moment, then, a thought catches her, and she turns on Jude, and demands- "How Old even are you two anyways!? Did you atleast get Married!? I can't imagine your version of me wouldn't---!"

Hoo. This is going to be a long conversation.

You wish you could be anyone else right now.

Your name is Jonas Quinn, and you find yourself flanked by two Daniel Jacksons, one in Black, one in Desert Camo Tan, as they enter the cafeteria lunch line.

"I'm really seriously wondering how things could go so differently here," Tan Daniel says. "It's insane to think that you could lose Abydos to Anubis! How do you even screw up that badly!?"

"In my defense, I wasn't exactly corporeal at the time," Black Daniel counters.

You raise a hand, and say, "Ours wasn't either, but we still saved it."

"Oh, Hi Jonas," Tan Daniel says, and then does a double take- "Jonas! Finally! A Voice of Reason! How'd you do it?"

"I wasn't there personally for it, but Jude, Cassandra, John, Argo, and Jade were there, and they built a massive reflector dish over the pyramid to rebound the laserbeam back at Anubis' ship," you explain.

"I only recognized one of those names," Black Daniel says, "you let Cassandra onto Abydos during a Goa'uld Attack??" He sounds confounded by the idea.

"I recognized two, actually," Tan Daniel says. "Your Daniel and Sha're had Jade too?"

Black Daniel pales slightly. "We had a daughter in two universes?"

"Yeah, they did," you say, fishing for your wallet. "Hold on... Joey keeps telling me to keep pictures on me for time loop reasons but... Ah!" You find a photo that you've been looking for. "Here." You show it to them. In frame is Jade, Argo, and John, in that order- taken on Atlantis infront of the Stargate there while Argo was still pregnant. "This is Jade, Argo, and John," you point to them in turn.

"...What's with the animal ears?" Tan Daniel asks. Then, "Wait, no. Genetic Modification?" he guesses.

"Something like that," you say, playing it safe. "This was taken just after a rift in space time opened
and started filling our dimension with a Magic Particle that made people start to exhibit random, hidden genetic traits."

You're not going to go through the whole story here and now. That'd be too much.

"...She's so much older," Tan Daniel says, staring at the picture, and reaching out to touch it gently where Jade is. "Did Sha're and I meet earlier, or-?"

"Time Travel," you answer. "And the Aschen Doomed Timeline aversion. John and Argo are also from that timeline."

"Of course we'd send kids back," Tan Daniel says, smiling. "More efficient than a single note!" He glances at Blue Daniel who hasn't said anything else. "Seriously! Just a single note? I mean, if it's all that you guys could manage, I guess that's fine, but we atleast sent a whole tape back telling us what was going to happen!"

Black Daniel doesn't say anything in response, he just stares at the picture, then asks, "His Sha're is alive. Is yours?"

You flinch, and you can't suppress it in time.

"...I failed there too, didn't I?" Black Daniel asks.

"You got captured on Abydos and had a Goa'uld put inside you by Apophis, Sha're died shortly after giving birth because she'd taken a hit during the fight," you explain.

"I'm suddenly not quite so hungry anymore," Black Daniel says, and then takes off.

"Ah... Geeze..." Tan Daniel stares after him. "I think maybe I laid into him a bit hard there."

"Do you know what happened in his world?" You ask.

"Not as much as I'd hoped to learn." Tan Daniel turns his attention back to the Photo, and then asks, "Wait. Is that Major John Sheppard?"

Ah. Now. That's an awkward question to answer.

Your name is Jude Harley once again, and after escaping a rather long lecture from an alternate version of your Mother-in-Law, you find yourself meandering the SGC hallways and-

You can't help it, you find yourself at Carter's lab and peer inside.

...

...

...

"...thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen," you finish counting the vast, improbable amount of Samantha Carters standing there in the lab.

All of them pause in their work upon hearing you counting, and stare at you with blinking confusion. One in Green recognizes you, the local to this universe, and so does-

"Jude! Oh my god!" And then a somewhat-younger-than-the-rest Sam Carter with a pink swirl in her
hair reminiscent of one of Roxy's old hair styles from when you were a kid rushes over, making her quick excuses to the group of Carters and putting an arm around you once she's free. "We need to catch up! It's been WAY too long!"

And then she drags you away from the lab, and once you're a safe distance away, she visibly slumps forwards, exhausted.

"Oh. My. God. I cannot. BELIEVE. How annoying I can be when there's almost twenty of me in a room!" She looks you in the eyes and says, no, begs, pleads, "Please tell me that my version of you isn't anything like that?"

"Uh... That depends?" You ask. "We have two."

"Wait," She stares. "Don't tell me. Loki?"

"Loki," you nod.

Well, that explains the age difference.

"Sooo..." you begin. "Your universe has a me in it?"

She nods. "Yes. I mean, you're a bit younger than my Jude? Oh! Question! Are you the older brother or younger brother?"

"Uh, younger?" You answer.

"So, that'd make Joey your younger Brother, right?"

"...Uh, no, Joey's my big sister," you answer. "Also, she came with us- sort of. She's from a slightly different dimension to ours, too"

Pink Sam blinks, processing that, and then, she grins, and says, "Please. Introduce Us! I need SUCH a break from the ego of the other mes. And also, tell me more about your timeline! Did you guys get to Alternia too? What about Atlantis?"

As you talk in hushed-tones and half-said statements, you unravel that the major difference in THIS Sam's timeline was that YOU were the OLDEST, and that Joey was born a boy, and also the youngest.

But, otherwise, things went just about the same as in your timeline.

That's something of a relief, if you're being honest with yourself. Pink Sam seems just as relieved to find a world so close to hers.

"Seriously, I kept name dropping events hoping to see who picked up on it and NONE OF THEM got it!" She says. "Hell, can you believe that out of all of them, I'm the only one who got to keep Jolinar and didn't lose her almost immediately? Plus, she's still up here, sort of," she taps her forehead. "Loki's cloning fucked up and I'm not really Sam or Jolinar anymore. Sort of a fusion of both."

Huh, there's a difference.

"What about the other timeline Jolinar?" You ask. "From the Aschen timeline?"

"Huh? Oh. No, she stayed with Nepeta the entire time. They're way close after everything that happened," Pink Sam says.
"Huh, that's different," you say. "Our cloned Sam got her Jolinar to fix her mental state. Still, I guess it's good to know that it could have worked out in the end."

Pink Sam nods. "Yeah, that's true!" Then, she gets a conspiratorial look in her eyes, and asks, "Did you guys build Megazords too?"

"Actually..." You start. "About that..."

Your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you pause as you catch sight of a you and a Samantha Carter both in black uniforms conversing in hushed tones in the middle of an isolated hallway.

They both zip up quiet, upon spotting you.

"Uh. Am I interrupting anything?" You ask.

"No, Sir," Black You says in that way that tells you that you were definitely interrupting something.

"Definitely not," Black Carter says.

"'Cause, if I was, I can totally leave," you say.

"No, we weren't talking about anything important," Black You says, "just..." He glances around. "Look. Don't tell anyone, but our Prometheus got destroyed recently and I just heard this world's one was still intact and I got a bit salty over it. That's all."

Black Sam nods.

"...Ah, yeah, I hear ya," you say. "We just lost ours too, not too long ago."

"Really?" Black Sam blinks. "What happened?"

"...Well, let's just say we had to go ramming speed on a very large gun, and also had to get it as far away as possible before the ZPM onboard lost its containment and went boom," you answer. "Still didn't save Dakara, but... What can you do, am I right?"

"The best you can," Black You says. "No matter the cost."

And with that, you sort of smile, at least awkwardly as you can, and turn to leave. "I'll just leave you two to your hallway salt, then."

"Wait," Black Sam interjects. "You had a ZPM on the Prometheus? How'd you get it? Where, even?"

There's a spark of hope in both of their eyes as she asks that. How desperate are they for ZPMs, anyways?

...You know Cassandra's probably going to be mad if you bring it up, but... "Well, all I'm cleared to know on the matter is we have some frends on the other side of some mirrored glass who are willing to give us spares when we need them."

And then that hope falls.

"You guys have a Quantum Mirror," Black Sam says, dejected.

"You guys destroyed yours too, huh?" You ask.
"Yeah," Black You nods. "We'ren't too happy about that when we realized.... It would've made things a whole lot simpler, you know?"

"Tell me about it," you chuckle. "Would've been so much easier to find our own way home."

"Speaking of," Black You starts, "...The Ori. How are things going in your world with them?"

"...Never had to really deal with them," you admit. "Beat up the guy who beat them? Yeah. Sure. But... I guess we lucked out, given all the sob stories I've heard today about how bad the Ori are."

"...I doubt it's applicable," Black Sam says, "but how did you beat the guy who beat the Ori?"

You muse on that...

Desperate times call for desperate measures.

"Just a minute." You decaptchalogue a pen and notebook stealthily within your pants pocket and pull them out.

You scribble down the relevant details. The Ark of Truth being a thing that exists, how it was originally an Anti-Ori weapon, and that it was in another Galaxy to be found.

Hrm...

Then you write down a single sentence:

"Then we shoved his green, scaly ass backwards through a Supergate into a Black Hole."

You tear the page out, fold it up, and... You hesitate.

"Don't open this until you get back to your world, if you guys can get back," you say, holding it up. "And only if things are really, really desperate. Alright? It was damn near a suicide mission to get this thing, and I wasn't even part of it."

"...Promise we won't open unless there's a fire," Black You says, reaching for the note.

You look him in the eyes, and then give it to him. "That's about all I can expect, I guess."

And so it was that the three of you parted ways.

You wonder if that made any difference at all?

"Excuse me? General Landry, sir?" Your name is Jude Harley, and you knock on the door to the General's office.

"Enter," he agrees, and so you do, enter that is.

So much changes, so much stays the same.

"Yes, what can I do for you... Major Harley, wasn't it? And... Major Carter, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Sir," Pink Sam nods.

"Sir, given that me and my team traveled through dimensions on a ship," you begin, "It's likely that the planet we arrived on might actually be within this dimension and not a parallel one. If that's the case, this version of Samantha Carter is familiar enough with my world's technology that we might
be able to devise a way for us to get back home."

"So, what are you asking for, exactly?" Landry asks, a bit gruffly.

"Just to dial back the planet we came from, and see if it's the same one we actually left or not," you say. "If it's the same planet, then my team should return and we can start making repairs and adjustments. If it's not, then there's no harm done."

Landry considers it, and he considers it some more.

"Fine, we'll send a MALP through to the planet you came from, if you have the Address for it," Landry says. "If you can go home through your own means, then power to you and God Speed."

"Thank you," you give a curt bow to him.

"But if you can't-" Landry continues. "I Need you to be prepared for the possibility that you'll be stuck here for the rest of your life."

"I don't think that'll be much of a problem, Sir," you say, smiling. "See, I've got something of some standing time loops to fulfill still."

"You do, do you?" Landry considers that. "If only we were all so lucky to assume that were the case."

A few minutes later, the MALP had arrived on the other side, and you direct its camera to look at a tree you'd carved the Alternia Point of Origin Symbol on just before you even dialed the Gate.

... But it's not there.

"Well," you say, "I guess we did gate through to this dimension after all."

"Bummer," Pink Sam grimaces. "I was really hoping to check out your spaceships."

Your name is Joey Harley, and you sit quietly as you browse this Earth's Internet.

"Sup, Joey?" Jude sits down next to you.

"We don't exist in this world," you answer, a little grimly.

"We don't?" Jude blinks.

"Betty Crocker was run by a different woman who didn't have children named Jake and Jane, because she wasn't an exiled Alternian Empress pretending to be a Goa'uld," you explain, looking at the history of the world. "Pa didn't end up being an adventurer, and marrying Mom... And Mom..."

You bring up a front page newspaper headline.

"Geeze," Jude grimaces as he reads it. "Professor Annette Claire-Hebert dies in Hit And Run, leaving behind widowed husband Daniel Hebert and daughter Taylor Hebert. Suspect at large, thought to be a disgruntled student who failed class..."

"She wasn't even a Ballet dancer this world," you laugh, a little grimly. "An English Professor?"

You shake your head. "I never... I can't..."

"Well, I suppose without Khepri, stuff in our timeline wouldn't have gone the way they did," Jude
frowns. "Even before things split off to become your timeline. I mean."

You lean against your alternate-verse little brother, and sigh that familiar tired sigh. "I can't even look
them up in this timeline. They haven't Disclosed the Stargate Program. So I can't even say, 'Hey! I'm
your sister from another universe! Can we talk?' Because they'd think I'm crazy."

Jude puts an arm around you in a hug, and says, "It'll be alright."

"Jude, I've lost so many people," you tell him. "And even if we stay here, I can't... I've already lost
them here too." you break out of the hug and bring up other search pages. "Look. Dirk Strider,
arrested for peddling puppet porn to children online. Dave? He Renamed himself out of shame and
dropped off the face of the earth! And Roxy Lalonde didn't even exist in this world!"

He hugs you again.

"I know it doesn't feel like it, but it's going to be okay," he says. "We'll get through this, somehow."

You wish you could feel like you believe it.

You are now Cassandra Fraiser, and a Plan had been devised between the Carters of the first
dimensionally foreign SG-1 to step through- the Black Uniform Wearing SG-1- and the local reality
SG-1- in Green Uniforms- by means of attempting to shut down this weird dimensional shunting by
shoving a TIME DILATION DEVICE and a BOMB into a black hole.

Their plan, frustratingly enough, was simply to "end" any possibility of any more SG-1 teams gating
through to this Earth. Needless to say a lot of the alternate SG-1 teams were frustrated by this, but
there wasn't much they could do about it. Your vibes are telling you it's going to work out, though,
so you're not too worked up over it.

The two SG-1s were taking the Local PROMETHEUS out to some black hole that didn't exist in
your reality, so you asked what that was about.

"Well, Cassie," the Pink Swirl Hair Carter explains, "in these realities Ori recently tried creating a
beachhead by converting a planet into a black hole to power their Supergate. Now, they destroyed
that Supergate in quite a few of them, something of a constant between their string of events, but..."

"But the black hole remains, right," you pause to consider that. "Honestly, I can see how that'd help
strategy, rather than having to find a Black Hole of the right power grade, and park it, you just make
your own too."

It's a terrifying thought, but an interesting one.

Artificial Black Holes being able to generate a singularity, and somehow, through a sheer fluke of
who knows what kind of science, creating portals between dimensions.

You look to Jude, and ask, "When we get back to the Astro-Delta, do you think we could do
something similar to nudge the drive into jumping us back home?"

Jude blinks. "You mean, like, follow the course of paths we took backwards?"

You nod.

"It's possible," Jude muses. "I'd need to look at a lot of the math, though."
Your name is Cameron Mitchel, and you blink as you hear the news that rather than SEALING the event sending people to this dimension, the two SG-1s found a means of reversing the process instead.

Apparently the Black Uniform SG-1 had been desperate in their fight against the Ori to the point of trying to steal the ZPM from Atlantis that was there in this timeline.

In the end, Green Uniform-SG-1 had managed to 'work things out' as SG-1s tend to do, and everyone was going to be going back home in the reverse order they arrived in.

You only saw your black-uniformed counterpart one more time, and he gave you a grim nod.

Their last ditch desperation mission had failed... and you'd gone and given them another one, hopefully one with much better chances of success than this one had ever had.

Jude got some interesting MATH to look at from Black Uniform Carter's designs for getting to this dimension to begin with, and was able to work out a means for adjusting the Hyperdrives to trace backwards the dimensional breaches that had sent you skipping across dimensions to begin with.

It'd be far too risky to attempt traversing it any further beyond, because there would be no telling where you might end up.

Still, you got back to the Astro and Delta in one piece, and Jude made his adjustments...

For reasons of safety, both mechs combined, you drew EXCALIBER and SYNCHRONIZED it with the Megazord, and...

Jude activated the Hyperdrive.

With a single flash, you were back in the ruins of the asteroid belt, and with a second...

"Star charts confirm we're back in our solar system!" Cassandra sighs in relief.

"Well... that was a fun detour," you summarize. "Let's NOT do that again."

Chapter End Notes

Yeah. That's right. We just had a surprise crossover with canon. :D

It always bugged me that they destroyed the quantum mirror rather than just locking it up or burying it. Seriously. It was always a possibility that something like this *could happen!* Why did they never think about it happening? Huh??

Reader Question: If you could meet a parallel universe version of you, would you be friendly with them or antagonistic?

DIASPORA DATE: 07/24/0005.

Your name is Jack O'neill, and you honestly wonder what the hell was wrong with the multi-variable-universe to arrange for so many different SG-1 teams to wind up converging on one Planet Earth like that?

...And you're also glad that it wasn't YOUR universe that got all of that.

"I tell ya, Teal'c," you lament as you and he take up positions infront of the active Stargate on Chu'lak. "Sometimes you just have to wonder... what does it matter in the grand scheme of things?"

"When it comes to the subjects of alternate dimensions," Teal'c peers at the Gate, and lines up his club... "I would say..." He winds back.... and SWING! PLINK-SCHLORP goes the Golf Ball!

You check the MALP and the Laptop on it, playing a camera feed being relayed back through the Gate from an old, abandoned mining planet. Teal'c's strike managed to nail an old abandoned sign post square in the center.

"It would be arrogant to assume ours is the only universe of matter," Teal'c continues on. "While, primarily, yes, it should be our main focus of concern. When matters of other worlds threaten the sanctity of our own world, they must be taken into consideration as well."

"Nice," you say, referring to Teal'c's shot and statement. "How about you, Master Bra'tac, Sir?"

Bra'tac seems amused as Teal'c hands him a club. "Personally, I leave such theory-crafting to those better suited to it." He stands up to the tee, places the ball as Teal'c had taught him, and muses over his thought. "However... I do agree that it would be foolish not to lend aid to those who need it if that aid can be lent."

He gives a mild swing that imparts a lot of force to that tiny ball.

THUWNK! SCHLORP!

You check the camera...

Bra'tac's shot went wide, smacking against an old metal fence a bit further behind the sign Teal'c had hit.

"Not bad," you say. "Not bad."
"What are your thoughts, O'neill?" Teal'c asks as Bra'tac hands you the club next.

"Me? Well..." You place the ball, and stare at the Gate. "I'm glad that world's Landry wasn't too much of a stick-in-the-ass over it, but I'm a little miffed that so many of those other Earths haven't gone Disclosure yet. Even with the Ori out and about? Geeze. Talk about stubborn." You focus on the ball, line up your shot, and....

TWHACK! SCHLORP!

You peer at the camera, and watch as the golfball smacks the corner of the sign Teal'c had bullseyed, and it spins around on the pole a few times before settling in at an angle.

"Then again," you say. "If our Anubis hadn't been such a blowhard, who knows. But, honestly, I think we dodged a bullet, disclosing when we did."

"Indeed," Bra'tac says. "Though, on that note. What reaction was had to Hunt's attack?"

"Oh, you know," You frown, handing the club to Teal'c. "A lot of 'what an idiot' moments. A lot of, 'well, atleast he's dead now's, and..." you shake your head.

"Honestly, the thing that gets me most is how well Ba'al of all snakes is playing the PR game right now. He knows we can't call him out on being a Goa'uld while he's singing our praises and being all buddy buddy."

"Meanwhile, his clones are out across the Galaxy doing unknown tasks for unknown reasons," Teal'c rumbles, annoyed, as he lines up his next shot.

"I swear he's doing this just to mess with me," you say. "Plus, you guys heard about what happened in Pegasus, right?"

The two nod, and then Teal'c swings and PLUNK-SCHLORP!

Teal'c once again hits that sign dead center. Damn it!

"It is a shame that Ba'al has found a way to multiply himself, rather much more of a parasite than the Goa'uld already were," Bra'tac says, taking the club, and preparing for his next shot.

"Indeed," Teal'c agrees.

"However, his time will come," Bra'tac says, eyeing the Stargate. "As it does for all tyrants, it will come in what seems to be his moment of Glory. Much as Hunt thought himself invulnerable, a 'God', only to find his secret weapon turned against him and forcing him to fight a battle he could not win in a whole other dimension." WHACK! SCHLORP! "Hmh! Truely, Fate was not on his side."

The camera shows Bra'tac's shot going wide in the other direction; so wide, in fact, that it goes off camera.

"Hmf, it seems even fate was not on my side with that shot either," Bra'tac muses, handing you the club. "Your turn, O'neill."

"Yeah, yeah...." You ponder things as you tee up, and line your shot... "You know, Hammond wants me to take over for him at Homeworld Sec. Landry'd take over at the SGC, maybe, if I do it."

"You are opposed to such a role?" Teal'c asks.

"Mostly... I'm just thinking about what happened with the kids and that little field trip they took," you
say, and work your jaw for a moment. "Our Hammond made the right choice to keep the mirror, but that Hammond didn't. And that Landry was ready to leave a bunch of SG-1s stranded on their world, too." You forget for a moment that you're supposed to be taking a golf shot. "...Something about that just doesn't sit right with me."

You take the swing.

KLINK! SCHLORP!

You don't check the camera, Teal'c and Bra'tac do, though.

"An impressive shot, O'neill," Bra'tac appraises.

"Ah?" You ask. "Really?"

"You managed to knock the sign entirely off of its post," Teal'c tells you.

You turn and look at the camera and...

Huh.

So you did.


Chapter End Notes

As of last chapter, we've passed a full 365 comments for this Act. A comment for every day in a year, if this were way more spread out and had one chapter for every day of the year with one comment per chapter.

...Sorry, I have no idea why I found that so interesting.

Might not have that many large chapters next week, as a heads up, considering the monster length chapter that opened up this week.
Another burst of dimensional energy was recorded, and this time, a machine was successfully transported from a desert world to a very less heavily radioactive world.

It was humanoid, barely a mannequin with a strange gear aesthetic. It raised its arms up and down with an annoying grinding sound and took in its surroundings.

Unsurprisingly, VENJIX called it a "GRINDER."

It stood at the rift in space, recording sensor data as the rift closed, and then started walking towards the nearest source of radio chatter.

Needless to say, the disposable mook machine never saw being immediately teleported into a room via Asgard beaming sensors and zatted to shut it down.

The woman known to many as Samantha Carter smiled grimly. "Gotcha."

---

Your name is Cassandra Fraiser of this world's SG-1, and you sit down next to an alternate universe's Joey Harley as you both stare through an observation window into the isolated lab where a mechanical monstrosity was being ruthlessly torn apart.

"How did you get past it all?" Joey asks without prompting, not tearing her eyes off of the sight. "Losing everyone you knew? My Cassie hasn't... she doesn't like talking about it. She's always trying to be so positive but... I don't. How the hell do you get past this? The Grief and the self-hate that I could have done something different?"

"It took me a long time," you answer. "Mostly... I think I realized there wasn't anything I could have done differently. Not then. What happened to Hanka was a disaster, and Apophis was the one who brought it down on everyone, in the end. And then when I started to realize I could change things, I did my best to make sure that I could. That gave me a focus, I think."
She considers that, then asks, "But. How?"

"How what.?"

"You and my Cassie see all the bad things. How do you say so strong through it?" She asks.

"Because when all I see is bad possibilities, it makes it easier to focus on the good things, because they catch me by surprise," you smile. "Sure, I can dance around the worst of worst disasters, but... I'm only ever dancing towards the least worst disaster. I can't choose something that's a 100% Good End. I just can't see those. So...

When things work out nice, it's really, really... nice, I guess."

Joey considers that, then nods.

"We weren't able to retrieve much from its memory banks," your name is Samantha Carter, and you give a report to SG-1, General Landry, and a Joey and Cassandra from the same dimension your little visitor just came from. "It looks like one of Venjix's minions made that drone specifically to go through the rift, and pursue travel to other dimensions. One 'Professor Cog', if the identification logs were accurate."

"So, what could we learn beyond that?" Landry asks.

"A few scraps of combat data from the programing matrix that hadn't been properly scrubbed," you bring up profile pictures- a series of pictures of a team of humans, along with suited up forms that were easily identifiable as Power Rangers.

"Hey, I know those guys!" Jude points at the ones labled "Ranger Green" and "Ranger Black."
"They're from Bregman's camera crew!"

"We also have Scott Truman, their Red Ranger," you say, motioning towards the respective picture. "He, and their Gold and Silver Rangers, work on the Daedalus' 302 crew." You motion to Blue and Yellow, "Flynn Mcallister, their Blue Ranger, is a mechanic on the Odyssey construction. And their Yellow Ranger, Summer Landsdown, is involved with the DRC project in New Mexico. Her parents apparently attempted to secure a controlling interest through her, and they were refused. Not only that, she's been working for the DRC rather than try to control them. If Doctor Watson's report is to be believed, the Landsdowns aren't very happy about it."

"Funny, that," Mitchel says. "So, we've got a whole team of Power Rangers already working with us to some degree or another. Any one else NOT surprised by this?"

"Considering the Alternia Built Megazords?" Jude asks in return. "No. Not one bit."

[The next part, Sam,] Jolinar reminds you.

"Right," you say. "There's one more thing we need to talk about." You move to the next piece of the presentation, a fragment of memory you'd been able to retrieve.

It's a video clip of a rather mangled Stargate spinning up, dialing, and then instead of a KAWOOSH, it generates a blinding rift of light that the camera perspective- the robot- steps through it.

"They found our Stargate," the Cassandra from their world says. "It didn't get completely destroyed??"
"I guess the base self destruct wasn't enough," Joey frowns.

"So, that's how they're getting to our world," your Cassandra says. "They've made a Quantum Mirror out of a Stargate, except its closer to the rift devices Oberonn and English were using."

"We have no idea if it's even capable of working as a Stargate anymore," Jolinar says after a nudge. "Or if it can connect to any other dimensions beyond our own. However..."

You take over. "The simple fact of the matter is, they're attempting to leave their version of planet Earth. And we need to figure out how to beat them, and beat them hard before they do."

"Alright," Landry speaks, "I'm open for options. Anyone got any bright ideas?"

Jonas, surprisingly, raises his hand first. Landry nods for him to speak. "We back trace through the rift they opened like we did with the Astro-Delta and drop a surprise on their Gate's front step. Explosion plus Gate Naquadah equals Bigger Explosion."

"But what about the fallout from that?" Jude asks. "Depending on how close to that Dome the survivors are living in their base could be... that could be very bad."

"That's a good point," Jonas frowns. "But... what if our surprise includes a time dilation device and a matter transporter?"

"You mean we lock the facility down hard, beam it into space, and blow it up from orbit?" Mitchel asks. "That sounds like my kind of plan."

"I think we can manage that," Jude says. "I think I can build it, even."

"Good," Landry nods. "Get it done. If we can close the door to other universes before Venjix can escape from Earth, I'm all for it."

"Wait," your Cassandra voices then. "...What about D'ni?"

Silence falls across the room.

"She's right," Mitchel says. "If their version of D'ni was discovered and compromised, Linking Books could be everywhere in that world."

Then, Joey speaks up, "I need to talk with your world's Me."

Your name is Joey Claire, and with a tingle of energy as you link through to the SGC, you can't help but feel a little apprehensive.

They're not even asking you to be involved beyond theory crafting.

This isn't about your earth. It's about another you's earth. An earth already once in danger before that you weren't around to help with.

Even so, you're going to do what you can to help.

You talk it over with the other you, SG-1, and Sam Carter, and you all agree that you can't risk this VENJIX VIRUS escaping the world it'd claimed as its own.

That wouldn't be good for anyone at all.
The plan that you come up with is simple in its elegance, while minimizing risk of COLLATERAL DAMAGE.

A "strike team" goes to that Earth, probably directly into the heart of the facility that the modified Stargate is in, and rigs it to be teleported straight into the highest heavens. From there, they'll travel to D'ni's location, check the Cavern's status...

And if under threat of Venjix taking control of it, they are to collapse the Great Shaft, blocking off all access to the Cavern itself. From there, they use Relto Books to return to your reality unscathed. And if during the process they wind up finding survivors?

Well, the Strike Team is to be composed of survivors of the SGC from that world. Your alternate self and the alternate Cassandra included among them.

Still, there's a contingency plan you want in place, and Jude's recent mis-adventures in another reality have given you an idea for how.

"Jude, I want you to build two sets of oneshot transponders for the Kyoretsu Zords," you tell him. "Other me will take one set of them with her and her team to their world. If they absolutely need them for transport or to fight in their world. And I want those transponders to be able to signal back to our reality so that if they need a precise evacuation, we can activate our version of the transponders and get them back."

Jude considers that, and then he grins. "It'll be my pleasure."

Of course, there's all sorts of SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE SECURITY UPDATES that will need to be done to limit CODE INFECTION, but...

"If it absolutely comes down to it, we're going to need Zords that can hop between realities," you say.

A short while later, you find yourself at the cafeteria, eating lunch across from yourself.

"Can I ask you how you deal with it?" the human reflection of who you could have been asks. "Deal with what?" You ask.

The answer surprises you: "The pressure of being expected to save the day... How do you deal with always making sure you win?"

"We've been through a lot that's different, right?" You ask, rhetorically. "I think for me, there wasn't any option for me that wasn't success. Failure meant I'd die, worst case." You look yourself in the eyes, and she looks you right back. "But even then there were times I failed. We failed. Stable Timeloops that meant things had to go certain ways. There were me's who failed at these trials, and I picked up some of their weight, going forwards."

You think on it, and run your tongue over your teeth for a moment.

"You'd probably be better off talking with Egeria and that other version of me, maybe," you say. "But there... there was this me who lost everyone. It was just her, and she came back through time and we were onboard the Destiny and she died to ensure that stable time loop went off the way it did. And it hit her hard. She was so sure she had nothing left to live for even if she could have kept going on in our world." You see your other self swallow at that, food having been nowhere near that particular motion. "You're not that far gone," you tell Joey Harley. "You've still got your Cassandra, and the other people from your SGC to help you. And... Even if you've lost a lot of people, and I
know we can't replace the people you've lost, you've still got us backing you up."

"So... are you saying don't treat you like replacements of people I lost?" she asks.

"Yeah," you nod. "Don't think of us like that. Think of us instead as friends and family you've still got left." You reach your right hand out, and place it on her left shoulder. "You haven't lost everyone."

She considers that, and then nods.

"Thank you."

"Any time," you say in return, smiling at her.

Your name is Egeria, Queen of the Tok'ra, and you sigh a little in relief as you take the first excuse you can get away from managing CONSTRUCTION WORK of a NEW HOMEWORLD CAPITAL CITY.

It's not like you're doing much in that regard normally, but today it seems everyone wants to run some change here past you, or confirm that last weeks changes are still what you want or...

The most absurd thing you were asked today was whether the carpet should match the drapes when the request form clearly said that they should be asking the DESIGN LEAD MANAGER instead. That poor boy looked so embarrassed upon you pointing that out.

"Oh, hello," you greet after entering your private meeting room. Already waiting there is an alternate version of your host- with much longer hair done back into a braid. "Sorry to have kept you waiting, Miss Harley."

"It's fine," she says. "I'm waiting on Jude to build stuff anyways."

"The message you sent didn't indicate which of us you'd wanted to speak to, but I suppose it would be my Joey, yes?" You inquire. She nods. "Just a moment then."

And then you nudge your host awake with a mental shake and a [We're done with the Construction talk, and someone wants to speak with you.]

Your Joey grumbles a mental reply something along the lines of 'grumblegrmbrrrr' and 'gimme a minute please.'

You say, "It will just be a minute. She dozed off during all the work talk from earlier today."

"I can imagine," Harley says. "I would too if I could, sometimes."

"So, what can we do for you?" You ask, even as you nudge Joey again to keep her from falling asleep again. [Come on, Sleepyhead.]

She considers it, then says, "...Well, I wanted to know, how did you-or she-or even both of you, I guess- deal with getting back to just... living??? After losing nearly everything?"

'Nooope. Too Tired for that. You handle it,'

[Then wake up, she clearly wants your input.]
Some days, your host can be very stubborn.

"For me, it was like awakening from a nightmare," you explain. "Those years long sessions of breeding and watching my children be ground up to dust to make a drug were torture and then to have my body dying on top of it... suddenly, to be pulled free and placed within a new body..." You give a smile. "It was like everything that had happened was just a nightmare. A real waking one for sure, but... It was just a nightmare. And then I was awake, and ready to move on with my life again."

'...That's pretty good. I don't think I can top it.'

[OH SUSH YOU! Now are you awake or not?]

You give a pause, close your eyes and let Joey take over.

"Hey, Me, Sup?" She greets.

"Yo," Harley gives a nod. "How much recap do I have to do?"

"Not much," Joey answers. "I... needed time to think on what to say. I don't think I can top what Egeria said, but, that's... mostly because I think it's pretty similar."

"Really?" Harley asks.

"...I failed, in my timeline," Joey starts. "English's forces came and attacked us for everything and he destroyed us so badly... and then when I was the only one left, he just... took off to do it to someone else's planet. And I was left to crawl out into the Desert and just... die. Alone." She pauses. "Honestly, the entire time I felt like I was living a bad dream. That none of it could possibly be real, but it was and..." She shakes her head, and you give her a comforting mental squeeze to the shoulder.

[You've got this.]

'I know, I know...'

"So... when you got brought back, it was... what, like waking up again?" Harley asks.

"...Sort of," Joey says. "What really felt most like a dream was waking up inside of a snake inside of an ANOTHER ME'S HEAD!" She exclaims, and then starts to laugh. "I mean, it's the most absurd thing ever, right? Like, you transition from a nightmare to existential confusion! Here I am, inside another me's head! And then she, like, clones me a BODY of herself and then shoves me into it!" She laughs again, slightly unnerving Harley. "But, then I'm just wandering around as a snake in an empty shell of a body, wondering what hell I'm going to do with my life. It still seems so... so... absurd. Like I'm just imagining it all while I'm dying out in that desert still?? You know??"

Harley nods, but you're not sure if she gets it completely. You're not even sure if you get it completely.

"But... so... Yeah. Then Other me comes along with Egeria in a crystal, she shuffles us around, and then I'm the body, and she's the snake and we're suddenly just... there. Together. And there are all
these memories that I couldn't ever imagine for the life of me, and that's when I realized I wasn't dreaming anymore. All of it was real and... I'd survived." Joey grows somber. "I'd died, and was rescued, and I'd lost everything. But by the time I really accepted that, I'd already gotten so much more to live for and work towards."

There's a pause of silence, and none of you say anything.

"But," Joey says. "I mean, sure, I avoid talking to people at the SGC if I can help it. I don't like the memories all that much, but... Egeria's there to handle that part anyways most of the time. And I really like doing stuff that's new and different from what I did before. Being the other half to Egeria, Queen of the Tok'ra, is... a really fun experience. And now that we've beaten Anubis and English... I feel like that old chapter of my life is closed, and a new one is just beginning. I still miss my old friends and family from my old timeline, but... I'm happy with who I've become. I've moved on from that tragedy, even if sometimes I think about it and remember how proud they'd all be that I'd made it this far."

"Remember, huh?" Harley muses, a twinkle of an epiphany in her eyes. "...They would want me to move on with my life, wouldn't they? To stop... wallowing in it all?"

Joey nods.

"Thank you," Harley stands, and bows.

"'C'mon, no need for that," Joey says, blushing.

"I should go now, I've taken up enough of your time as it is..."

"No, no!! If you don't have anywhere else to be, we're BOTH glad to have you to talk to for a while!" Joey says. "Even if it's a little selfish, uh..."

"Geria! Help!!"

"Chatting about random stuff is a welcome break from dealing with construction decisions," You interject. "Please, do stay for a while if you have the time for it. You're not taking us away from anything ground breaking. And I mean that in the literal sense. We're not doing any more ground breaking projects for atleast another month."

Harley stares, blinking, and then smiles and laughs. "Alright. I'm game."

You three then proceed to spend the next four hours talking about life, the multiverse, and everything your minds can think of.

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**EARTH DATE: JANUARY 23RD, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 08/03/0005.**

Your name is Jude Harley, and you look at the set of three devices in hand. Small, oddly angled boxes in CRIMSON, WHITE, and PEARL-BLUE colored plastic, respectively marked with numbers 10, 11, and 12.

"These are your Zord Transponders," you say, handing them over to the alternate universe version of your Sister. "Press and hold the button on the bottom of each one for three seconds, and the light will turn on. Release the button, and wait for it to start blinking before you throw it into the air, and it will summon the Zord in question to you. "10 is Kishamoth, 11 is T-Line, 12 is K-Line. Once the Zords
are summoned, to send them back to us, press the buttons again, and it will signal us in this universe. We'll do the summoning procedure from there."

"Got it," Joey says, taking the boxes and placing them into a special pouch. "Anything else?"

"Yeah," you decaptchalogue a small hybrid device between a ticket puncher and a cellphone, with a metal blade jabbed onto the top of it. "This is a Dimension Dagger. We tested it with some instanced Linking Books from the Kadish Vault. You squeeze the handle, jab the blade into the panel, and it will shatter the book's connection to that world. If Venjix has any active experiments going on with Linking Books, use that to put a stop to it."

Joey takes the device, and nods even as you decaptchalogue several others and hand them to the rest of her team.

Her universe's Cassandra, Touya and Yuuki from Alfheim, and, concerningly enough, your universes Jennifer Hailey and Samantha Carter are going with them.

Apparently Sam and Jack fought over this, but what convinced him was that the argument she had with the other universes Samantha didn't push letting you all know about Venjix after the attack. Or something like that. You weren't privy to the private details, and you honestly don't care to dig into it right now.

"Now, make sure you DO NOT use them on your Relto Books unless you have absolutely no choice," you say, even as your sister from this Universe decaptchalogue a crate full of the small green books and starts handing them out.

"These are your tickets back here incase of extreme emergency. Got it?" She says, looking each of them in the eyes as they take a book. "Keep them hidden. Keep them safe. Venjix CANNOT get his hands on these."

Nods all around.

"Alright then," Carter says, "I think we've got everything?"

"Good luck out there," Jack says. "Come back safe and sound, everyone." He's looking at Carter as he says that.

"We will," She says, there's a pause, and then Jolinar adds:

"I'll make sure of it, Jack."

"Thanks," Jack nods, then, turns to Mitchel. "Alright, Cam. Send them out."

Cameron Mitchel decaptchalogue EXCALIBER, and slots its blade into the ENERGY CHAMBER you designed for this INTERDIMENSIONAL SENDIFICATOR. "Everyone in position?"

The away team makes sure they're standing on their assigned spots and have their air filter GAS MASKS in place, and then you give the nod to Mitchel.

"Beam us down, Scotty," Carter smiles, and then puts on her gas mask too.

Jack and Mitchel both quirk a smile, and then Mitchel twists the handle of the sword.

There's a burst of golden light from its blade, and then with a burst of light from the machine you'd
built, everyone vanishes with a sound not too unlike *SEND-IFICATE!*

Your name is Samantha Carter, and your team appears in the abandoned ruins of a lighthouse, not too far outside a massive facility that you quickly check with your scanners and confirm...

Quantum signatures are a match for Joey Harley's dimension, physical coordinates are just about where you wanted to land, and... Yep."

"Alright, this is it," you repot. "That's the facility we need to teleport into space and blow up."

"Looks pretty big, Ma'am," Jenifer says. "Are you sure our teleporter charges are going to be enough?"

"Going to have to be," you say. "We're not going to get a second chance at this."

*Lovely. I've so missed these life or death situations,* Jolinar chimes in, sarcastically. You laugh in agreement, internally.

"Alright," Joey speaks up. "Let's do this, and make it count."

And with that, your group begins to make your way towards the facility.

Meanwhile, on what would have once been the mainland, some distance away, a signal was detected outside of the Domed City of Corinth, and a challenge was issued to the Rangers.

Confront the Attack Bot known as PROFESSOR COG, or be prepared to have CORINTH CITY wiped off of the map entirely with one very massive bang. A bluff, though the Rangers weren't aware of it.

The Professor's true plans were something much more subtle.

Infiltrating the facility was a piece of cake, all things considered. The SECURITY DRONES here weren't programmed to look for infiltrators given this facility was OFF THE GRID and TOP SECRET. Not even Venjix's TOP GENERALS knew of this place, save for their overseer, PROFESSOR COG.

Nobody was supposed to be here, and so, the Professor's arrogance overrode any potential security flaws. After all, the perimeter fences hadn't been breached, and no alarms had gone off.

Nobody was coming here, as far as they knew.

A shame they never considered people teleporting in from another dimension.

The local team of POWER RANGERS dueled against one PROFESSOR COG outside of the Domed City of Corinth, to the point of forcing him to grow to GIANT SIZE.

"Call the Zords!!" the Red Ranger ordered.
The mechanical Professor's face would have grinned if it were capable of making that expression.

Everything was going according to plan.

With a cry of "SKYREV MEGAZORD!" A nine part megazord came together, and took to the skies outside of Corninth's Dome.

Professor Cog fired off bolt-shaped missiles at them, trying to sneak in some specific RFID SIGNAL TRACKING CHIPS onto his enemy.

Once those were in place, well... His GATEWAY TO ANOTHER WORLD would power up and banish the lot of them from this world, leaving CORINTH VULNERABLE.

Finding the Stargate was somewhat harder, but once it began to POWER UP and emit a large energy signal, it was easier to find.

Of course, security was tighter here. And so Zats came out and began to fire.

The poor Grinders never knew what hit them, and an Alarm never got a chance to be sounded.

The sabotage team quickly planted their charges around the Gate, and then ran out of the base back the way they came to get as far away from the Asgard Beaming device's range as they could.

Thankfully, the time dilation device kicking in around just the Stargate itself gave them plenty of time to get clear.

"ENGINE CELLS! ACTIVATE!"

"WHEEL BLASTERS!/ "WEAPONS COMBINED!"

"LOCK ON...!"

Professor Cog could only stare on in horror as the Megazord Above him glowed brightly with nine different colors, and prepared to fire down upon him.

"FIRE!!"

"SHIELD ACTIVATE!" The Professor summoned a massive energy shield, and prepared to tank the finishing attack that had slain so many of his fellow Attack Bots in the many months past.

The attack of energy zords smashed down upon his shield- and it held for a moment, before shattering, and the energy assault rushed through him at half strength.

"GAH! You think you've bested me!" He began to laugh. "No! I am Professor Cog! And even if I cannot defeat you today, I will live to fight another day!"

He reached and pressed a device on his wrist that was supposed to teleport him to safety.

Nothing happened.

"W...WHAT?" He gave a startled gasp as the Megazord came in to land a spinning shark-zord blow
across his chest.

Inside a time dilation field, a timer hit zero, and-

**PVVVVVYVMM MM-SHING!!!!**

A massive building suddenly vanished from the planet's surface, re-appearing far, far out beyond even the moon's orbit.

The time dilation field canceled, and the explosives planted at the Stargate's base exploded, taking the overcharged superconductor with it.

A massive blue fireball lit up Planet Earth's sky.

Professor Cog stumbled backwards, peering upwards into the heavens as the blue fireball turned the normally orange desert hued landscape purple.

He failed to guard as the Megazord turned its blaster arm at the gash in his chest armor, and fired off several blasts point blank straight through his body.

"But... But my plan was flawless!" The Professor cried out before falling flat on his back and exploding.

In another universe, perhaps the Professor may have escaped to another dimension to cause trouble to a different team of Power Rangers.

...But not this one.

Within his Lair, VENJIX observed the simultaneous destruction of his DIMENSIONAL RIFT EXPERT *and* the FACILITY that the experiments had been conducted in, and he let out an angry roar of "**NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO0!!!!**"

Needless to say, all of his mechanical Generals within hearing distance tried to cover their audio receptors, because even machines can have strained ears from overly loud sounds.

"You know," your name is Samantha Carter, and you peer up at the blue fireball in the sky from the safety of the lighthouse tower. "You'd think something like that would get old. But nope, still just as beautiful as when we blew up Ra's ship."

*[It is quite the sight.]* Jolinar agrees. *[Shame we had to blow up a Stargate for it, but... it happens.]*

A thought occurs to you, then.

"...I hope we managed to stop it before they connected to another dimension," you say. "Otherwise that explosion might have carried through the rift and caused some collateral damage."

*[Agreed.]*

Meanwhile, in another dimensional variant of the COMBINE'S DYSON SPHERE STAGING
GROUND HOMEWORLD, located in a different physical location of space-time from the last version of such a thing you-the-audience has seen, their sun suffered from a large blue flare beneath part of its surface, triggering a massive SUPER NOVA for reasons unknown, and obliterated their entire staging ground.

A few short minutes later, when a RESONANCE CASCADE happened on yet another version of Earth, there would be no SEVEN HOUR WAR triggered in response.

Needless to say, a variant of a certain GOVERNMENT MAN would be horribly confused why the Combine failed to TAKE THE BAIT.

The answer was simple, of course.

There was no longer anyone left to take the bait.

Chapter End Notes

NOTES:
Yeah. I meant the summary literally.

Professor Cog in canon Power Rangers jumped from the RPM dimension to the canon main dimension, during the Samurai Rangers era of operation. While events in this timeline have followed canon RPM's timeline off screen for the most part, this is the first major divergence based off of it being built off of a branch of a Stargate timeline rather than a branch of the Power Rangers timeline.

Remember how the Kyorestu Zords are based entirely off of Kyoretsu-oh from Go-Onger? ...Those are the same zord designs used as Paleomax Megazord in RPM. There's a reason I made those transporters that'll come into play later.

Yeah. I had to stick it to the Combine again. Consider it an easy re-use of pre-existing CGI, if this were actually a live-action show! XP
MINISODE: Combine Intelligence Reports.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


Dimensional Rift Activity Confirmed At Subsection 5.439.4288.

Homeworld Staging Ground 5.439.4288 Confirmed Sterilized.

Percentage of Homeworld Staging Grounds Destroyed, 42%.

Reviewing Previous Incidents.

Dimensional Rift Activity Confirmed in Subsections 1.337.0962 to 5.439.4287.

Overseer Assessment: Hostile Infection; Malicious Intent Assumed.


Overseer Assessment: Snake Venom Agent Likely.

Overseer Assessment: Agent Codename "Freeman" Presumed.


**Threat Assessment: 50%. Unacceptable Risk Variable.**

**Judgement: Withhold Action Until Location Determined.**

__________________________________________


Alert: Dimensional Rift Activity Detected in Dimension S4L7.5G1.5G4T.

Genetic Anomaly Detected, Snake Venom Agent Codename "Freeman" detected.

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Wraith."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Goa'uld."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "D'ni."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Tau'ri."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Alternian."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Mofang."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Villein."**

**Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Cla'dian."**
Warning: Virulent Species detected! Codename "Bahro."

Warning: Dimensional Rift Activity from Dimension S4L7.5G1.5G4T confirmed linked to incident targeting Subsections 1.337.0962 to 5.439.4288!

Warning: Multiple Dimensional Rift Anomalies Detected!

Warning: Multiple Foreign Dimensional Visitors Detected!

Warning: Highly Advanced Space Faring Mechanical War Machines Detected!

Warning: Infectious Energy Wave Particle Z-177Y-UM Detected!

Warning: Super Heavy Element N4Q-U4D-R14 Detected!

Overseer Assessment: Hostile Infection Rampant, Fatal Contraction On Exposure.

Overseer Assessment: Do Not Provoke. Unknown Weapons or Technology Level.

**Threat Assessment: 100%. Unacceptable Risk Variable.**

**Judgement: Avoid Interactions at All Costs.**

Chapter End Notes

Because let's be real here, some version of the Combine would take notice with that much of their dimensional cousins taken out...

Doesn't mean that the ones who DO take notice are going to be dumb and attempt to attack their perceived attackers.

...Of course, that doesn't mean that there couldn't be others who ARE that dumb. But... yeah. Atleast one version of the Combine realizes that attacking our heroes is a bad idea and are praying they don't get caught up in the collateral damage of another attack.
I couldn't help myself. Homestuck Updated and I had to get out those FEELS in some tangible form.

Feel free to skip if you haven't read the UPDATE yet. In fact, go read that NOW if you haven't and want to read it!!
https://www.homestuck.com/epilogues

As an aside, this chapter is of dubious canonical status anyways. I'm not entirely sure WHEN it fits into the timeline here, if at all. But. It's a thing.

Your name is LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN SHEPPARD, once a JOHN EGBERT of a doomed timeline, and you blink a little as you realize that with all the time travel and time loops and everything else you've done over the course of your life, that you've once again hit that yearly marker of AGE.

Had you lived a perfectly linear life, today would surely be APRIL THIRTEENTH, and you would be roughly...

Roughly...

Almost TWENTY YEARS OLD? Maybe somewhat over it. You wouldn't be surprised if it were closer to TWENTY-THREE, if that were the case.

Many years ago, you embarked on QUITE the adventure, one that has had its ups and downs and lulls and swells, but one that has been... quite ongoing for a very long time.

And for some reason... You feel as if you are paralyzed by a choice. Different from the current question of food before you on the Atlantis Lunch Line Specials Menu, and yet somewhat paradoxically related.

Out there in the Multiverse, in the vast, whimsical nature of cause and effect and the sea of infinite possibilities- there is a you making a choice.

You don't know what that choice is, be it food related or something terrifyingly larger, and honestly, Ford would probably know better than anyone else what exactly that you is up to, if he's able to lay eyes on him, and yet...

You empathize with and for that other you out there, plagued by an impossible choice.

Your own choice is made much easier, food ordered and collected, and you sit down across from your sister, ROSE.

"I've been having some interesting dreams as of late," she purrs, pocking her fork at a pile of peas on
her plate. "How about you, John?"

"Not sure about dreams, but, I did have some weird moment of introspection earlier," you say.

"Much along the lines of some other you being confronted with some herculean task of unknown scale?" Rose asks.

"Something like that, yeah," you frown. "What about you?"

"Dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams, and dreams," Rose says. "I have a lot of them about a lot of things. I've actually been talking with Boldir about them."

"Have you now?" You muse, picking up your sandwich and biting into it.

"Yes, apparently she deals with similar," Rose elaborates. "Versions of herself living different lives, doing different things. I wonder if some other version of me is subconsciously tapping into this 'Heart' Aspect to some degree like her and Ford? Or perhaps I'm simply overthinking things to a ridiculous degree."

Your answer of "I guess so?" is muddled with food between your teeth.

"Did I mention lately that I've been having dreams about when we were really small kids?" Rose asks. "Except, not that timeline. Not ours- as in the old one- but Ours, in the present.

"...You've what now?" you ask after swallowing because there's a look in Rose's eyes. She's scared about something.

"And I've checked, actually," Rose starts to elaborate. "I've had dreams about what my other, younger self has been doing during the day before. Only when we both somehow manage to fall asleep at the same time, though. It's... very disconcerting, considering the age differences. I'd rather like my private life to remain private to this version of me, thank you very much, other mes. Especially younger ones. That way leads to..." she shakes her head. "I woke up this morning thinking I was twelve, and having the memories of having lived in Texas of all places, with Uncle Davis's brother as my guardian."

"What." You stare at her.

"I was panicking about over sleeping an alarm and horribly confused about where I was and why I was older until Kanaya managed to anchor me back to the present of our world," Rose says. "In the process, I ended up briefly teleporting the both of us onto the top of Atlantis' Jumper Bay roof. Somehow. Whatever this is is effecting my powers too. It's terrifying."

"I can only imagine," You say, feeling not quite so hungry right now, forgetting your sandwich to the tray below. "So... this is why you asked me out of the blue this morning to have lunch?" You ask.

"Pretty much, yes," Rose nods. "You've been feeling something odd too, haven't you? I think somewhere out there in the great unknown... there are versions of us that are about to have a very uncomfortable future, and I can only hope that whatever it is doesn't backlash onto us."

Rose then forces herself back to eating rather than talk, and you do the same. Both of you consume your food at a pace that's slightly slower than usual because both of you would rather focus on food rather than...
"I think we're probably safe from that," you say after a few tense minutes of silent eating, when your brain can't take it any more. "Whatever weird 'self-soul-identity-connection' thing we're feeling isn't anything to do with the us here and now. And if we absolutely have to do something, we can go and find those other us-es and give them a helping hand."

Rose snorts. "As if any kind of meddling from us in that regard will be anything fruitful."

"Believe me, Rose," you say, putting a hand on her shoulder- an act that makes her lock eyes with you. "If we absolutely have to do something, we'll figure out a way. We're already branching out into other dimensions as it is." You smile. "Watch, the next thing you know, General Hammond will be on TV, announcing that we're forming some new branch of the SGC designed to explore other dimensions and help people out of jams they get stuck in and can't get themselves out of."

Rose smiles, it's a half smile but it's there.

"And what if those other uses die before we can get there?" She asks. "It's happened. It's been a thing we've dealt with. There have been so many doomed timelines we've brushed with that..." She shakes her head. "What makes us the lucky ones?"

"Who's to say they won't be lucky too?" You ask.

"I don't think luck has anything to do with it, John," Rose answers. "I feel like it's a foregone conclusion already penned into stone, and we're just... waiting for the translation to come through."

"Then we help pick up the pieces and save whoever we can," you say.

"We can't keep getting involved," Rose says. "At some point we'll hit a cap. There will be some wall we can't break down, or some enemy we can't defeat. It's all in the air until that happens. And what then?"

You consider that for a very long while.

And then you say, "Then the survivors have to make a decision whether or not they want to carry on as they are, even if it means their doom, or go back and change things for the better, even if it means they might die because of it. And it's got to be something they go with because it feels like the right thing to do." You squeeze Rose's shoulder, and smile. "Stressing out about it isn't going to help any. That's why I did what I did back during the siege. I didn't know how it was going to turn out, but I had to do the only thing that felt right no matter what kind of timeline we were in. Other us-es out there? They'll do the same thing."

"That's all it comes down to then? What feels like the right thing to do in the heat of the moment?" She asks, as if it's really that simple. "I suppose it is that simple isn't it?"

This time, when Rose smiles, it's fuller.

You've done your job as little brother, even if you think you've aged a bit past Rose due to time travel. But, that really doesn't matter, does it?

Chapter End Notes

Like I said in the notes above. Not sure if this chapter is canon, or uncanon, or any form of canon at all. This is just a thing that IS and demanded to be written.
So it was.
Your name is YUUKI, and you've had a very interesting life over the years.

You don't focus on all of that, though, and instead the current chapter of your life...

You're hiking through a desert that used to be an ocean on magical horses that don't exist unless you or Touya cast the spell. They're an old relic of Alfheim warfare, from before Oberonn was ever born, as a matter of fact. Meant more for use in traveling the vast expanses of Alfheim's continent with old warfare machinery.

Perfect for getting a team of six across a desert-that-was-an-ocean to your destination a whole half a continent westward.

You've been hiking for about a day now, and thank Yggdrasil for the tireless magic mounts, they just keep going as long as their summoners can pump magic into 'em.

...That's where you and Touya have hit your limits.

You find a small former-sea-cave and hunker down for a few hours of rest.

Using some spell crystals Silica and Minori made, you generate a PERFECT ENVIRONMENT AIR SHIELD at the mouth of the cave, and you all take off your gas masks.

Despite every bit of progress you've made so far, Joey Harley sits on her own, staring out at the ruined world with a mixed expression on her face.

While Cassandra works on fixing up some food for you all, you go and sit down next to Joey.

"Col for your thoughts?" You ask.

"Huh? What?" Joey blinks, confused.

"It's a saying on Aincrad," you clarify. "What's up?"

Joey stares out at the desert for a moment, then says, "I'm just a little worried about all of this. It's going to take us weeks to get to where we need to go by horseback. Should we summon the Zords and rush? Or...?" She shakes her head. "Plus, I'm scared of what we'll find if we go by the Mountain on our way to the Cavern."

"Fair enough," you say, staring out with her.

There's but the silence filled by crackling flames and sizzling food for a few moments. Feels like an eternity, honestly.

"Do they hate me?" Joey asks, voice nearly a whisper that you're sure the others except for Touya
wouldn't hear without enhanced wolf-ear hearing.

"Hm?" You ask, casually casing a silencing spell with a few well practiced flicks of your hand. "How's that?"

"Silica and Minori," Joey says. "They didn't come with us. Do they hate me for not saying anything sooner?"

Ah.

"Well, I can't say," you answer. "Personally I know someone had to hold down the Mirror-fort, heh-" and that does get a faint smile out of her, '-but I don't think their like or hating of you has anything to do with it." You allow, "Maybe they're a little mad you didn't tell us, but then again you didn't tell anyone else so... It's not like you were hiding it from us specifically?"

She nods in acceptance of that. "But still..."

"And it's not like we've shared everything with you guys either," you say. "We'd be hypocrites to hate you over that."

"Really?" she asks. "Like what...?"

Well...

Now you're committed to one thing, atleast.

"So... we had Goa'uld possessing a lot of Aincrad's ruling council, right?" You refresh her memory, and she nods.

"And they went and possessed a bunch of cloned floor monsters," Joey says.

"Yeah, well, we killed them all and we thought that was the end of it, but..." You shake your head. "It wasn't. There were others on the other Castles. One of them managed to colony drop their castle onto the magnet shield thing."

"Oh my god," Joey stares. "What... what happened?"

"It's..." you shake your head. "It's not something I want to go into detail on, considering I was called in to help with search and rescue. It was messy. Really messy. And with a hole punched into the shield thing it, well, it was collapsing and the other Castles were losing altitude..."

"That sounds horrible," Joey says, staring out into the desert beyond. "And you guys didn't ask us or the SGC for any help with it?"

"It was more of the same, 'what can they do to help with this?' that you were talking about," you say. "We'd thought of it, but, there wasn't any time to come up with any plans like that."

"So... what did you do?" Joey asks.

"We evacuated as many Castles that were losing altitude through the hole down to the planet below," you explain. "Landed them all on the sea and stuff. But we still couldn't save everyone. Some of the Castle Ships refused to believe there was anything wrong and stayed until the last possible minute."

"How...?" She trails off.

"How many?" You shake your head. "I never asked. None of us did. I've got a good idea, but... it's a
guess, at most." She nods for you to go ahead. "When the shield finally collapsed, I think we lost about one fourth of the remaining airborne Castles to gravity, and lost everyone onboard."

"That's horrible," Joey says, swallowing sharply.

"Yeah," you sigh. "It wasn't too much longer after that that we all started helping out more in the other worlds where we could. Alfheim was a lost cause at that point. Oberonn had too tight of a grip on everything. Working on Quantum Mirrors or helping out wayward Lycans..." You glance back at Touya. "You know, when Keiko said she was going to work on the Atlantis Expedition stuff in Pegasus, we all knew what she was running away. None of us stopped her for it. Not even her sister."

Silence falls for a minute, not even the sound of the fire crackling, due to your silencing spell.

"I can see why you guys didn't say anything," Joey finally says. "Even though you didn't lose as many people... it's still a disaster as bad as what happened here, just..."

"Just for different reasons?" You ask.

"Yeah," she nods.

"...Yeah," you agree. "That it was."

Chapter End Notes

I very nearly ended up almost skipping this chapter by accident. Thought I'd posted it already. WHOOOPS. Was queuing up another chapter when I realized, "Wait. Did I do the one before it?" o-0; So. Uh. YEAH. I'm an episode further ahead in my queue than I thought I was for a moment. Ah well, gives me more time to write SGA:02X13: "Critical Mass." AKA: The episode that this Act's subtitle comes from. We're slowly narrowing into the end-of-act arcs for this Act. It's been a lot longer of a road than I thought it'd be, that's for sure.

As for this chapter, we hit the stumbling block of the limits of what I can reasonably fit into the chunk of time left unknown on the Aincrad side of things. I'll probably transition over to using the MIR chapters as dealing with RPM-verse shenanigans for the foreseeable future. Speaking of, there's atleast one more MIR chapter this coming week!
MINISODE: Karmic Mirroring

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 08/07/0005.

"Jake, I think you're being really unreasonable about my whole disappearing stunt!" Your name is Jane Egbert, and you're smiling a little strained, but mostly sibling-friendly-ly, at your brother. "After all, I was only gone for a few months! YOU disappeared for almost an entire century before I heard from you again!"

Jake sputters, stalls, and then has the common decency to look ashamed. "Right. Sorry, Jane. Kinda seems like it was a whole lifetime ago, you know? I really blundered that up, didn't I?"

"I think it just goes to show it runs in the family," you place a hand on his shoulder, you're smiling, but you quickly frown. "And I do mean that literally. You ran away from home for years. Joey ran away from a bunch of bad-men with guns for a couple of years, never mind the countless other Joey's who have been running away from their problems from other worlds. Penny even ran away from her entire timeline twice as far as we're aware of! Now me?"

Jake stares at you, then he groans. "Running really does run in the family, if you think about it, doesn't it? Even Khepri ran away from Earth and Abydos when they caused her trouble." And then he adds, "And Jayni too. Gosh dang it. Did she ever do some running away from her own Sanity!"

All you can say is, "I'm not sure whether we should blame our mother or thank her, considering everything we've lived through."

"Given what Jude saw of a world where we were never born? I'm quite certain that, at the very least, we ought to be thanking her for atleast making sure we existed. It was the best thing she ever did for any of us."

"Agreed." You nod in firm agreement.

Your name is Daniel Jackson, and you feel like you've screwed up somehow.

Since you're-not-sure-when your daughter and her matespirts have been... avoiding you it feels like? For atleast a week.

You're not exactly sure what you did to make them mad at you.

"Hah," Boldir Lamati laughs at you as you step up across from her in the lunch line. "You only JUST noticed?"

Ah, right. Mind reader.

"But seriously," Boldir narrows her eyes at you. "You fucked up at Christmas, Doctor Jackson."

Christmas? But--?
You forgot to meet them for dinner and instead had a dinner date with Sarah instead without telling them.

"Oh is right," Boldir rolls her eyes, and then hands you a bowl of food you hadn't ordered. "And no, you're not getting what you asked for unless you talk with your kid first. Now scram!"

You go to track down Jade and figure out what you can do to fix things. It's going to be tough, though, considering it took you over a month to realize what you were doing wrong.

Sometimes, you wonder if you were ever really ready for a family, given this turn of events.

...How do you fix something like this?

...

...

You honestly have no fucking idea where to even start, and spend the next three hours debating what to do within your head without getting much of anything done.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, Jake it's a little hypocritical to nag on your sister for going off on her own when you did the same exact thing! XP

And Daniel. DANNY BOY. C'monnnn. Just talk to your own daughter would ya?!

This was originally two separate minisodes, but I felt like I was stretching the chapter count out way too much. Given that we're narrowing in on the home stretch, I condensed things in a bit.

Next chapter: That next Mirror Chapter I mentioned Last chapter.
**EARTH DATE: JANUARY 30TH, 2002.**

You are now Doctor K. Just that, DOCTOR K. You don't remember your birth name, the CARETAKERS at ALPHABET SOUP were certainly thorough in that regard.

Some days, you wonder about what would have happened if some dashing adventurer had realized what had happened and come to rescue you all. But that conjecture is futile in the current systematic environment.

That last VENJIX ATTACK BOT had tried to do something strange to the Rangers and their Zords involving SIGNAL EMITTING TRACER BEACONS and it had failed, not only in doing their intended purposes, but also in ESCAPING through similar means.

Instead? A Massive FIREBALL had appeared in the heavens above. Whatever the Venjix Attack Bot Codenamed "Professor Cog" had been attempting to do, it had instead EXPLODED. And violently so at that.

The spectrogramical readings of the UNIQUE RADIATION produced showed wild and exotic particles that matched nothing within the CORINTH DATABASE. The MORE MUNDANE, however, DID however match something from the old STARGATE COMMAND DATABASE- a certain DECAYING NAQUADA PARTICLE.

Whatever The Attack Bot had been attempting to do, it involved one of EARTH'S STARGATES. Wormhole technology meant transport to other worlds, so... had the Attack Bot intended to teleport the Rangers to another planet entirely? But if so what about the other particles?

No, this couldn't simply be about simple Wormhole Technology. The residual radiation was...

No. It wasn't anything like that at all. Perhaps a Stargate had been used as the basis for it, but...

There had been... RUMORS within the Soup. A MIRROR made of the same element as the Stargate, Naquadah. A Mirror that could go to other worlds.

Had the Venjix Attack Bot been planning to send the Rangers to a whole other Dimension to leave Corinth VULNERABLE? Potentially. If Venjix had its hands on the Mirror itself, assuming it was real, then why had it not spread out to other worlds yet?

...Perhaps it had, that was a disturbing thought. Or perhaps it had only recovered fragments? The base in Colorado was reported to have SELF DESTRUCTED and while

the Stargate might have survived partially intact, a Mirror?

Such a fragile object was surely to have been destroyed if it had been left behind. No, it was likely that, if this so-called QUANTUM MIRROR existed, it was no-longer on Earth in any form. That made the most logical sense.

Was Venjix then researching into breaching the Dimensional Walls and escaping to other worlds?
That... was inherently and terrifyingly more plausible.

If that were to be the case, then it would make sense for Venjix to attempt to test run the technology by disappearing the Rangers to another world.

But then why did it explode? No, more importantly, why did it explode in SPACE?

Beyond the WHALE ZORD's initial DOOMSDAY BOT DESIGN, Venjix had never shown any signs of creating ships capable of leaving Earth's Orbit, nor had any MISSILE LAUNCHES into space been detected. But even so, if they had somehow managed that without your detecting, why build in SPACE? Venjix did not seem concerned with damage to the planet itself, though an explosion of that magnitude could cause one massive ELECTRO MAGNETIC PULSE that maybe even his shielding was incapable of resisting against.

But at the same time...

Something about that train of logic feels... OFF.

Something about the exact distance away from Earth's lunar orbit track and the placement of it all seemed far too engineered in a way to inconvenience Venjix, while sparing everyone else.

It certainly wasn't Gem and Gemma's doing, given that they were in the Megazord along with the other Rangers.

Inter-dimensional travel... No, Venjix wouldn't authorize an attack plan like that unless it knew that the technology wouldn't explode the first time it was used. Venjix was far too cautious for that, only striking at the Earth's populations once it had already infected most of everything undetected.

Venjix's experiments had drawn ATTENTION from another world- that was the only reasonable and sane explanation.

They had to have inter-dimensional teleportation technology, as well as actual spatial displacement teleportation technology- and surely the two were linked somehow- as well as knowledge that blowing up a Stargate or anything with made with the Naquadah Element would be HIGHLY VOLATILE towards a planet's surface...

Venjix had just tried to banish the Rangers to another dimension, and in the process, garnered the very much unwanted attention of a fish much larger than itself.

The question was... was that doorway to another world now closed with the destruction of Venjix's Gateway, or was it still open?

No, a better question would be... were there any people who had come to this world through that gateway while it was open, and if so, were they still here?

You lean back into your chair, and peer at the data on the screens before you.

If they were still here, what were they doing, where were they going, and what was their mission?

More importantly, would they attempt to ally themselves with Corinth?

...Ignoring the possibility that they were from another dimension for a moment, was it possible they were survivors of the initial attack that had left Stargate Command a smoking crater in Colorado?

If so, where had they been all this time? No, likely they had fled through the Stargate. Had it taken...
them this long to simply get their hands on a ship capable of venturing close to Earth?

Whatever the case was, Venjix was certainly not in a good mood over this.

Another attack would be imminent, likely. You had best take the time to prepare while you still have it.

You briefly consider re-activating the Paleomax Zords, however...

No, not unless you absolutely need them as a last resort.

...Still, you re-open the old file documents on them, and peer over the data again. Surely... it could be possible to fix that problem with the Extinct Animal DNA? You pencil in a few possible fixes for the problem, resolving to mull them over more seriously when you get a chance to do so later.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, screw it. I'll just queue this one up right now too and get this done ahead of time since I already got two chapters ready to go as it is.

A more close in look at this universes Doctor Kae, that is to say, Doctor K. It always struck me that she had to have been preparing a bit behind the scenes for a potential reuse of the Prototype Paleo Zords, given how quickly she managed to put together a fix for the Bio-field problem.

READER QUESTION: Are you Ready for Ford to return and cause some trouble?

DIASPORA DATE: 08/11/0005.

Your name is DOCTOR GINA KAE, and you flinch as the hood is taken off of your face.

"You all okay?" Sheppard asks.

"...Why did I agree to be on your team again, Colonel Sheppard?" You ask, glancing at him from across the very fancy dining table you'd all been KIDNAPPED to. "What even happened?"

"I can't remember, but I think someone went to a whole lot of trouble just to get us to come dinner," Sheppard answers, glaring around at the people who had kidnapped you, him, Ronon Dex, and Teyla Emmagan.

They look like farmers, but they also look like half-trained soldiers with Wraith Stunners in hand.

How did they get their hands on those, you wonder?

"If we release you from your bindings-" one of the men starts and, wait, bindings? "-do you promise not to-" You tug at the rope holding you to the chair. "-attack us?"

"Oh this is Just fantastic!" You interject.

"Yeah, sure," Ronon grunts.

"Promise," Shepard smiles faintly.

"Of course we'll untie them!" And then in walks Aiden Ford, and your wondering question is answered. "But before we do, they have to know they're among friends!"

"Aiden," Teyla starts.

"You all thought I was dead, didn't you?" Ford smiles, looking over the lot of you before stoping on you and frowning. "...Who's the chick, and where's Doctor Mckay?"

His void of an eye seems to gleam oddly in your direction. You feel as if you're being looked through clear to some abstract concept that could be identified as a 'soul.'

"That's Doctor Gina Kae to you," you introduce yourself. "And what does it matter if I'm not who you were expecting?"
"You know," Sheppard starts, "that's actually a good question."

"...Well, it certainly changes what I was expecting," Ford says, before smiling again. "But then again, this universe always has had quite the unique script to it. That's for sure."

Somehow, you get the feeling this is going to be a very long day.

O<--STARGATE: ATLANTIS-->O

Your name is John Sheppard, and as FOOD is placed before you, you eye Ford with a certain bit of unease.

"Go on, eat," he insists.

"What is all of this?" You ask.

"Just some local vegetables, an alligator looking thing. Tastes like salted meat even without salt in it. Give it a try," Ford says.

"I don't mean the food, Ford, why are we here?" You ask.

"Who are these men, and why bring us here?" Teyla adds.

"Well, that's a whole lot of questions," Ford smirks.

"How about you start with why you're arranging the timeline to follow some other timeline's series of events?" You ask.

"Or why you think I'm 'needed'?" Ronon asks.

"Mostly, I'm curious to see how the Wraith Enzyme is affecting your neurological structure long term," Kae says. "You're all on it, aren't you?"

Ford turns to his men, and grins, "See? Told you they were smart." He turns back to look at you all, and explains, "After I got Ronon to you, the Wraith showed up, all according to the script. I hitched a ride in a Dart, and they took me to their ship. Now they thought I'd be unconscious because of their auto stun on dematerialization thing, but I proved them wrong."

"The Enzyme," Kae deduces. "It made you almost immune to their Stunner tech."

"Yep," Ford grins. "Killes the Wraith, took his enzyme pouch, and, well... made my way off the ship, stocking up on it where I needed it. You can get around pretty easily on a Wraith Ship. NExt to no security, 'cause they're not used to prisoners breaking free." He shrugs, "After that, I walked off the ship, found the Stargate, dialed the first friendly address I could scavenge up off the script, and... well. Met these guys. Showed Kanayo here-" one of the guys who'd spoken earlier- "How the Enzyme worked, and he and me slowly put the Crew together. As our operations grew, and our numbers grew with it, we needed more and more Enzyme. So we've been capturing Wraith and keeping them stunned- draining them all of their enzyme. We barely even have to hunt to get it anymore."
"You're farming the Enzyme from live Wraith!?" Teyla asks, shocked and horrified by that. "They're here!? But what about their-?"

"Psychic link? Neutralized as long as they're asleep," Ford insists.

"Interesting," Kae muses. "So, what is this then, a sales pitch? Let me guess, you've gotten so good at refining the Enzyme you can lace it into food?" She motions at the untouched plates of food before your team.

"Well, yeah," Ford nods, but then adds almost immediately, "Don't worry, though. I knew you guys wouldn't be kosher with it from the other scripts. So your food is clean. I need all of you in your right minds to prove to Doctor Weir- or whoever replaced her in this world- that we're sane on this stuff."

"Well, thanks," you frown. "I think you'll forgive me for asking how often this actually works?"

Ford just laughs, "Funny! Very funny, Sheppard!"

You'll take that to mean that it doesn't. Ever. Except in very rare circumstances.

It occurs to you suddenly that the Enzyme Demonstration isn't the point.

"You have a job for us, don't you?" You guess.

Ford's laughter slows, and he observes you with both eyes- but its that full black orb that concerns you the most.

"Not many of you catch on before I get a chance to say it," he says. "Do eat. You're going to need your strength."

Your name is Rodney Mckay, and you arrive back in the City of Atlantis through the Stargate with a smile on your face and a spark in your heart. It's amazing what a proper therapist could dig out of you just doing a psych evaluation.

Who knew your 'allergy' to anything with lemons on it was actually a childhood induced trauma reacting to the word 'lemon' itself rather than the actual, well, lemon?

You sure didn't, and boy, was that an interesting thing to uncover.

Stepping around the rest of the supplies that had been gated through, you make your way up to the Administrator's Office, and meet Mikari Aiikho there. She's strangely in the middle of talking with-ah- Chuck? No. Wait. Lorne. It's Major Lorne- about Stargate Addresses?

They left the door open, so what if you're eavesdropping?

You give a brief knock on the door to interject.

"Doctor Mckay," Mikari nods. "Glad to see you're back with us. Passed your psych evaluation?" Her tone is a bit curt, as if something else is bothering her.

"With, well, not exactly flying colors, but, close enough," you say. "Enough to pass, at any rate. I'm scheduled for some repeat visits once a month for the next while. But still, cleared for duty."

"Good," Mikari says. "And just in time too."

"What's going on?" You ask.
"Colonel Sheppard's team missed their scheduled check in as of six hours ago," Lorne says. "We found signs of a struggle. Looks like they were taken off world."

"Well, I guess it's time to dive right into the deep end then," you say.

"You seriously expect me to repair a Wraith Dart!?" Doctor Kae exclaims as the lot of you stare at the somewhat banged up Wraith Dart lying beneath a tarp.

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and to be honest, you're feeling a bit unnerved by this plan of Aiden's.

Flying onto a Wraith Hiveship to destroy it and prevent it from culling a planet?

It's insane.

It's absurd.

It's reckless.

"Well, no," Ford says. "I expected MCKAY to repair a Wraith Dart. I wasn't expecting you at all."

"Then why ask me to even try?" Doctor Kae starts to protest.

"Kae, a word?" John asks, and they speak off in the forest for a moment. There's a tickle of wind on your ears, and you hear him talking about using the dart as a means of escape... and that Ford's probably aware of their plan regardless of what he's doing to ensure that his voice doesn't reach anyone but you and Ronon.

They return.

"Well, consider yourselves lucky, then because I actually have some ideas on how to do this that I'm sure Rodney wouldn't," And then Doctor Kae requests her sylladex be returned for certain items.

Ford smirks and lets her have her sylladex back.

And so work begins on repairing the Wraith Dart.

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**EARTH DATE: FEBRUARY 1ST, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 08/12/0005.**

You are once again Gina Kae, and you've surprised yourself here because the Dart was put back in working order in a shockingly quick time. You suspect it wasn't quite nearly as badly damaged as it could have been in "Other Timelines."

Having a working piece of Wraith Technology to work on was a good change of pace from the busted Dart. If you get to keep this Dart, it will be invaluable to research and experiment on with the new EXPLOIT VIRUS that Doctor Beckett has been working on.

Unsurprisingly, Ford decided he couldn't trust you to go on this mission, and had a few of his men stay behind to guard you while everyone else went on the mission to "take care" of the Hiveship. He also advised you not to try to escape, because you couldn't go anywhere, because the Gate DHD was sabotaged to not work unless he wanted it to.
And so you're forced to sit, and wait, and watch the two muscle bound idiots left to guard you fight over scraps of Enzyme tainted food.

Just about when you started to get anxious that the mission had gone wrong was when AR-2 Plus Major Lorne's team and Doctor Mckay of all people come busting in through the front door.

One of Ford's captors gets off a wraith stunner shot- but as to who it would have it, it doesn't matter.

Why?

Because it seems that during his time back on Earth, Rodney Mckay discovered what his Rift-powered abilities are.

A massive flare of a green shield springs up inbetween the engaging team and the two out of their league Enzyme-dosed guards.

The stunner shot falls short, and then they get taken down in quick succession as Mckay throws the shield directly at them, bowling them over and onto the ground while somehow passing over you without even imparting any force at all.

"...Friendly Fire Immune Force shields?" You ask. "That seems oddly specific and fitting for you, Doctor Mckay."

"I know, Right?" He asks in return, grinning.

"As great as it is to see you, Doc," Major Lorne steps forwards, "Where's the rest of AR-1?"

And so you explain about the mission that Ford took the rest of his men and the team on.

With a gripe about that, Tyzias then asks where the DHD control crystals might be stored.

You think you might have an idea, given the brief tour of the facility that you'd been given.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho. It's been but half an hour later that the rescue team comes home safe and sound, and yet you feel no less at ease.

You make the call.

The Daedalus is to head towards the other side of the planet from where the Wraith Cruiser is expected to emerge and start culling, and hope and pray that Colonel Sheppard's team can make it out alive.

"So... " Your name is John Sheppard, and you find yourself surprisingly the last person to come back up after being stunned in what was probably the most hilariously pitiful attempt imaginable to blow up a Wraith Hiveship. "You lied about the C-4, Ford?"

"Of course I lied about the C-4!" Ford answers. "The guy other mes used to steal it from the Genii died of a fucking heart-attack before I even met him in this world!"

This whole mission has been a disaster from the moment it started. First the Dart goes on AUTO PILOT, forcing you to blindly de materialize everyone. Fortunately you got everyone except for one of Ford's men on a large platform. That guy fell to his death.

Then, the Wraith came to inspect your dart, and you were forced to improvise, and ghosted out of the
way. Unfortunately, one of Ford's men got greedy and wanted an extra dose of enzyme and set off a bunch of alarms, negating the point.

You joined up with them and fought and fought, but in the end, your plan of trying to set off some C-4 to cause a distraction was worthless...

Because the "C-4" was just mud wrapped in paper with the letter "C" and the number "4" crudely drawn on it with a marker.

Then, you got stunned.

When you woke up, it was just you, Teyla, Ronon, and Ford to a cell.

The rest of Fords men were nowhere to be found, though their screams could be heard distantly. Ford doesn't seem bothered any, disconcertingly. And what's more, you're pretty sure he could easily get past this door faster than you could. Why is he playing along?

You check the cell and find that the Wraith put up some fucking force shield over the door, so you can't even breeze away through it.

Stupid Wraith.

The ship shudders as it drops out of hyperspace, and Ford smiles. "You know," he says, as if you weren't being held in a Wraith Prison Cell, "I tried really hard to keep my men from infighting like the Wraith do in a lot of worlds. Shame that I didn't curb their hunger lust as good in this one, isn't it?"

And with that said, that's when a group of Wraith guards and a Commander show up, asking for who piloted the Dart. Well. Might as well take your chance to escape here.

As you're lead to THE QUEEN'S CHAMBERS, you have to wonder what Ford's game is here. He clearly dropped a hint to you just before those Wraith showed up. Infighting? The Wraith are fighting eachother? You seriously wish he'd mentioned that sooner.

Maybe give it some time to simmer?

Hunger Lust. Wait. DUH, of course the Wraith are fighting eachother for food.

But what do you do with this information??

Your name is John Sheppard, and you get the feeling this is going to be a very long day.

You arrive in the Queen's chamber, and find the white haired queen standing impatiently before you.

"You are the pilot?" She asks.

"I am," you say, being forced to stand in the center of the room.

"We can play this the polite path, or the rude path," the Queen begins. "Where did you get that Dart?"

"Would you believe we just found it in the forest beneath a tarp?" you ask.

She laughs. "Funny. Now tell me the Truth, or I will force you to [KNEEL.]"
You feel a brief push of psychic energy against your head. Urgh. That's unpleasant.

"Fine," you say. "But you first."

"...What?" She asks.

You're about to do something either incredibly stupid or incredibly brave...

"Is that white hair all natural, or is it just the stress getting to you?" You ask.

No. No, that was pretty much the most stupid thing you could ever say to a Wraith Queen.

The Wraith Queen Snarls, and gets in close. "You insolent wretch~"

"Yeah, that's me," you grimace. "Also. Wow. Ever considered a breath mint? You've got the worst breath from a Wraith Queen I've ever met!"

You're pretty sure that's the wrong thing to say, because she pushes against your head with her psyonics, forcing you to kneel before her.


"You!" You grunt out. "First!"

The Wraith Queen snarls- then pulls back, and growls out "Return him to his cell!" before storming off.

...Either you royally pissed her off, or someone else did.

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and you watch as John is returned to you with concern in your eyes.

"We got incredibly lucky," you advise as the doors are closed. "Another Wraith Hiveship appeared. I felt the presence of another Queen appearing suddenly. The Queen likely felt it too."

"That explains the quick exit," John says. "She wanted to know where we got the Dart."

"Good," Ford says. "While she's distracted we can escape."

"How?" John asks. "The forcefield-"

"Isn't on," Ronon interjects.

John turns around, peers at the door, and you take a second look as well.

"...They forgot to shield the door?" John asks, confused.

"...This has to be a trap," you say.

"Of course it's a trap," Ford grins. "They're expecting us to beline towards the dart bay, and conveniently pass through the Cocoon storage area, where a 'captive' will conveniently ask us to help them. We try, get captured again, and the 'captive' will conveniently try to learn as much intel about home as they can to share."

"...Other timelines?" John asks.

"Of course," Ford nods. "Of course... I know where they're keeping our weapons. So, instead, I say
we split up and go that way instead."

"Well that's-" John starts, then stops. "Wait. Are you saying that this Wraith Queen has a human willingly working for her?"

Before Ford can say anything, there's a jolt, and the ship's in Hyperspace again.

"Yeah," Ford nods. "Humans worshiping Wraith isn't exactly a news flash around here, isn't it?"

John grimaces, then says, "Yeah, you're right. But... What ELSE do you know, Ford? What's all of this really about?"

"It's about blowing up two Wraith Hiveships, Sheppard," Ford answers. Somehow, though, you get the feeling there's more to it than that. Much, much more.

"Fine by me," Ronon says.

"Right," John frowns. "So, how do we do this?"

You spend the next half hour or so hashing out the plan, and when Ford cites the ship is about to exit hyperspace, you kick your plan into action.

John takes a knife that Ronon had managed to hide from the Wraith, breeze through the door, and cut open the control console to open the door, and with that, you head out. You, Ronon, and Ford to get your weapons, and John to lay the bait.

---

Your name is JOHN SHEPPARD.

You're about to do something either incredibly stupid or incredibly brave...

No. You're pretty sure that you know exactly what kind of bone headed move this is.

"This Is Stupid!" you remark mostly to yourself before you barge into the Queen's chambers without even getting your hands on a weapon first.

She turns and hisses at you, angry, even as a flock of young girls scatter for the walls.

"YOU!" The Queen hisses. "You escape and the first thing you do is come and visit? I don't know whether I should applaud you, or kill you."

"Well since you were so nice and hospitable giving us the chance I thought I'd repay the kindness and just give you what you wanted to know," you bluff your ass off.

"Now, don't shoot the messenger here, but- The Dart? My Wraith Queen gave it to my team so we could come sabotage you. She wants the planet you're going to all for herself. Of course, the explosives she gave us were fake, so... I suppose we BOTH got double crossed."

The Queen hisses. "Myrella! The Other Hive!?"

"Well, duh?" You roll your eyes. "How else did she know to show up out of the blue like that? She's planning on attacking the moment all the ships are deployed."

And with that, the Queen roars, and turns to exit the chamber, all thoughts of doing anything to you forgotten.
You quickly breeze through the ship, and right about as you find the hangar bay, where Ronon and Teyla are, the ship drops out of Hyperspace. But there's one problem...

"Where's Ford?" You ask.

"He vanished on us the moment he collected his weapons," Teyla says, frowning as she hands you your gear back. "A flicker of 'static' and he was gone."

"Damn it, Ford," you growl, equipping it all. "Fine. Whatever. Stay if you want, kid." You shake your head. "I'll be right back. I'll get the Dart and beam you guys onboard."

They nod, and you breeze across the hangar bay as darts take off all over to head out for Culling- or who knows what else- you get into your Dart, activate it, and--

"What the-?"

A note appears on the screen, "Daedalus will be out there for you. - A Ford"

It vanishes again, and then the Dart's translated OS fills the screen.

"...Well, okay."

You raise the Dart from its bay, and swoop back over to where Teyla and Ronon are waiting.

"Here goes everything," you say, and beam them onboard. That done, you zip out of the hangar bay, and consider your options.

The Hives aren't firing on each other yet, but at the same time, both Hives are deploying Darts still.

You glance at the long range and... Huh, there's Deadalus making its way over towards the fight.... But, there's also a SPACE GATE that's far closer. Hmm... Decisions Decisions...

Then, your decision is taken from you.

The Hiveship you just left starts breaking away from the planet, no doubt moving for a 'safe' explosion distance.

Fuck it.

You jet for the Daedalus before the fireworks start, and you do some spinning to get some friendly attention your way.

And then the Hiveship begins to open fire.

The other Hiveship is caught completely off guard, and starts returning fire.

Looks like you didn't need to intervene much anyways.

You manage to get into range of the Daedalus, withholding fire, and activate your radio, "Daedalus, this is Colonel Sheppard. Current Authorization Code: Delta Four One Three Beta Six One Eight. Open the Hangar Bay Doors, please?"

"Glad to hear you're alive, Colonel Sheppard. Where's the rest of your team?" Caldwell asks.

"Beamed into Dart Storage," you answer.
"Roger that," Caldwell answers, "Opening Hangar Bay doors."

Your name is Colonel Steven Caldwell, and you watch as one of the two Hiveships explodes brilliantly from the amount of damage it took. The other one hesitates, then it starts turning towards you.

"Alright then," you decide. "Lieutenant, make that other Hiveship go away before it gets into firing range."

"Yes, Sir," you hear in reply, the words music to your ears. "Hyperbeam Cannon Firing At Surviving Wraith Hiveship. NOW!"

A beam of Blue and Red spears out and obliterates the other Hiveship. The explosion of that hiveship, like the last, destroys most of its orbiting Darts and Cruisers.

"Begin cleanup operations," you order. "Let's make sure that no darts or debris makes it to the planet's surface."

"Roger that, Launching 302 squadron."

And thus, you sit back, and consider everything.

Beyond ridding the Galaxy of two more Hiveships, what was even the point of all of this?

Honestly, you have no idea what Lieutenant Ford's game plan was here. There was no rhyme or reason to it.

It... honestly felt like a rehash of events that otherwise wouldn't have happened. What was the end goal here?

Still, at the very least it feels good to do something that didn't have you under a Goa'uld's mind control.

Your name is Mikarii Aiikho, and you smile as Jade and Argo pounce-greet their mutual Matesprit to the ground the minute he and his team have beamed down from the Daedalus.

"Welcome back, AR-1," your smile falters a little. "...No Ford?"

"No," Ronon answers, absently glancing down at John and his girls on the floor before meeting your eyes again. "He ran off."

"Unfortunately, we're not sure if he survived the explosion or not," Teyla says. "He used his odd ability to jump between dimensions last we'd seen him, and did not reappear."

"Chances are we'll run into him again then," you sigh. "Damn it. What was even the point of all of that?"

"Well," Mckay says, entering your office with a grin on his face. "Whatever it was Ford's game plan was for? It's benefited us greatly. One working and fully intact Wraith Dart was just beamed down to the Storage Hangar. Doctor Beckett and Doctor Kae just reported that they're already preparing to
run a thousand and one tests on it. Sounds a bit boring, if you ask me, though."

Simultaneously:

"Rodney!" Telya beams. "You've returned!"

From the Floor, John glances up and asks, "Wraith Tech? Boring? Who are you and what have you done with the Real Rodney?"

"I didn't mean it like that," Mckay rolls his eyes, and says, "Also, thanks, Teyla. It's good to be back." He raises a tablet computer. "I just got a data dump from the computer interface Doctor Kae put on the Dart, and it seems Ford did more than leave Colonel Hair-mop down there a parting note about the Daedalus being there."

"I resemble that remark!" John protests, still from the floor.

"What did we get?" You ask.

"It's a lot of data to go through, but if Ford documented his data properly like he seems to have?" Mckay smiles, "Well, I think we just got a solid listing of at least fifteen different Dimension's worth of Wraith Hiveship Fleet Movements."

You gasp, "Fifteen!?"

"That's a lot of different dimensions," Ronon says.

"We'll have to cross reference and see where the commonalities lie," Mckay says, "but I think with this we stand a decent chance of being able to swat out as many Wraith Hiveships as we want with a fairly efficient hit and run strategy. Ah, and that's the fun part for me, Colonel. Hence why I said the ship tests would be boring."

"Fun," John says, and then adds, "it's good to have you back."

"I'll, ah, try to not be quite so aggravating in the future," Mckay promises. "But for now!" He smiles, "I've got Data to Crunch!"

And with that, he turns and leaves your office.

You turn to look down at John, Argo, and Jade, and ask, "So, ah... are you three going to be getting up anytime soon, or should I hand you all some lint brushes?"

The sheepish smiles on all three of them makes you feel like, at the very least, things turned out better than they could have.

Chapter End Notes

Things Not Elaborated on in Chapter:

The Rescue Team knew it was the right planet when the DHD didn't work.

Ol' Myrella managed to get off a subspace beacon alarm to some other nearby Wraith that she had been betrayed by that other hive before she got blown up. That's gonna
have ramifications.

Mckay's latent powers were influenced heavily by that shielding device, tweaked in a way that helps more than hinders.

SCHEDULE:
Next Chapter: SGA:02X12: Epiphany.
Monday: A minisode that leads into Tuesday: SGA:02X13: Critical Mass.

DIASPORA DATE: 08/16/0005.

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you look up from your desk work as the Gate dials in. WAA WAA! KAWOOOSH! It splashes against the shield creating a flicker of light you've come to find oddly comforting.

Bit early for any of the offworld teams to be coming back just yet, you muse,

The shield lowers, and then the Jumper AR-2 took out comes through the Gate, and raises up to the bay above.

Something isn't right.

You get up, stretch briefly, and head out of Mikari's office to the Control room, just as Tyzias come running down the stairs, panic and hurry in her eyes.

"What's going on?"

"Never Trust a MALP on a fucking STICK!" Tyzias, as she barrels past you to briefly glance into the empty office, and then makes for the City Intercom and radios,

"This is Tyzias Entykk to Every Single Scientist with Time Dilation Field experience on Base Right Now. We have Keiko and Mallek stuck in what we're pretty sure is a 240 times accelerated Time Dilation Field. Meet me in the Jumper Bay As Soon As Fucking Possible to get me ideas."

...Well, fuck.

O<--STARGATE: ATLANTIS-->O

Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you massage at the back of your neck as you look around the dark cave that you and Mallek stumbled into at least two weeks ago.

"Well," You say. "I'm pretty sure that we're probably stuck in some kind of time dilation field."

"Probably," Mallek agrees. "Only way to explain why we can't walk back through the field and why the Relto Books don't work."

"So... shall we go out and explore and see what's here?" you ask.

"Might as well. We're running out of food at any rate."
"And we have no idea whether they're injured?" your name is Janet Fraiser, and you sure picked a hell of a week to help out in the Atlantis Infirmary.

"The pain they were feeling was probably a result of the temporal differences," Tyzias explains, grabbing equipment and captchalogueing it as you, her, and Mikari storm down the hallways. "And I'm pretty sure the portal has to dampen the tidal forces that'd exist right at the edge of a time dilation field like that."

"So we have no idea whether they were experiencing time at different rates across their bodies as they went through?" You ask.

"Above all, we don't even know if they're alive?" Mikari asks.

"Look, our best use of time was to assume they're alive but stranded and unable to pass backwards through the time dilation field," Tyzias huffs. "Do we HAVE to keep stopping to explain all of this? Hours could have passed for them already!"

You blink at that. "Okay, point taken."

"Good," Tyzias takes to the radio, "Mckay! Zelenka! Are the supplies loaded and the probe loaded into the Jumper's drop compartment yet?"

"Yes, we're just about finished," Mckay answers.

"Good," Tyzias says in return. "Let's Get Moving, people!! I'd like to solve this sometime within my teammate's LIFETIMES!"

Lifetimes?

Oh. God. She's right.

If this takes too long, then Keiko and Mallek will have died of old age by the time you rescue them.

"RAAAAAAAAWRH!!"

Your name is Mallek Adalov, and you watch as your Matesprit goes werewolf and jumps on the phantom beast that's been attacking the village off and on for the last few YEARS for them.

You get out the handheld scanner from the Jumper and run some scans on the beast...

But the scanner can't detect it.

Whatever it is, is real, though. Given that it's struggling to knock a werewolf-ized Keiko off its back.

You glance around at the rather empty village. Stupid cowardly people hiding away whenever this thing comes knocking.

You'd think that they'd be more concerned, given that this thing killing them would squash any chances they had at ASCENSION, but whatever.

This is what happens when a group of Wraith-fleeing Monks and Refugees seek "enlightenment" in a time bubble cut away from the rest of the Galaxy.

You still can't get over that they've been here for hundreds of years that, for you, was barely even
half a year ago.

Keiko manages to make the beast disperse, and she roars in triumph, for the time being.

...You really hope Tyzias and Daraya come through for you on this, and fast. You can only take a few months of 'peace and quiet' for so much longer!

"Readings indicate there's nothing within the crater," Your name is Rodney McKay, and you glare out the Jumper window down towards the planet below. "Nothing there my ass! That crater is clearly the result of the extreme tidal forces caused by the time dilation field digging itself into the planet's crust."

"We're in position," Sheppard reports.

"Good, drop the probe," you say, going to check your instruments...

"Dropping probe," Sheppard says.

You watch the probes telemetry as it feeds data back to you and--

**SCRAMBLED!**

"Damn it," you swear. "The probe was smashed up by the extreme tidal forces."

"Well so much for plan A," Sheppard then radios, "Jumper 2, this is Jumper 1. Aerial entry to the time field is a no go. Circle around for landing at the gateway."

Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you yank off your shirt to toss to the side, even as you stare at the large lake in front of you.

"Think they're coming for us?" You ask, not even needing to glance to the side as Mallek also takes his shirt off and throws it on top of yours. It's habit at this point.

"Definitely," Mallek says. "Think the time device is really hidden inside the bottom of a lake?"

"Maybe," you answer, disrobing your pants to join your shirt. "It's the only part of this bubble we haven't explored deeper than surface level."

You take a moment to take deep breaths, and then cast an Alfheim UNDERWATER BREATHING SPELL on yourself and Mallek.

You glance over at him, and nod.

He nods in turn, and you both wade into the lake, walking down the incline further and further, as the water raises up along your body until it goes past your head and...

You briefly close your eyes, and then open them once beneath the surface.

You look to Mallek, and say-- "Testing?"

Your voice echoes slightly due to the spell, but it works.

"Tested," Mallek gives a thumbs up.
You both proceed deeper into the lake.

"Anything?"

Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and you look away from the portal into the crater as Tyzias and the rest of the rescue crew come hurrying through the forest to join you.

"No," you answer your Matesprit. "No progress. Not even any signage on the ground since they added the arrow. How did plan A go?"

"Probe got scattered, but we got some data," Mckay adds, joining into the conversation. "I'm pretty sure we know where the power generator for the entire time dilation field is."

"How does that help us?" You ask.

"It means we can go in and shut this thing down," Tyzias says. "Two teams. Us and Doctor Fraiser. Then AR-1 goes in after us if we don't come out from their perspective in ten minutes."

"Oh, good," you take a moment to shake your head. "I was hoping we'd get to go after them." You start re-securing your gear. "How long's it been for them, you think?" You ask.

"If we're lucky? No longer than five months," Tyzias frowns. "I really, really hope we're lucky."

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you enter the time dilation field first.

This is all your fault.

You just had to cut corners and throw a stupid camera on a stick and NOT check how much footage you actually recorded.

Damn it all.

It takes several minutes before Daraya steps through after.

"That's... trippy?" Daraya blinks, finding you sitting on the ground in a semi-meditative pose.

"Tell me about it," you say, patting the ground. "Take a seat, it'll be a few minutes before Doctor Fraiser joins us."

She sits by your side, and then asks, "So... how are you holding up?"

"I'll be better once I can get everyone home safe," you say. "I'll talk with Barzum later."

"Alright. But as for right now?" She asks, grabbing your hand, and squeezing tight.

"Focusing a bit too much on shutting this thing down to worry about anything else," you answer, squeezing right back.

You are Ronon Dex, and you're pretty confused what all the rushing is about. It's been explained to you a bunch of times, but... Yeah. You just don't get it.

"Ah, I've got it," Mckay exclaims.

"Got what?" You ask.
"I've translated some of the runes here and, ad-libbing a little, it seems the field was designed as a sanctuary from the Wraith, as a place the Ancients could come to without fear of being culled so they could Ascend," Mckay explains.

"Thousands of years of meditation gone in the span of a few hours," Sheppard says. "Not bad."

"And if the Wraith ever did come, their ships would get torn apart like the probe did," Mckay adds.

"And so it has remained since the Ancestors departed," Teyla muses, staring at the oddly glimmering surface of not-really-a-wall.

"Yes, well, there's also a warning," Mckay says.

"What warning?" You ask.

"Once you cross the threshold, you can't come back," Mckay shakes his head. "Well, I mean, that is unless you have the exact location of the Power Source and the knowledge to turn it off." He grins. "Anyone else betting we'll get a Zed P.M. out of this?"

"We have ZPMs," Sheppard says. "We don't need more, honestly."

"Fair enough," Mckay glances at his watch. "How long has it been since they went in again?"

"Three minutes," Teyla says.

"Huh, thought it'd been longer," Mckay chuckles. "Guess I'm a fast reader."

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you keep quiet as you, Daraya, and Tyzias hike through a large plane of grass, heading towards what seems to be a distant village near a lake.

Tyzias has a grim look on her face as she leads you towards the coordinates saved onto the Jumper's Hand-Scanner device, and Daraya looks just as concerned as you feel, if not more so.

"We're not too far away," Tyzias says. "Just another-"

And then there's a roar that sends shivers down your spine. An unnatural sound, if ever you've heard one.

Then, it's followed by another roar, one much more familiar- a Werewolf's call.

Then, there's the even more familiar cries of angry Alternian swearing.

The three of you rush forwards towards the sound of conflict, and as you crest a hill, you come across the bizarre sight of a werewolf tussling with some sort of phantom creature, and Mallek trying to stab the thing with a knife, just on the outskirts of that village.

Keiko wraps her legs around the creature's waist from the back, roars something magical, causing her her claws to glow golden as she raises them into the air, and then she slams them forwards and together like crashing a pair of cymbals together.

The phantom creature's body seems to destabilize and then vanish- causing Keiko to fall to the ground.

No, not vanish, teleported. Screams start coming from within the village.
Mallek quickly helps Keiko to her feet, not even bothering to spare you all a glance as more yelling comes from the village.

All of you race forwards into the village itself.

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you growl as you watch the phantom beast tank a couple of ZAT SHOTS, and then fade away into the unknown.

"What the hell was that!?!" you ask, even as Keiko transforms back to normal, looking tired, exhausted, and frustrated.

"That?" She asks in turn. "That was something we've been fighting for the last six months!" She then whirls on you and says, "It took you long enough!"

"It's only barely been two hours for us!" You counter.

"That's no excuse," Keiko crosses her arms over her chest. "We were expecting you months ago!"

"Three Months an hour?" Daraya swears. "Geeze. That's quite the compression ratio. Also, is the sun setting right now!?!"

"Yeah, it does that," Mallek chuckles.

"So..." Doctor Fraiser begins. "...What now?"

"Now-" A villager approaches then. "Now we must do as we have been afraid to. Scared to. Frightened to confront."

"It's about time you guys fought back against it," Mallek says with a grunt. "But that's not what the Doctor means, I think."

"I know where the field generator is, we can shut it down and-" you get cut off.

"You do not need to shut down the field protecting this place," The villager who came up to you sounds indignant somehow, "I forsee it. You will be able to leave unharmed when the beast appears. The doorway will be held open for you once we defeat the beast..."

"And just what is it, anyways?" You ask, a bit annoyed.

"...A manifestation of our own fears towards Ascension," The Villager says and-

"OH COME ON!" Keiko yells. "Is THAT why we haven't been able to do more but make it go running!?"

"You should return to the gateway," The villager advises. "We will be done by the time you arrive."

With that said and done the villagers exit the village and walk out into the unknown fields of the time bubble. Mallek and Keiko go retrieve their gear, and you all start walking back the way you came.

"Can I see that?" Keiko grabs at the scanner tablet. "...Oh Come ON! Seriously? We checked that stupid pile of ruins atleast ten times!"

"You did?" You ask.

"Yes!" Keiko huffs. "Stupid dumb stupid dumb dumb stupid ruins! It was the first place we thought
about looking, but we couldn't find anything that'd respond to the ATA gene or could be forced open. We basically tore the place apart and couldn't find any power source to shut down."

"Hell," Mallek adds, "we even searched every inch of the lakebed. Nothing there either."

"...Fucking hell," you gripe. "We'd have been stuck here for months if we failed at finding it."

Half way back to the cave, you hear the roar of the beast, and you all turn to look as a shadowy creature over the lake evaporates in the face of a village's worth of glowing, ascended beings.

"...I guess that answers that question," Daraya says. "$\ldots$This whole day has been so fucking weird."

"You wanna talk about days?" Keiko laughs. "$\ldots$It's been SIX FUCKING MONTHS! I'm ready to pamper Pina like she's never been pampered!!"

"Not to mention proper swimming in the pool in the City again," Mallek says, sighing wistfully. "$\ldots$That lake just didn't come close enough."

"Oh, definitely," Keiko nods. "$\ldots$Too cold for early morning swims, that's for sure."

Your name is Janet Fraiser...

And honestly, you're just glad that nobody got seriously hurt.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, yeah. This Episode.

There are always certain lynchpin episodes that I have in mind when I plan ahead for the story. Even if I don't have a firm grasp of what will happen before or in the meantime. Broad strokes, certain key episodes. This was one of them. When I seriously sat down and started planning out who was going to go to Atlantis, this was one of the episodes I knew generally what I wanted to do with them. This was the point of no return episode. If I hadn't gotten Keiko and Mallek into a relationship by this point, this was the episode I'd force the dynamic through.

Tuesday's chapter, Critical Mass, is another one of those chapters, as a side note. I didn't realize they were so close to eachother, to be honest, until somewhat recently.
MINISODE: The Silent One.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Your name is...

Far. Far. FAR too important to give away.

The fool clone of Ba'al had been caught.

The Humans and the Alternians and the Tok'ra and Jaffa were hunting for any irregulars among their rank and file, and you, who had once been so important, nestling within the brain of one former Senator, former Vice President, Robert Kinsey...

You were now stuck with the most nervous of precarious situations.

You who had once been on top, was now taking orders from he who had already been caught.

A bog standard spam email appeared.

It seemed nonsense and gibberish, but the code was there.

You had been authorized to activate the self destruction plan.

Atlantis...

Atlantis is to be destroyed at Ba'al's request.

You wonder what prompted the sudden change of heart?

...No. You don't care, really. The sooner you get out of Pegasus, the sooner you can begin reclaiming your TRUE THRONE away from BA'AL.

Ugh.

Ba'al.

You'll never work with him willingly again after this. That much...

Oh, that much you can be certain of.

Chapter End Notes

So. Homestuck Epilogue.

I finished both paths. I have words to say but I think I'll leave it short for now. In related news, someone told me that, apparently, the Epilogue brings Homestuck's word count to just shy of 1,008,000 words- slightly over, I believe...

If that's true, I think I've got canon beat by a wide margin, and that somewhat terrifies
me because I'm nowhere near done.

Meantime, let's try and keep Epilogue spoilers out of the comments for a while so as to give people time to catch up on it until I start drawing potential content ideas from it. I've basically got next week all written out as it is. So... Yeah. Let's tentatively pencil in a no spoiler gap of that long for anyone who hasn't read it yet and *wants* to, yeah?

....Stiiill holding out hope for Hiveswap Act 2 but man. It's going to be *WEIRD* going back to that after all of this.
Chapter Summary

On the subjects of Life, Death, Battles, Circles, and Journeys.
AKA: The one the Act is Named From.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 08/16/0005.

Your name is Raddek Zelenka and you drew the SHORT STRAW.

"[Going offworld?]" Colonel Sheppard asks as your team preps to gate offworld.

Tiredly, you say the planet name, M7G-677.

"[Ah! Kids plannet!]" Sheppard grins.

"[Yes, they're having problems with their E.M. field generator and Mckay insisted that I am the one to go fix it in cases where he cannot,]" you grumble. "[At least he's coming with us to show me what he did to make the field expanded to begin with.]"

"[Wait. Mckay is going with you?]" Sheppard asks.

"[Yes yes, imagine my surprise. He says it's something his Therapist back on Earth advised him to try.] And I have no idea why it took him this long to get his head out of his ass but here we are." You say.

"[Ah! I heard my name!]" And there's Rodney himself, joining you. "[Sheppard! You coming?]"

"[Nah. Tyzias wanted me to take a look at something.]"

"[Ah, well. Good luck with that.]" Mckay waves up to the control room. "[Dial Us Out, Chuck!]" Sheppard gives you a helpless shrug as the Gate starts up. "[Well! Say Hi to the Kids for me!]

"[Will Do!]" Mckay says, then, to you, says, "[Make sure to say hi to the kids for him incase I forget.]

"Idiot," you mutter. "[Of course I will.] Two steps forward one step back, eh? Sometimes you can still be such an idiot still. Ah, well. Baby steps, I suppose."

"[Huh? What was that?]"

"[Nothing!]

---
"Two Wraith Cruisers are inbound through our section of the galaxy," You start. "Now, I picked up tracking of them just shortly after Mckay went to Earth following, ah, his sabbatical. They've been mostly keeping to themselves, up until recently, when word seems to have gotten to them of a recent, ah, shall we say...."

"You mean me telling a Queen to start fighting with another Queen by pretending to be a God Fearing Wraith Worshiper?" John asks.

"Yes, in so many words," you nod, and zoom in on the cruisers, showing them trading bursts of energy fire. "Basically, they've been trading fire with each other off and on for the last while," you say. "Not sure why they haven't blown each other up yet, but they've been very cautious about it."

"Weird," Mikari says. "How far out are they?"

"A day, maybe a day and a half? I think the reason they haven't blown each other up is that they're going to pass by us on a checkup," you say.

"So we cloak and let them drift on by before blowing each other up," Mikari nods. "Good. Keep me informed if there's any change of course, at all."

"Right," you nod.

"Let me know if they blow each other up," Ronon says. "I want to watch the replay."

"Ah. Sure thing, Ronon."

"Let me know if they blow each other up," Ronon says. "I want to watch the replay."

"Ah. Sure thing, Ronon."

---

Your name is HANK LANDRY, filling in at the SGC while General O'neill is off once again dealing with politics... You're meanwhile on the phone with the SECRETARY OF STATE. Politics waits for no man, even if you're the temporary seat warming man of the hour.

And then there's a knock at your door.

Walter leans in to say, "Sir, there's an urgent matter that needs your attention."

You pause, acknowledging that, and then politely cut the call short.

You exit your office to find AGENT MALCOM BARRETT of the N.I.D. standing there, looking uneasy.

"I just cut short a call with the Secretary of State. This had better be worth it," you advise the agent.

"I'm sorry sir, but an urgent situation is developing that you need to be made aware of," he says. "It can't wait."

"Alright, then fill me in," you say.

"We've picked up a recent surge of chatter among the remains of the Trust that Ba'al swept up," Barrett explains. "Upon learning of his clone's defeat and capture, Ba'al's ordered that a bomb be set off in Atlantis."

... What.

"...Well what are you doing sitting here telling me for!?" you ask after a moment's pause. "Go link
through to Atlantis and tell them about what's going on!! Or Gate through, for that matter!"

"...Right!" Barrett looks shell shocked- shaking his head. "I forgot that was a thing."

And then he rushes off.

God, seriously? You wonder how some of these people manage when they fall behind the times.

---

"Excuse me, Doctor Fraiser?"

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you look up to see Teyla Emmagan entering your office on Atlantis.

"Yes, Teyla? What can I do for you?"

"Do you have time to accompany me to the Alpha Site?" She asks.

"Is something wrong?" You ask.

Teyla nods. "A woman who is very close to me, Charin. She is feeling very ill."

"I think I remember seeing her once or twice," you say. "A nice woman."

"She is like a grandmother to me, and given that she is feeling ill..." Teyla shakes her head. "I was wondering if you could come take a look at her?"

You smile, and nod. "Of course. Though, if you don't mind me asking," you start packing up some supplies, "why me and not, say Carson?"

"Doctor Beckett is a fine physician, sure, but..." Teyla pauses. "He is wrapped up in his work. Even Lieutanant Cadman has been having a hard time bringing him out of it as of late. I fear he would be too torn between duties to focus properly. Another pause. "Also. I went to check on him and found him sleeping at his desk. I did not want to disturb him."

"I'm going to have to see about ordering him to get back on a proper sleep schedule when we get back," you say. "That's really not like him."

"So, let me get this straight," your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you look at Agent Barrett standing across from you. "Ba'al, in all his 'infinite' wisdom has decided that because we kicked his clone to the curb, he's going to have a low ranking Trust Operative blow the place up when we try to dial out to Earth for the weekly mass data transfer??"

"Uh... In as many words, yes." Barrett nods, "That's generally what the chatter indicates. The Dialout is the trigger for the bomb."

"Of course they'd rig it to something so utterly mundane as a common trash dump and data transfer!" Doctor Freeman scoffs- having been in your office for a different reason when Barrett showed up. "We don't even use the Gate for Earthbound connections anymore unless it's the mass freight transit
of returning of old supply crates that need to be refilled. Linking Books. They really changed a whole dynamic here, didn't they?"

Barrett chooses to ignore that with a cough, and says, "Yes, well. I'd suggest removing the Control Crystal that allows the extra dial out process in the mean time, just to be on the safe side."

You nod, "i'll get that done. And I'll take us off of ZPM power too, just to be safe."

"Why?" Barrett asks.

"Because what if the bomb isn't actually an explosive device?" You ask. "What if this Trust Agent has sabotaged the ZPMs in some way? I'd like to be certain we're not going to wipe out an entire solar system with that much condensed space exploding outwards."

"...That's entirely fair," Barrett nods. "I'll head back to Earth and see what else my contacts have picked up."

"Good," you nod. "Keep us informed of any changes."

As he leaves, you look to Freeman, and say, "Pay a visit to the cafeteria, please. Tell Boldir Lamati that I need to speak with her immediately."

"I was gonna go get lunch anyways. Want anything?" He asks.

You shake your head. "Not hungry. Don't think I will be for a while."

"So I've had Mikari decide to include intel' about the Wraith Infighting in today's data burst," Tyzias explains as you, one COLONEL JOHN SHEPPARD, and her walk down the hallways of Atlantis. "Well, let's hope that lasts, huh?" You say as you pass a group of scientists working some stuff behind removed wall paneling.

"Oh! Colonel Sheppard! Doctor Entykk!" And then one of them breaks off- wait, that's no normal scientist. That's LIEUTENANT LAURA CADMAN, the girl who got Rodney stuck in her head for a few days.

"Cadman?" You ask. "What's up? I thought you were on the Daedalus heading back?"

"That's what I want to know," she says. "Colonel Caldwell canceled the trip suddenly. Said something urgent had come up that needed his attention here first. You got any idea what that is?"

You look to Tyzias, and she shrugs, saying, "Beyond the potential for Wraith Cruisers to come swinging by to check in on us? I can't think of anything."

Hrmf. Something doesn't feel right.

Your name is Steven Caldwell, and you watch with a bit of unease as a list of your crew is put before you, names starred and marked in various colors.

"This is everyone that's been on the Daedalus crew since around the time you were possessed," Mikari Aiikho says. "Do you remember Ba'al interacting with any of the ones we've marked in red while you were possessed?"

"No," you frown. "He generally kept to himself, pretending to be me. Never let the mask slip until
the minute he was caught, not even at night. He received emails from himself from time to time, but nothing that was more than a reminder to 'stick to the plan.'"

"So it's possible if our mystery agent is on your crew, they interacted with the other Ba'als in the same way?"

"Almost certainly," you nod. "What about your crew, Miss Aiikho?"

"I've had Boldir passively reading minds to check for Goa'uld influence, but since Ba'al was aware of it and had you avoiding her at all times, it's probably whoever planted the bomb has been avoiding her too," Mikari answers. "I have her going around the city checking in on everyone she hasn't interacted with directly in a while.

Once she's done with Atlantis, I'll have her go through this list in terms of who you think are prime suspects."

You look back over the list, frowning. "This feels like some kind of invasion of privacy, Miss Aiikho."

"I know, it's not a pleasant idea, but it's one that had Doctor Weir searching out Boldir to begin with for this expedition," Mikari says. "And it's worked out so far. Boldir knows not to take it too far. And besides... Lives are at stake here. ALL of our lives, including whoever set up a bomb to blow up the City. I can't imagine they're actually that suicidal enough to stay behind on an exploding city"

You breathe out. "That's true. Okay." You peer over the list. "Kavanagh is a new transfer, all things considered. Don't know him that well. Barkley is eccentric, but I can't see him being a Trust Agent. But then again maybe? ...Novak? Come on, she couldn't hurt a fly. Too nervous all the time... Hermiod? Okay, they have been a little weird, for an Asgard, given the recent upgrade to a newer, less, uh, old-clone-blues Asgard-y body, but... you seriously don't think an Asgard would work with a Goa'uld, do you?"

"Not willingly," Mikari says. "But neither did you, after all."

"...Touche," you grumble.

A knock at the door precedes it opening, and a "Jade! Can I have a minute?"

Your name is Jade Jackson and you bite back a groan.

Of course your dad would want to talk now.

You stuff all the anxiety down into a bottle within your soul, and seal it tight, and try to keep a firm grip on your powers too.

"Yeah, Dad?" You turn around in your office chair, and look to him.

"...It's, ah..." Leave it to Daniel Jackson to be the textbook definition of "Awkward" as he stands there, scratching at the back side of his head. "I've come to realize I screwed things up back at Christmas and, uh... I realized a little while ago that you and John and Argo were avoiding me a bit."

You sigh. "Yeah. I guess we kinda were. S'not like you weren't making it hard for us, though."
"Is it because I've been spending a lot of time with Sarah, or-?"

"Dad, no, it's not about that." You groan, lift your glasses up, and massage at your forehead temples for a few moments. "if you want to move on, then that's fine. Power to you. I moved on a long time ago. I just." Nrg. How do you even?? "I just wish that you'd have realized sooner."

"I did, actually, a little while ago, but..."

"You just didn't know what to say?"

"Yeah." God, this is so awkward.

"Well, me either, I guess." You shake your head. "Look, I gotta get back to work, alright?"

He nods. "I'll let you be, then."

So. Damn. Awkward.

"Okay, that's the third time now that the Gate's tried dialing out automatically to Earth's address," your name is Mallek Adalov, and you frown as you look at the code.

You just passed the deadline for dialing out to Earth, so something in the system has decided to take it upon itself to try again and again, as if that would succeed in anything given the lack of Control Crystal needed for the special chevron connection.

Whatever is doing this, though...

You decide to go talk to Mikari. "I'm recommending we shut down the Gate DHD entirely for the time being," you tell her, handing over the control crystal. "All offworld activity should be suspended until we clear this."

"How many teams are stuck out there if we do it?" Mikari asks.

"Just Rodney and Zelenka on M7G-677, and Teyla and Doctor Fraiser on the Alpha Site," you inform her.

"Do it then," she orders, and you go to unplug the control crystal.

The Gate tries dialing out for a third time by the time you finish- and just in time, too, because that address was local and not extra-galactic, and would've gone through.

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you can only watch with regret as Teyla tends to the woman who would basically be her grandmother for all intents and purposes. Present task? Soup, with, what you think was said to be TURTLE-ROOT? Or maybe TRUFFLE-ROOT? Tuttleroot maybe? You weren't quite paying exact attention.

You're running a check on CHARIN'S BLOOD WORK TEST with your portable equipment, but... your instincts are telling you something you already knew.

The Athosian woman would be lucky to last another day without treatment. If this were normal old age, you'd chalk it off as just needing a pacemaker, but...
You think this is a different cause.

The transformations caused by the Rift energy can be brutally violent at times, and while for the most part you haven't been aware of cases where old age has caused complications with the energy... you think you're seeing something akin to that now.

But, given how happy the old woman seems to be dying of, as far as she's aware, natural causes...

You're unlikely to bring it up.

Could a pace-maker work to help? Certainly, but...

"Teyla," Charin starts. "Tell the others to prepare the Ring Ceremony."

Teyla seems shocked. "Charin, that's..."

"I'm dying, Teyla," Charin says. "And you are the leader of our people, in spirit, and in battle, here and afar amongst the stars. Prepare them."

"I..." Teyla seems so shocked and unable to figure out what to say.

"Forgive me for asking, but what's the Ring ceremony?" You ask, saving her from that.

"Oh," Teyla blinks, shaking her head. "Among our people, it is very rare for someone to die of natural causes because of the Wraith. The Wring Cremony celebrates such an event. A ring of stones is laid out, representing the Ring of the Ancestors- the Stargate- in which the body is placed..." She trails off.

"Ah," you nod. "Similar to the Tok'ra rites."

"Yes," Teyla nods. "I had thought it similar when we... When Doctor Weir..." She closes her eyes, stabilizing her breathing, and then says. "I am not ready for this, Charin. Not for us. Not for you. Not yet."

Charin strokes Teyla's hair, and whispers, "We never are."

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you glance over at Lieutenant Cadman as she exits the conference room. "Hey," you start, "Just the woman I wanted to see."

"You did?" She asks.

"You're an explosives expert, right?" You ask. "Miss Aiikho has me searching the city for the explosive device. I thought I could use the help."

"Well, lucky for you I just got cleared by miss mindreader in there," Cadman jabs her thumb over her shoulder into the interview room, where Boldir is reviewing a list of interviewees.

"Good," you say. "What can you do?"

"High Temperature and Energetic Material Technology," Cadman says. "I can also tap dance, too."

"Remind me to make you and Joey talk next time she's in the city," you say. "Now c'mon. We've got work to do."
She follows you through to your workstation in the Control Room.

"So what progress have we made?" Cadman asks.

"John's checking Power Distribution, Ronon's checking Grounding Stations. There's at least eight other teams searching."

"It's a big city." Cadman says, eyeing Mallek and Keiko as they groan in frustration as the Stargate attempts once more to dial out. "Is it supposed to be doing that?"

"No, our mystery Trust Operative did something to the City OS," you explain. "It seems to be working on automatic assumptions for the moment, but we don't know how long before it's going to switch up to something new."

And then, as if the universe decided to prove that point? The lights all around the city flicker as some low, grinding noise echoes upwards from below.

"Oh FUCK US!" Keiko yells. "The Star Drive is trying to turn on!"

"I thought it was busted!" Mallek starts, startled.

"It IS!" Keiko yells, typing in a forced command and-- the noise stops. "Fucking Hell. That was too close."

"What was?" Cadman asks.

"The Stardrive was trying to draw power from the ZPMs," Keiko answers. "Impossibly, considering we disconnected them, for starters. And second of all, the engines-"

"Were hacked a long time ago," Mallek suddenly interjects.

"They were what now?" You ask.

"The problems we were having with starting the drives?" Mallek points at his screen. "I just reviewed the startup log and found out why. Someone put in a bogus command prompt lock that meant only a certain sub-command code would kickstart the engines."

"Why the hell...?" Keiko stares at it.

"Uh-" Chuck suddenly interjects into the conversation. "We have a problem!"

You turn around, looking at what he's looking at- a blinking line of code on one of the large monitors.

Atlantis is Broadcasting a Distress Signal.

"Oh FUCK!" You hurriedly grab the nearest computer terminal and send a shutdown code to the transmitter.

You manage to make it go offline, but...

"What's wrong?" Keiko asks.

"We're so fucked." You look at her. "The Stardrive powering up was just a distraction. We just broadcast a distress signal. The two Wraith Cruisers I've been tracking just changed course and are heading straight for Atlantis."
"How long?"

You are now John Sheppard, and you wince at how sharp in tone Mikari's question is. You, her, and Tyzias are in Mikari's office. Argo is outside, keeping an eye on things just incase you need to be alerted while you're talking.

"A day?" Tyzias frowns. "Maybe a day and a half, depending on if they need to make a hyperspace jump. Look, the long and short of it is we'll have to cloak the city."

"Doesn't stop the fact that the Wraith are going to wonder where the signal came from," you say.

"True..." Tyzias thinks on that for a moment, then, "We'll throw a transmitter to the mainland and dump it with some charred rubble. They'll think it was just a transmitter that briefly worked again for some reason after surviving the city's destruction."

"I think the bigger issue," Mikari changes subject, "is why our bomber decided to signal the Wraith?"

"Well, it's pretty clear we sabotaged their sabotage plan," Tyzias says. "They probably realized we all hadn't gone kaboom and started looking into it. And, summoning the Wraith... That's got me thinking there isn't an actual bomb in the city per-say, but rather..." She shakes her head. "I'll need to do a thorough scrubbing of the City's operating systems, but I'm willing to bet that the ZPMs are the bomb and there isn't a secondary device."

"Just one ZPM going boom is a huge explosion of subspace," you agree. "If we dialed earth with all three and they all went off? I don't want to even imagine what would have happened."

Nobody has anything else to say after that.

---

**EARTH DATE: FEBRUARY 6TH, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 08/17/0005.**

"You think *I'M* Behind this?" Kavanagh asks, staring blankly at you.

Your name is Boldir Lamati, and you shake your head. "Relax, Doctor. We're just checking people off of a list."

"Right, and I'm sure mine's the first name on that very short list," Kavanagh scoffs.

"Actually, you're Number Sixty Seven," you say. "While you are the first I'm interviewing today, I was busy quite a while yesterday looking into people."

His thoughts swirl in a bundle, and unsurprisingly, like the conversation that's transpired so far, they surface aloud.

"Okay. Fine. Lay your questions on me then."

"After the Siege, you couldn't wait to leave Atlantis, but you stayed on regardless after a brief sabbatical on Earth. You took another break for the winter holidays, and you've only been back again for three weeks before you suddenly asked to return to Earth again," you narrate the list of
actions he'd taken so far.

"Yeah, because some of my new co-workers have been absolutely intolerable. Freeman? He doesn't respect anyone. I have no friends here, and my work isn't respected even by those who are respectful. Kae? A nightmare to work with."

"Now, there's nothing wrong with that," you tell him. "The only issue here is timing. Your request went out just days before we found out there was a bomb in the city."

"Right!" He scoffs. "Of COURSE it's a matter of timing! Obviously I did it, right? Is that it?"

"You're not the only one under such circumstances, if it makes you feel any better," you offer. It doesn't.

"It doesn't!" He exclaims. "You've all hated me! That's been clear from the start!"

You look at all of his emotions and...

Hrm. There's one thing he's doing well in keeping away from you.

"Listen, Kavanagh," you begin.

"No, You listen to me!" He glares at you. "Little miss mind-reader here looking inside my head trying to figure out if I'm a spy or not! You realize how shitty this is, right? Seeing anything you don't like? Cause I can't imagine you'd keep pressing the issue any otherwise!"

"Look, Kavanagh," you say, "if you are a spy for the Trust, then you HAVE to realize that if you don't tell us what's going on then you're going to get caught up in an explosion either way, right?" He doesn't look impressed. "Are you hiding anything from us that could make this City explode?"

His mind is a swirling of emotions, focused severely on hiding the fact he's got a secret date-mate somewhere on base (And doing a good job of it too, because you're not picking up other details beyond that), as he declares, "No." And then Kavanagh sits back in his chair, crossing his arms over his chest. "Are we done here?"

"I think we're done, yes," you agree. "And you're cleared of suspicion, just like everyone else before you so far."

You cross his name off the list. Onto the next person.

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and you squeeze Charin's hand as she lies there next to you, looking so faint and weary to the world.

"Everyone is always running," Charin whispers, seemingly to herself. "Always looking to the sky in fear. And soon I shall be free of this Burden."

"Charin, Doctor Fraiser can give you something for the pain if..." You're stopped as she shakes her head no.

"I feel fine, Teyla. I welcome this. It is not to be feared."

"But..." you breathe, guilt weighing heavily upon you. "You are all I have left. My family- my parents- they are all gone." Your vision blurs with wet tears. "If you leave me, I will be truly alone."
"No," Charin smiles. "Your people are your family, Teyla. Your teammates from Atlantis, they are your family too." She squeezes your hand back. "And as you look to them, so to will they look to you for strength."

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you frown as you watch Boldir interview Doctor Lindsay Novak.

"You understand that I'm interviewing everybody onboard the Daedalus, right?" Boldir asks.

"Oh, sure, yes. I know. I mean, whoever planeted the bomb was probably eager to get out of town," Novak giggles nervously. "I- I mean. N-not that I was eager. I was just. Doing my Job? I could have cared less about when we left-- N-n- But, I care about my job obviously! I just didn't--- Er. You know what I'm saying?"

Boldir squints slightly, then smiles. "Doctor, you don't have anything to be nervous about here."

"I know I know!" Novak laughs. "Unless I was guilty, of course. Then I would have to-" She hiccups. "S-Sorry! The Hiccups. Ah. Those are so annoying."

"Right. Right," Boldir pauses. "Okay. I have some questions about your behavior the last few weeks. A few odd transmissions from Earth were recorded in the Daedalus' database as being directed towards you."

"Oh! Those!" Novak laughs it off. "Someone got my ID mixed up with someone else's in the Atlantis Crew Email Database. Kavanagh, I think his name was? He- Hic!-He was very, ah, um. Well. Very anxious to get those ba-Hic-hic-hic-HICHICHICHICHIC!" She slaps the table and yells out, Frustrated and very loudly, "FOR GOD'S SAKE!"

"Can I get you some water?" Boldir asks.

"N-No! No. It wouldn't do any good. I get the hiccups when I'm nervous, it goes way way- HIC-ergh. Way back. To when I was a kid but uh. Yeah. Eye-Dee-Kay, it's- Like. Where were we? Emails? Right? Uh, Kavanagh. Yeah. Guy with the pony tail? He was. Ah. Very um."

Your radio buzzes. "Mikari, this is Tyzias, come to the control room ASAP. We've found something."

You leave the interview behind and head to the control room.

"What is it?" You ask upon arriving, finding Tyzias and Jade standing near to a terminal that Cadman is working on.

"There's no bomb," Jade says.

"Well, there is an explosion coming," Tyzias says, "but I was right. Every single thing that was firing off required a huge surge of power that would overload a ZPM if the Ancient's Failsafes were, for whatever reason, disabled. And guess what?"

"Our spy sabotaged the ZPM failsafes?" you ask, rehtorically.

"I ran into errors after helping run the calculations for cloaking the City with only one ZPM," Jade says. "Brought it to Tyzias, and, well. We figured out what's going on."

Tyzias nods. "Basically, the failsafes prevent huge overloads of power and ZPMs from exploding, but they've been shut down and locked behind an access code."
"Whose?" You ask.

"Unsure," Cadman says. "That's why I'm looking for odd access points in the logs for the Atlantis OS."

"Anyways, the problem is that dialing another galaxy requires huge bursts of energy, as does powering on the Stardrives," Tyzias continues. "Any number of systems can cause it too, when working together. Among them? Cloaking the city requires a lot of energy. Enough to overload."

"The Wraith Cruisers were summoned to make us turn on the cloak," you say.

"And it was manually done last ditch effort," Tyzias says. "Which was why I was able to even shut down the transmitter. Our spy didn't have time to program in a code lock. Same with the Stardrive power on."

"So... we need to find out whose access codes locked us out of re-enabling the failsafes, if I'm understanding this right?" You ask.

"Basically," Jade nods. "Yeah. Otherwise, we risk an overload when we turn on the cloak. So. We gotta act fast."

"Teyla...?"

"Yes, Charin?"

"Our Journey Begins."

"...Charin? Charin??"

_________________________

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you exhale as you slide in a single ZPM.

The Wraith Cruisers will be within scanner range any minute now.

You head back to the control room, silently, quickly, and using the teleporters.

You knock briefly on Mikari's office door to report to her, "ZPM power re-engaged. We're about to activate the cloak."

"Will we overload from it?" Mikari asks.

"Not sure," you say. "I think we've turned off enough secondary systems to keep us cloaked and under overload, but... we won't know until it starts."

"Alright then," Mikari nods. "Get on it."

_________________________

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you look up from examining a few scrapes one of the kids' parents wanted looked at while you were here as Teyla exits Charin's hut.

Tears are brimming in her eyes.

She heads over to one of the men, Halling, and says to him, "Gather the items. Prepare for the Ring Ceremony."
You can only exhale in tired anticipation.

So, it's come to this.

"They're heeereee," your name is Jade Jackson, and you stare at the screen. "Two Wraith Cruisers, just above our atmosphere."

"So far they don't seem to be acting like they know we're here," Mikari starts. "That's... Good. I think."

And then an alarm buzzes, and Tyzias swears, "FUCKING HELL! The City's internal dampeners just powered on!"

"Shut it down!" Mikari orders.

"Working on it...!" Tyzias then radios, "Keiko! See if you can shut down internal dampeners directly! I'm code blocked!"

"On it!" is the reply, followed by some familiar groaning sounds.

"Not the Stardrive again," you whimper, ears flattening against your skull.

The stardrive clonks out again, but...

"Internal Dampeners are stuck online!" Keiko answers over the radio. "Someone sabotaged the control console too. It's missing a control crystal."

"Shit!" Tyzias stands up, and runs her hands through her hair.

"We're going to overload," Mikari guesses.

"No ifs about it," Tyzias agrees. "We're going to overload so badly it's not even funny!"

"How long?" You ask.

"Thirty minutes, tops," Tyzias answers.

"So. Evacuation plans?" Your name is Steven Caldwell, and you look around the conference room. AR-1 is present, save Teyla Emmagan and replacing her for the moment is Jade Jackson, and so is all of AR2, and Mikari Aiikho.

"Daedalus?" Sheppard suggests.

"No, it won't work," Entykk waves it off. "The Life support won't sustain the entire city for nearly long enough to get us anywhere but a nearby planet in this system, and if the ZPM goes boom, so do we."

"Then the quickest thing then is to get the access code," Ronon Dex says. "Give me five minutes with Kavanagh. I'll get it from him."

"But it's not him," Aiikho counters. "Boldir has cleared him. No. I think I know who it is, but I'm waiting on Boldir to get back to me. Her last interview with Novak had her flustered for some reason."
Tyzias' watch beeps, and she chimes out, "ZPM overload in Twenty Four Minutes."

"Evacuate as many people onto the Daedalus as we can," Aiikho orders. "Get the rest into Jumpers and dock them onto the Daedalus for take off. We'll jump to hyperspace when we can."

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you watch as Teyla exits a hut, dressed in a bright blue dress, as shimmering blue as the stargate eventhorizon.

"How are you holding up?" You ask, following her towards the large tent that had been erected for the ceremony.

"Ask me again when the day is over," Teyla says, as you both enter.

There, lying on a stone platform in the center of the tent is Charin's body, as Athosians place stones around her in the shape of a circle.

You nod to Teyla, and take your place among the gathered Athosians as Teyla takes her place next to the ring, briefly talking with the Musicians set to play.

Your name is Boldir Lamati, and you think you've sorted out the confusing jumble of nervous, panic laden thoughts from within Lindsay Novak's brain.

You rush to find Mikari and let her know.

> [S] Teyla: Sing

The Athosians take Teyla's nod as their signal to begin, and the music begins to play.

Teyla takes a moment, and then begins to sing.

[Beyond the Night, a Rising Sun. Beyond the Night, the battle is won. The Battle is Won.]

All around her the Athosians close their eyes as they listen.

Meanwhile, in the Atlantis Control Room, Tyzias and Cadman both work furiously at their laptops, trying to crack the command code.

[Fear and shame now in the past.]

Tyzias glances at the ZPM overload status, and grimaces before turning back to her work.

[Pain and sorrow gone at last. Gone at at last.]

Mikari sits in her office, peering out the window at the Stargate, before standing to join everyone in the Control room.

[1:09]

The Wraith Cruisers circle above the planet, scanning the surface for any anomalous energy
readings.

"ZPM overload in ten minutes," Tyzias reports. "We should think about getting to the Jumpers."

That's when Boldir comes running into the room, "Mikari! I've-" she stops talking, but grins as Cadman exclaims:

"I've Got It! I found who input the command code!"

[Circle Renewed! Peace will be found! Beyond the Night on Sacred Ground!]

Teyla continues to sing, tears flowing from her eyes.

In the Atlantis Conference room, John looks to Ronon, and they both smile dryly.

[1:50]

"Here we go again," John says.

"Yeah, here we go," Ronon agrees.

Mikari, standing next to them tabs her radio, "Hermiod. Do It."

PVVVVMMMM- SHING!

And then appearing with a burst of light across from them on the other side of the table is Lindsay Novak.

"What the hell is this!?" She exclaims.

"We asked Hermiod to beam you here so you could give us the access code," Mikari declares.

"W-What!?" Novak counters, not even paying attention as Ronon begins to circle around behind her.

"Lieutenant Cadman discovered a gap in the system command logs that indicates two deletion points that-" Mikari starts.

"We don't have time for this!" Novak interjects.

"Your Identification code was used to hack into this City's Operating System. Boldir confirms it. You brought the Trust- brought Ba'al the data and they rewrote the ZPM Failsafes to overload. You then reuploaded it into Atlantis' computers." Mikari reaffirms.

"This- This is ridiculous!" Novak hiccups. "You think I'm working for th-The Trust!?"

"We know you're working for the Trust," John draws his handgun and clicks off the safety, yet to raise it. "Now Give Us The Code."

[2:10]

Novak looks at them for a moment, and then her eyes flash.

"Not Again!" John and Ronon both raise their guns in the same breath, and Mikari steps backwards with a "Oh Fuck."

"I will never give you that code," the goa'uld within Novak says, smugly.
Mikari nods to John and Ronon, and steps out of the room as John takes aim at Novak's torso.

"I warn you, as a Goa'uld I now possess the strength of many men," Novak counters.

"Won't be a fair fight then!" Ronon growls, ominously, and then charges at Novak.

There's a struggle, and then Ronon throws Novak to the floor over the table, and John swaps his handgun for a taser gun. He fires and triggers the shock, and Novak shrieks in pain before the Goa'uld echoes from her voice fade away.

[2:35]

"Doctor Novak?" John asks.

Her eyes flash, and John instinctively triggers the shock again, there's no shriek of pain, but when it passes, Novak is huffing for breath.

"Sh... Sheppard?" She asks.

"Doctor Novak," John begins, "We Need Those Codes."

In the moments that followed, the lone ZPM plugged in continued to glow brightly as it began to overload fatally.

[3:09]

In the control Room:

"ZPM levels are spiking, We need to go NOW," Tyzias starts to get up from her chair when there's a burst of wind and John appears.

"Access Code!" He hands Tyzias a small sheet of paper, and she quickly types it into a computer.

The screen flashing OVERLOAD over and over again stops, instead replacing it with a message reading "ZPM FAILSAFES RENGAGED."

[River Flows, Led by the wind.]

Everyone sighs in relief and slumps into their chairs or onto the nearest object.

[First new Breath, Our Journey Begins. Our Journey Begins.]

Teyla concludes singing her song of mourning, and soon, the Athosian musicians end their music as well.

---

**EARTH DATE: FEBRUARY 7TH, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 08/18/0005.**

Your name is Rodney Mckay and you are in a SOUR MOOD.

You step through the Stargate and hike towards the nearest elevator with your crew and team and—OH GOD it's CADMAN.

"Hey Look! It's Mister Mom Rodney Mckay!" she grins at you. "How were the kids?"
You roll your eyes and mutter a "Ha ha, very funny."

You glance at Zelenka and the rest of your team from the brief excursion to kiddy town, and you shudder, wondering how bad your face must look compared to the heavy amounts of mud-based makeup paint across their faces.

Not to mention all the who knows what stuck in your hair.

"Not one word," Zelenka says. "Please."

"Fine, fine," She waves it off. "I've got a date with Carson anyways." And off she goes.

"...Wasn't she supposed to be on the Daedalus off world by now?" You ask.

"Why should I know?" Zelenka asks. "You're the one who was inside her head."

"Oh, VERY FUNNY," you say, and then storm off to find a mirror and get cleaned up.

---

"Penny for your thoughts?"

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you look up as Argo places a coffee mug on your desk- their own cup decaptchaloguing smoothly into hand a moment later.

"Thank you," You take the coffee mug and sip at it.

"Did you see Zelenka and Mckay when they came in?" Argo asks, ears wriggling in amusement.

"No, not yet," You shake your head.

"You should go see them before they wash their faces," Argo smiles. "The kids did a real number in on 'em. Heheh."

She perches on the edge of your desk, and you lock eyes with her, a no doubt serious expression on your face reflects back at you from her eyes.

"I asked Janet to give everyone another full exam," you say. "I thought we'd gotten all of the Goa'uld after we caught Ba'al. Somehow... Somehow that snake slipped through our net."

"It was the one inside Kinsey," Argo shrugs. "At least, that's what Boldir told me when she got a good look at its memories on its own without them being filtered through Novak."

"Another successful removal, sure, but..." You shake your head. "It's not a pleasant thought knowing that we might have to keep doing this."

"No, it isn't," Argo says. They muse for a few moments, then, adds, "You handled it really well, Mikari. Nobody got seriously hurt, and Novak's going to make a full recovery."

"I just..." You frown. "I thought we'd gotten past this. Here we were, gloating about the wraith fighting among themselves, and yet... we have Ba'al, trying to kill us through one of our own. How are we any different?"

"I'll tell you how we're different," Argo says, pausing to take a sip of coffee.

"How?" You ask.
"We're not all just one species here on Atlantis," Argo answers. "We're not just one country, not just one race, not just one blood color, not just one planet, not just one dimension, not just one of anything. We're from all over and we're making it work."

And with that, Argo hops off your desk, and moves to sit down at their own.

You take your own coffee and sip at its slightly bitter taste...

Somehow, it's a bit sweeter than you thought it might've been, given circumstances.

Chapter End Notes

This was one of those LynchPin episodes I mentioned before. And despite some timeline changes, things still happen generally along the same pace as the original episode. Despite the fact that early me never wanted to rehash episodes all that much with this fic, I always suspected I was going to basically just that with this episode, whenever I got to it. I think there's a fun contrast between the canon and this fic when it comes to seeing how different everything goes while otherwise being the exact same thing.

The simple fact of the matter was, I knew going into this that I didn't want to pull the same Caldwell reveal here in this episode that happened in canon. It wasn't going to have the same impact as it did originally. I went for a much more different impact, using Ba'al in Caldwell earlier. Two Goa'uld spies for the Trust, and never the two did meet. I suppose I played a bit of the long game with this one- setting up for it all the way back when Kinsey got captured after he tried stealing the Stargate.

Now that we've hit this point, we're entering the final downward slope of this Act. A6A2 is in its final stages and the curtains are greasing their wheels in preparation to move once more. I'll bet it'll be probably... atleast another week after this one, maybe slightly longer. We'll see, I suppose.

The main focus on this final arc will be the closure of Atlantis Season 2, baring the actual last episode of the season. That one is going to kick off the opening of A6A3, or somewhere in there. It didn't feel right as an End of Act to me. There may be a couple of SG-1 episodes thrown into the mix- atleast ONE that I'm currently writing.

If there was one thing I hoped to convey with this scene, it was that there was a difference and there was hope, even when there were people angling to try and take you out of the equation.

Minor Epilogue Take in relation to the above: Having two contrasting paths with similar overall events transpiring despite things being *VASTLY* different in the nitty gritty details of it all and being able to show that there's still hope despite everything is something I feel is important to make in stories of this nature. Being able to know what's happening in other possible parallels was also something the Friendsims touched on too, if you'll recall Marvus' route.

...
Yes, I'm electing to ignore the clown in the room that is Marvus and Elwurd's missing crew of wayward pirates for the moment.
Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you look up as there's a knock at your office door's frame. "Wh-Okurii!? What are you doing here?"

"Well, a couple of reasons. One of them is, even if it's a tad late, that I came to drop off an office warming gift," Okurii Leijon steps into your office, closing the door behind her. She decaptralogues a gift wrapped box, and hands it to you.

"Thank you," you say, motioning for her to take a seat. "So. What else brought you here?"

"We heard about the Trust operation that you guys foiled," Okurii says. "I wanted to make sure that you were dealing alright with the fallout from that, too."

"I'm..." You blink, palming the box back and forth between your hands. It's lighter than you'd expect for something of this size. "Well. I'm not really sure how I'm dealing either. How are things back in Alternia and Milky Way?"

"Quiet in both cases," Okurii answers. "Gerak's Jaffa have been silent and hidden since Hunt was killed, and the Handmaid hasn't been seen in a while either. The Mofang survivors of the Lucian Alliance raid have started migrating back to Alternia, given the relative peace of everything we've been having. At this point they just seem to want to be left alone and I can't blame them on that."

"Good," you say. "They deserve a break after everything. Any luck on tracking down the slaves that the Lucian Alliance took?"

"Not yet," Okurii shakes her head. "Honestly, the drug trade from them is starting to become the bigger problem."

"It's always something," You say.

"That it is," Okurii nods. "Oh! Also. Teal'c says the Jaffa Council is opening up elections for proper management, since, well, the whole 'military might makes right' thing didn't work out." You nod and say 'good' at that. Then, Okurii smiles, and motions at the box in your hands still. "Going to open it?"

"Oh, right, right." You nod, and strip away the colorful paper to unveil... "A Model Kit of Atlantis?" You can't help but laugh. "Mister Grover's insane idea actually became a thing."

"It's a pre-production desk-scale sample," Okurii elaborates. "Sticker sheet is still being worked on,
unfortunately. Apparently there's a divide over whether they should be foils or water slides."

"Why not both?" You ask, gently removing the binding wraps and lifting the lid from the box. Inside is a bundle of runners in grey plastic suspending all kinds of vaguely familiar shapes. You do a double take as you see a certain shape suspended in two halves near the top. "Is this a to scale Daedalus?"

"Costs I think? At any rate, I'll make that suggestion," Okurii smiles. "And yes, yes it is. There are 304 kits in the line up, plus Puddle Jumpers too. But, anyways. I figured your desk would work best with the city itself."

"Thank you," you smile at her. "I'll have to get some snipers to cut it out with."

Okurii blinks, then laughs. "Whoops!" She decaptchalogue another small box, and hands it to you. "I nearly forgot! Hah. Sorry."

You unwrap that one, and find that it's a beginner's tool kit for assembling kits. "Nice." You smile. "I think I have something to work on tonight when I get off work.

And hey, it might even look cooler without the stickers."

"Maybe," Okurii nods. "So, I-

And that's when you hear some startled shouting from the control room.

"Hold that thought," you say, and go to check on the situation.

...Naturally, Doctor Mckay's test flight of the Puddle Jumper Zelenka had rebuilt had to have gone radio silent just moments after issuing a mayday signal.

Your emergency call to all the people who are going to want to help is probably not going to be very appreciated given today's status back on Earth.

O<--STARGATE: ATLANTIS--->O

Your name is Raddek Zelenka, and you're afraid that your decision to take a break after finishing restoring the Jumper and ask Rodney to fly out on the test flight has cost you your friend's life.

And that's honestly a little shocking to think about.

You? Considering Rodney Mckay your friend?

You suppose in a weird, oddly professional way, he is.

And you were just so tired that instead of putting the flight off another day you-

The hour that passes before radio contact is briefly restored is one of the most stressful ones in your life.

It's soon replaced with what's sure to be an even more stressful series of hours. But now you have a
job to do and math to crunch.

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you can't help but think that this is one hell of a Valentines day. Lunch with Jade and John interrupted, and both of them hurrying to the Jumper Bay to start working on a plan to rescue a sunken Puddle Jumper incase the scientists can find it.

You never really thought much of the overly commercialized holiday. For most of your life you were kept hidden and off the grid because of the Aschen, and your wings and ears were a dead give-away that meant your life was never going to be normal.

Romance? Who ever needed something like that? You'd thought something like that in an internal rant with Jolinar once or twice.

You were certain you were going to die.

And then you didn't.

Suddenly you were back with John and Jade and Rose and then you were all in the fucking past and-

And then you were alone inside your head and you started to think about all the things you never had a chance to think about before.

Asking John and Jade out was simultaneously one of the most nerve wracking and- and- and- Hope. Hope inspiring. You think those are the best words for it,

And then you were stuck in a time bubble and so much changed. You re-affirmed a part of yourself you weren't sure would even matter in the long run, and they accepted you for it. Jude and Cassie had Penny and the whole time you were keeping everyone alive and-

Finding out that that condom broke was somehow even more terrifying than all of that.

The three of you panicked so hard and so bad and- you weren't sure if you were ready for that.

The idea of being a mother? After you'd already distanced yourself from the pronouns associated from that gender? It... It felt so weird. Why not Jade instead of you?

Ah, but the memories do come back to you in that moment. Both of them kissing you and being so close and just- making you the center of attention it--

You feel your cheeks warming and you feel like if this were a cartoon your face would be pouring out waves of steam.

You check on Liz, sleeping in her crib, and smile fondly at your child.

Though you were the one who gave her life, she's not just yours. John and Jade had as much to do with that night as you did.

There's a common saying that it takes two to tango, but that night it was definitely three. Heh.

And you're a little annoyed that they're busy saving someone else's life right now, but- you're all the kind of people who wouldn't ever sit idly by when there was something you could do to help.

Right.

You call for your backup sitter to come keep an eye on Liz- and thankfully Daraya is free to do such-
and then go to the Atlantis Cafeteria to fetch some cups of coffee to take to your Matesprits.

You're not just going to sit idly by when-

...  

...  

...  

Wait.

Rose.

That's It!!

Your name is Rose Lalonde, and you borrow one of Argo's hands for a FACEPALM X3 COMBO.  

"God damn it! I should have thought of that the moment I heard!" You say, powering up to kitty mode. "Go get Kanaya and tell her to prep the Infirmary! I'll be back in a flash!"

And so you reach out into the ocean, following a strand of connection out deep, deep, deep to the sea-floor below and--  

**POP!**

The world woooooshes past you- city walls blurring past before open sky transitions to the ocean, and then deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper.

Faster and faster and deeper and deeper you travel, bluring past fish and whales and sea life and---

---For a moment, you can see it. You can see the Jumper. You can See Rodney Mckay.

You blur through the cracked windshield of a Jumper, past the sealed bulkhead doors, and materialize with a WOOSH of displaced air next to Rodney Mckay, presently arguing with thin air.

"Oh! And look, Sam! It's another halucination!" he points at you. "What's Rose supposed to represent? Huh?"

There's a long silence, during which you take in the large bandage on his forehead, and a lot of dried blood on the side of his face and clothes.

You blink, and then cough politely. "Um. Rodney? I'm actually very real."

"No, you can't be any more real than she is!" He points over at thin air. "See, there's a limited amount of air supply this Jumper can even-" he pauses to look at his tablet. "Wh... Why did it go down-?" Before you can say anything he wirls on that empty corner again- "OF COURSE I KNOW THE POWER IS DRAINING BECAUSE MORE OXYGEN IS BEING BREATHED UP! I AM NOT AN IDIOT!" He stops, and then turns to look at you, "You're real?"

"I'm very real, Rodney," you nod. "Where's-?"

"Griffin? The guy who flew me out?" Mckay jabs his thumb at the forward compartment. "He sealed the door with me inside the back."
"Let's get you out of here," you say, and reach out to find Kanaya and Argo....

Your bonds with them are much stronger, and you reach out to grab Mckay and-

"Wait!" he says. "What about the sudden decompression!?"

---And just like that, the moment doesn't happen.

If Your powers had a mental interface, they would be telling you a firm [NOPE] in that moment as you rebound right back into Atlantis. But instead, you have this weird flicker of a moment of a sliver of time that doesn't actually exist.

"Ow." You groan, hitting the floor.

"What happened?" Argo asks.

"I think.... it was the pressure differential," you groan, getting to your feet. "He's too far down. My wormhole trick can't handle the water pressure going down, and I think even if I did get down there to him, I couldn't bring him back up properly."

"Shit," Argo swears. "Of course it wouldn't be that easy."

You agree very readily with them.

Your name is Kanaya Maryam, and you gently place an ice pack on the back of your matesprite's head. Rose hisses at the first sting of the cold.

"And you're not using shaper whyYYEEE!!?" She asks, pitch going up at the end as you make sure the rest of the ice pack is securely held against her skull.

"You really need to be more careful before you leap," you say. "And it's not that bad of an injury anyways. You'll be fine in an hour."


You pat her shoulder, and smile. "Now then, how about we talk about what we're doing for dinner?"

Your name is Jade Jackson and you flinch upon hearing a new voice call out for your name among the din of the construction work securing the grappling cable to the bottom of a Jumper.

You turn and look to see who's calling your name and see that it's Sarah Gardner- dad's new girlfriend.

You feel surprisingly neutral about seeing her.

"Yes, Sarah, what can I do for you and can we make it quick?" You ask.

"Well, I suppose this is a bad time, but, I was wondering if we could talk about Daniel-" she starts.

"Yes it is! Let's put a pin on that until AFTER we've saved Rodney Mckay from drowning, shall we?" You wave her off not out of some personal vendetta against your father or her for that matter,
but for the simple fact of the matter that this is HORRIBLE TIMING.

"Okay, very well," and she heads off.

You're about to turn back to your work here when you hear your name called again, this time by someone who's been here this whole time.

"Jade!" John yells from across the hangar. "I have an idea about the depth problem!"

You hurry over and listen, and...

OOOH.

If converting the City's SHIELD to a CLOAK is possible, then the REVERSE is ALSO POSSIBLE.

You quickly begin the groundwork for that kind of conversion, but you think a vast majority of the work is going to have to be done in the ocean at this rate.

Zelenka has a location, and he and you- JOHN SHEPPARD- are going down in the Jumper with Doctor Fraiser to rescue Rodney Mckay.

Zelenka works on finishing the cloak-to-shield conversion Jade had started as you dive down...

It's going to be a long trip.

Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and you lay in bed with your Matesprite, not really thinking much about anything, content to lay there on your side, and look at Tyzias next to you even as she stares up that the ceiling blindly.

Her glasses are off somewhere on one of the nightstands nearby, so you get a rare, unobstructed look at her face.

And you can tell her mind is already starting to drift towards some serious thoughts.

"So... What's up?" You ask.

She tilts her head to look at you, and asks, "Do you ever wonder about how lucky you are to have met the people you have through sheer coincidence?"

"All the time," You smile, lean over, and kiss her. "We both lucked out."

"I guess we did," Tyzias nods, then kisses you back.

About Five hours after Mckay's Jumper had crashed and sunk, he's finally back in Atlantis and resting in the infirmary.

Your name is Carson Beckett, and you can only shake your head in frustration.

A concussion that bad to the point of hallucinating is a concerning thing. Very concerning. Miss Maryam at least was willing to accelerate the healing process, but even then the Shaper Crystal has some limits in that regard.
And yes, Janet did a lovely job siphoning off any 'Doom' from Rodney but even so...

Still...

You worry about potential long term impacts to all of this.

It's days like today that push you to work even harder. You shouldn't have taken time off to have a
day with Laura Cadman. You have to finish this Wraith Retrovirus FIRST. Make sure it works.
Make sure...

Make sure you can end this so accidents like these won't happen because of malicious intent.

Your name is Okurii Leijon, and you knock once more at Mikarii's office door.

"Oh, hey, sorry," She smiles. "Things kind of got hectic there, didn't they?"

"Yeah," You say. "Anyways. So, I gotta get going, but there was something important I needed to
give you." You decaptchalogue a folder and hand it to her. "Save for Yellow and Blue, you have
Power Rangers on base. Alternate dimension, our world versions of them, but still."

Mikari opens the folder, and stares. "Mother Grub! Ziggy's a Ranger!?

"Apparently, yes," you nod.

"Thanks," Mikari looks up at you from the folder. "Why didn't anyone bring this up sooner?"

"Considering we just had the Kyoretsu Zords vanish on us to that world, I guess nobody figured it
was going to be important. But... Well." You shake your head. "At any rate, we're keeping this on
the down-low just to be on the safe side,"

"Wait. The Zords vanished?" Mikari asks, shocked. "When? How??"

"When? Just about an hour ago. How? Joey's idea. Transponder boxes. They haven't signaled for us
to draw the zords back yet, so... we'll see." You force a smile. "At any rate. I was hoping to have
more time to just hang out today but, well..."

"Sinking Jumpers and all that."

"Yep." You nod. "I'll try to drop in again another day when things aren't quite so hectic."

"Knowing the universe, that'd be grounds to summon trouble," Mikari shakes her head. "Anyways.
It was good seeing you. Thanks for dropping by. Travel safe!"

You nod. "I will!"

And with that, you turn to leave back through the books you came through.

Chapter End Notes

NEXT EPISODES: Rounding out the week: MIRROR episode, followed by a breather
of an intermission. Then, Back into it with an emotional heavy SG-1 ep, and then more
Atlantis.
Reader Question: I looked and looked, but it seems that the only Stargate Model Kits that were made were Daedalus and 304s and Jumpers. I couldn't find an Atlantis City Model Kit anywhere, and it makes me sad it seems that one never got made. Would you guys want a Desktop Atlantis Model?
Your name is YUUKI, and you snap awake very quickly as your ears pick up the sound of mechanical grinding noises from outside.

*Whrrr. Whrrr. Whrrr...*

You roll over in your makeshift cot and glance at Touya, seeing that he, too is awake, alongside Cassandra, who was keeping watch last.

You and Touya quietly move to wake up the rest of your team- Joey and Samantha- and then start moving down through the abandoned apartment block that you all holed up in.

There are now loud clunking noises like footsteps, accompanying warbling electronic sounds that sound like communication.

You move up to peer out a window, and see that there's a Squad of Grinders moving on all sides, surrounding a very oddly feminine looking robot with... Ew. Are those Temperature Knobs for breast nipples? And... shower heads for hands? What...???

You honestly don't know what Venjix was thinking when he designed that one, but he's got to be drawing from some kind of rejected design pile at this point. Who'd ever design a robot based on a Shower of all things?

The Shower-bot motions for the Grinders to encircle the building you're in.

You look to Touya, and nod. He nods in turn.

You'll have to fight.

Nobody says anything as you and Touya prepare for trouble... and about to make it double. (Heh.)

You both leap out of the window, and attack.

A quick shift to wolf form, and you and he both begin to trash the Grinders with ease, leaving only the Shower Bot behind un-assaulted.

It motions angrily at you during the fight, making warbling sounds that you think sounds like it's saying "Showa Showa" over and over. It even reaches one hand up to one of the knobs on its chest as if to power on an attack.

And then Samantha or Jolinar sharp shoots it from the window with a P-90.

Sparks fly, the Bot stumbles backwards, and then... it falls over flat on its back.

"Let's get out of here!" Joey yells from the window, holding up one of the transponders for the Zords.

You nod sharply, and finish dispatching the rest of the Grinders.
A quick transform back to human form, and you and Touya regroup with the team, running for a wide open, clear area in the ruined town to summon the things in.

You do find one relatively easily enough, though. Easier than you figured it'd be.

"Here," Joey hands you and Touya two of the transponders, and then, together, the three of you press the buttons.

Then, there's a flash of green light back the way you came, and suddenly the Shower-bot is GIANT Sized.

Yeah, you're going to need those zords for more than escaping this town, aren't you?

The Shower Bot starts making its way towards you.

Any Second Now, dimensional transporting zords. ANY SECOND NOW???

And then there's a crack of sound in the air, and you feel a smooth breeze of MAGIC brushing past you, and you look up to watch as the Kyoretsu Zords brust forth from a rift in the air and smash, conga line style into the Shower Bot.

It gets flung far back into the ruined city, landing on its back, and the Train Zords circle around and-

"PVVOOOMSHING!"- you find yourself in the K-Line's cockpit.

You take the seat, and bring up the controls.

Joey and Cassandra got Kishamoth, Touya and Samantha got T-line, and it's just you here alone in K-Line. Lovely. You do so love a Triceratops all to yourself.

"Split up and move for combination!" Joey orders.

"Right!" You and Touya nod, and break your Zords off from hers, zig zagging around through the air even as the Shower-bot gets to its feet and starts hurling steaming water blasts at you from its hands.

"COMBINE ZORDS!"

Kishamoth transforms into its bulky upper torso form while you and Touya harass the bot to keep it away until its time to drop in and attach as the feet.

"KYORETSU MEGAZORD!"

Your mind links up with Touya and Joey, and the Train themed Megazord stands off against the Shower themed Robot.

It roars something sounding like an electronically warped "SHOWAH!", waving its arms and throwing more bursts of water at you.

"Steam Attack!" Joey throws a lever, and a burst of steam launches from Kishamoth's trunk-deflecting the water attack.

You start the charge in for a running punch and kick combo, and deal in some heavy strikes to the Shower Bot's body.

"Let's finish this!" Touya declares, and signals for the powerful arm chop attacks.
With another steam burst to stall the Shower Bot, you then slam both arms down across it like giant, steam powered, train-wheel rolling karate chops.

And with that, it's finished.

The Shower Bot falls flat on its back and explodes.

"Let's split up again and double time it for the Cavern," Cassandra suggests.

"No arguments from me," you say.

Meanwhile, within the Domed City of Corinth, a trio of Train Zords suddenly re-activate, bursting forth from the nearby mountain and startling both a giant Venjix Attack Bot and the Rangers in their Megazord fighting it.

Hours later, looking backwards into the files recorded through the eyes of two Attack Bots, Venjix stared at the near identical Zord designs.

_And. He. Marveled._

The same three Zords. TWICE.

Two places at the same time.

A marvel. A truly genius marvel.

Inter Dimensional Displacement on a dime.

Venjix studied the rift explosion of energy that let those three zords in, and he could care less as the Rangers once again defeated one of his Attack Bots.

Oh, sure they may have gained a new Megazord today but it was only a matter of time before his Creator had unearthed those Zords ANYWAYS. So...

No. This was fine.

This was more than fine.

This... This was fantastic.

This required time to properly process this data. So, when General Crunch- or was it Shifter? Venjix didn't care and wasn't even paying attention- asked to design an Ultimate Attack Bot, Venjix told him to take all the time he needed to perfect the design and even ordered all other attacks to be halted for the time being until the project was completed.

Let the Rangers sweat for a little while, dreading the next attack.

And if they somehow beat this Ultimate Attack Bot that'd be fine. It didn't matter.

Venjix was close to discovering the means of beating them once and for all.

Your name is Doctor K and you sigh in relief as you finally settle back into your office chair and review the data from the Paleomax Zord's automatic launch, now that you have full access to their
hard drives and memory banks.

Something had awakened them, and you have a suspicion that it is not entirely due to the Attack Bot digging into the old Alphabet Soup dumping ground.

...And there it is. The activation signal. A strange burst of Bio-field energy that seems to mirror the Paleomax Megazord's combined energy readouts, except, attuned to three separate Biofields rather than one?

How is that even possi-?

Wait. There's another bit of data here. There's... There's that unknown particle from the solar explosion triggered by that "Professor Cog" Attack Bot.

Now what is that doing there?

...

..."Wait," you mutter aloud, and run through the data again.

The Paleomax Biofield configurations... could it be that parallel versions of the Zords had appeared? That would explain the- but then what about the-- and if then, what if---?

The only possible explanation is that some alternate version of you and the Rangers have the Paleomax Megazord, be it future iteration or parallel world iteration, and are lurking about causing trouble for Venjix elsewhere.

But why?

A Stable Time Loop would make the most sense. Did things go disastrously wrong?

...No, that might not be the case at all.

No. Time Travel has to be ruled out, after reviewing your earlier conclusions.

There are visitors from another world here in your world. And if that is the case then--

Then your fear of Venjix attempting to visit other worlds may very well be a reality.

Chapter End Notes

Shower-Banki from Go-Onger was cut from the Power Rangers RPM adaptation for obvious reasons. Here's a little nod as to why that might have happened in universe. (Don't look it up if you want to spare your eyes. It's one of the *weird* ones.)

RPM Timeline Wise, this is the episode "Ancient History" which is near to the end of RPMs run, introducing the last Megazord in the show. We'll be roughly following their progress in tandem for a while.
Your name is Boldir Lamati, and you wince as two of the Cafeteria chefs snap at each other.

"No! You're using way too much sugar and cinnamon in that bread!" Shirou Emiya protests, pointing at a bowl of half mixed bread dough.

"And I'm telling you!" Marienette Dupain-Cheng points at it in turn. "THAT. IS. THE. RECIPE. That's how my parents have made it all my life and it's FINE!"

"But you're not considering the Altitude!" Shirou counters. "Paris is sea level, isn't it?"

"Yes, and so are we!" Marinette counters in turn.

"No! We're above it! The city is MASSIVE!" Shirou runs his hands through his orange hued hair. "We're at least a mile above the ocean thanks to how high up the city is! That altitude affects how food cooks here in Pegasus just the same as if we were in Devner, Colorado!"

Diemen sits next to you, shaking his head. He doesn't have to say anything. Neither do you.

"Two Words, Emiya!" Marinette raises her fingers with each one. "INTERNAL. DAMPENERS."

"That aren't on!"

"The ones for the spaceship flying!? Sure, of course not! But have YOU noticed any altitude pressure differences when teleporting all around the city!? Because I have. Not!"

"...Well. I suppose that's..."

"Check." She points both fingers at her eyes, and then at Shirou's. "Mate."

"That hand gesture doesn't even go to that phrase, Marinette," Shirou laments.

"Two Words!" Marinette repeats the motions, timed to "Don't. Care."

"You're just being childish now!"

"Who's the one being childish!? Interrupting a baker at work! Let me make my damned Cinnamon Sugar Bread in peace, Emiya! And if it doesn't work, you can tell me I told you so! And if it does-!"

"And if it DOES work?"

"Then you owe me an apology!"

"...That's it?! What. Not even going to ask me to make you food or something?"

"Your cooking isn't god's gift to Pegasus, Emiya. I Just want an apology."

"You know my family back home would be seriously offended if they heard you say that."

"Well they're not here right now. Are YOU offended?"
"Not especially, no. I'm just used to people asking me to make them food in return for something."

"Well, I'm not that kind of person. Now let me get back to making my damned bread!"

"Alright, alright."

You look to Diemen, and he says what you're both thinking. "Ah. I do so love the quiet days where our highest point of excitement is arguing over how to make food and not, like... you know. The fate of the galaxy or something."

"Agreed on that," you agree with a firm nod.

Chapter End Notes


This chapter:
Yeah. Breather episode. Also. I just really wanted to have the top bakers from Fate and Miraculous Ladybug arguing with each other over Sea Level and Altitude affecting Baking.
Dirk Strider had lived a long and tempestuous life. His parents had never been the best, and his Brother, well... there was a time that he thought they'd never be on speaking terms again.

Hearing that in another universe he was in jail? For disturbing crimes that he, personally, knew could entirely be within his potential to commit without proper guiding hands to steer him away from it?

That did not surprise him.

Honestly, chances were more times than not that there was a high risk of potential for Dirk Strider to turn out to be a fucking horrible monster.

And the last couple of days after SG-1 had returned, Dirk could see some people looking at him differently. The worst offender was little Rose, though. Why she had started avoiding him confounded him. Nobody had told her, right? He certainly hadn't done anything. And yet...

The few times he'd seen the girl around Base, or staying over at the house with Nepeta...

She looked downright terrified of him.

Honestly, it might be enough to bring a man to want to avoid interacting with people entirely, in whatever way he deemed fit. Like going out into the woods for a weekend to clear his head.

And he was so very, very, alone.

Ripe targeting material for the Trust. For YOU.

Your name is BA'AL, just one of many, and you smugly coil yourself around his spine.

Your plan is utterly flawless.

You're going to infiltrate the SGC through the eyes of someone they already trusted. Heh. Their trust would be soon heavily misplaced and it is with that thought that you step out of your car and start heading back to the Strider Household's front door.

You hear some rumbling above you, akin to thunder, and pause to peer around.

Hrm, no clouds in the sky? You could have sworn the Weather report said today was going to be
clear sk-

Crack! Creeeeak...

Wait.

What?

SNAP!

You look up a moment too late to see a mass of sparking wires and falling wood tumbling towards you.

KRAKOOOOOOOOOM!

Your name is Karkat Vantas, and you yell out a startled expletive as the power cuts out with such a loud crack of sound like thunder or lightning or whatever the fuck it was.

Nepeta, thank god, was over at the Egberts. That would have hurt her ears more than it hurt yours.

"Yo, what the fuck was that?" Dave asks from halfway across the house, meandering towards you as you also meander towards the front door.

"Sounded like it came from outside," you say- and then pause to sniff the air. "Oh. Fuck. Do you smell that?"

"Roast Pork?" Dave frowns, and then you both open the front door and.

"...Oh Fuck," you swear, staring at the sight before you.

A nearby electrical pole had snapped clean in two and collapsed down onto your yard, burying some poor fool beneath the mound of currently burning wood and live electrical wires.

"Shit!" Dave grabs his cellphone. "Someone's trapped under that!"

"...Hope it wasn't anyone we-" you stop, seeing the car parked nearby. "...Fuck. It was someone we know."

Dave does a double take, and then grows deathly silent, stating only a whispered "Bro...?"

O←STARGATE: SG-1→O


DIASPORA DATE: 08/31/0005.
Your name is Doctor Caroline Lam, and you grimace as you finish the autopsy report.

A Symbiote had managed to get implanted inside Dirk Strider, and it was only thanks to the luck of Termites of all things carving out a home within a power pole that had stopped him from directly causing any direct damage to the SGC, or God forbid the Strider family.

That's the only plausible plus side to any of this, because even if the Trust hadn't gotten their hands on Dirk- and of course it had to be the Trust because who else would even try?- if he had returned at the same time of day, down to the exact second...

He would have been crushed and burned alive just the same.

You can only hope whatever Symbiote within Dirk was suppressing his mind thoroughly enough that the poor man never felt it coming.

Freak accidents happen, but it's so rarely that you can feel that they aided in something positive, change wise.

Fuck.

You don't know how to handle telling Davis about this.

---

Your name is Davis Strider, and you're shell shocked.

"A Snake was in him?" You ask.

Doctor Lam nods quietly.

"...And we lucked out with the termites chewing on the power pole right then and there!?!" You ask. "LUCKED OUT!!?"

"Maybe that's the wrong choice of words, but... I suppose yes, we did," Doctor Lam then says-"Atleast it wasn't you, Karkat, or Nepeta."

"But Dirk-!!"

"Was possessed by a Goa'uld," She reiterates the point. "Direct your rage and grief at the Trust, please, Davis. Not me. I'm just the messenger."

And so you think it over.

You keep thinking it over.

...

...

...

Your first decision is to find a new place that isn't so close to power lines, and is a reasonably termite free area.

---

Your name is Roxy Lalonde, and you run your hand through your hair as you help your elder, alternate self with the paperwork for cremation and a spot in the cemetery.
You can't believe that Dirk is dead.

Of all the things to happen...

"Hey, um..." Other you says. "Thanks for helping, Rox. And, um. Coming from Atlantis. I don't think I... I could handle this on my own, you know? Any of us, really."

Rox? You blink. Yeah, sure you can rock that. "Ah, it's fine. It's just a quick link back from the City, anyways," You say. "But I know what you mean. I remember when we were doing this for Jake and it was all... "

It was a lot.

Everyone worked together and did what they could to help make things work. In this case, you and your other alternate, more feminine self are taking off the load of arranging for the-

For the, well. The...

Honestly you...

...

...

"Hey, Roxy," you start, a gear of thought clicking into place. "...Has anyone seen Hal?"

"Lil' Janet went to get him," Roxy answers.

Huh.

"Well, cool, i guess." You answer, and get back to work, trying not to think about everything.

Your name is Missy Fraiser, and you frown as you hear the ticking of clockwork as you stand outside the small Diaspora Appartment that Hal Strider had taken up residence in.

Something isn't right.

You try for the door handle... but it doesn't budge.

No, more than not budging, it doesn't even wriggle like it's locked.

It just flat out doesn't move, and makes no sound as you try.

Impulsively, you try slamming the door with your shoulder but bounce off without a sound.

What the fuck!?

"Hal!?" You try knocking on the door, but again, no sound. "HAL! Are you in there!?"

You kick at the door.

No avail.

Fuck, there's that ticking sound getting louder.

You dig deep down within yourself, and try to draw up some of that potential DOOM that you're
You try and try and use it on the door...

Finally, you feel a spark of something--

**ZAP!**

--And that something makes the door shrink down to about half size, floating impossibly in the middle of the space it used to occupy.

Then, the ticking stops, the door hits the ground and falls flat on its side before returning to normal size.

You don't question what the hell happened, and you jump through the gap you just made.

What you find is an utterly trashed mess of an apartment. More so than Hal usually keeps the place.

"Hal!?" You call out, and start searching.

You spy splashes of blood on the wall, and large chunks of walls and the floor and ceiling carved away by...

You almost want to say sword strikes but-

No, surely that can't be right.

There are some chunks that look like they were burnt around the edges.

Then, in the bedroom, you find a spherical section of pure rock that seems to have replaced the floor and ceiling and also the bed itself.

You grab for your cellphone and call Joey Claire.

Hal Strider has gone missing.

"I can't locate Hal," your name is Cassandra Fraiser, and you frown, peering at two sets of galactic starmaps. "So either he's not in any real danger, or..."

"Or The Handmaid has him," Jude states the obvious. "So... her teleportation trick has a wider range than just jumping dimensions."

"Which means she could be anywhere, or any when for that matter," you say, staring at the maps more.

...This is not good.
Kanaya, and you just overheard MOM talking in hushed tones over the phone with UNCLE DAVISH about what happened with UNCLE DIRK and COUSIN HAL.

Someone kidnapped Hal? Just so soon after Uncle Dirk died?

Your PLOT SENSES are tingling.

But you're only SIX YEARS OLD, what do you know about PLOT beyond what your mother reads you from those WIZARD BOOKS and the crazy shows they put on TV?

What you do know is that Uncle Dirk was troubled over something, and not days after he died, someone kiddnapped his CLONE.

Yes, yes, people were careful to not say the word, but you remember him and Jimmyy, and Morgan, and Missy, and Aunt Jane suddenly becoming a teen again, and your own MOTHER suddenly having a copy of herself all around the same time and, please. Don't be patronising.

You may be Six but you're still pretty smart. You've always been smart for your age. You were the first to talk. The first to read. The first to crawl, and the first to walk.

You might have only been the SECOND to be born, but you've been first in everything else.

Of your peers.

You feel it needs to be said that, naturally, you weren't the first human being ever born anywhere ever.

Sometimes your classmates give you weird looks when you talk. Sometimes your teachers stare at you like you're not really a kid.

John's normal. Jade's normal. Nepeta- for her otherwise abnormal ears and wings- is normal.

Developmentally, they're all just. Normal. Even Kanaya and Nepeta- the Alternian one- are normal for their social environments.

They're all so sheltered.

Nobody's told them yet. Nobody's told you, yet.

Not directly.

But you've thought that same sentence now in various forms atleast five times the past half hour. It hasn't gotten you anywhere.

Why would someone kidnap Hal? For his Speed? For genetics? For his hair? His winning personality?

Wait.

Genetics?

You know cloning is a thing. You're pretty sure Nepeta was born out of cloning, even. So...

So.

...
"Well, this is certainly not how I was expecting to spend my afternoon," the boy gripes as he works at a console.

Your name is Damara Megido, and you laugh with your borrowed mouth. "Imagine then my frustration hunting down this laboratory."

It's one of these places that someone named NIRRTI once worked in, cloning tanks and other various equipment remains scattered about, still usable.

"Oh, I can imagine," he says. "I've got places to be, you know." He tries to move to another console, and sends you a withering gaze when your time bond around his feet makes them not move at all.

"Specifically, that console over there?"

You flick Clarent over that way, and he teleports.

"Beyond that, there's a funeral of myself I'd like to attend, so after I make you a real girl and not a spirit possessing people, how's about you send me back to where I was?"

"Mmmh..." You consider it. "No."

"And why the fuck not?"

"Because I said so."

"Fuck you-"

"Maybe when I'm younger, or perhaps were you older? Hehehe."

"-With your own damn sword."

"Ah, a sharp wit you have there."

"You broke into my house, wrecked my shit, and teleported me and my bed to a fucking ectobiology lab in another fucking galaxy!" The glares at you through a monitor's reflection from behind his shades. "Clearly you could have chosen anyone else, but instead you chose ME. WHY?"

"Because this lab was used to create that young girl with the cat ears and crow wings, and the devices were keyed to accept your genetic signature in places. Some of these devices wouldn't work without an authorized operator," you elaborate. "Couldn't add privileges could only modify. Blah Blah. Tiresome work. And considering your other self was otherwise occupied, I was limited in options."

"So, what, you wanna be another Nepeta Strider?" he asks.

"No," you say. "I thought I made it very clear what genetic material to put into the device."

"You did. Just double checking the standing orders were still standing."

"A wise idea. You should keep your feet planted firmly on the ground, as an aside. I would hate for
you to lose grip on gravity and fly away into the sun before you're finished." You grin.

He remains silent for the remainder of the next hour.

"Mom."

Your name is Roxy Egbert and you ignore the tugging at your pant leg with a "Not now, Rosie. Mommy's working."

"Mom! It's important." There's an impatient, concerned tone to Rose's voice.

"Can it wait, Rosie?" You ask, feeling torn.

"Hey, I'll take her for the moment," Younger-you says.

"Thanks," and you let her take Rose to talk about whatever it is. You tune it out as you work on paperwork.

Let's see... if it takes them a week to prepare a slot and to get the-

"How did you know about that?" Younger you's voice jumps in sharpness for a moment.

"I'm Six. Not Deaf," Rose counters.

You resist the urge to snicker and try to focus. FOCUS. Get your head in the Game, Ro-Egg!

So, if you can't do anything for a week, then someone will have to hold onto Dirk's Ashes for at least five to six days, and you're pretty sure that would just break Dave's heart even more than it has been and-

"You think Hal's been kidnapped to make a clone with Nirrti's tech!?"

And then you stop.

You turn in your seat and look at your youngerself looking horrified, and little Rosie down there staring up with a firm, hardened look in her eyes.

"I'm sure of it," Rose nods. "It's the only thing that makes sense why it's happened right after Dirk died. There has to be some kind of genetic lock on the tech that only he can activate!"

You feel oddly distant as you hear little Rose speaking like her older self. It's... it's a frankly very disjointed contrast. Her higher pitched voice, the large words.

When did your little girl get to be so smart?

And then you recall the title the Diaspora Seers gave her some time ago during a little signing ceremony thing you had the kids do when they got jealous that Okurii's Nep and Kanaya got their signs.

Seer of Light.

You'd been confused since, well, hadn't older Rose gotten something different? You can't remember exactly what it was. But her powers certainly don't act like they have anything to do with Seeing Light, more... vanishing into the VOID, all WITCHY like.
Could a self diverge so greatly over time that even something fundamental like that could change?

You come to the startling realization you've made some fundamental miss-assumptions about how your Daughter's powers were going to develope.


DIASPORA DATE: 09/02/0005.

Your name is Roxy Lalonde, and as you link back to Atlantis, you mull over the possibilities of life, the universe, and everything.

Jokingly, you think you've probably come up with about 42 different theories as to why The Handmaid would kidnap Hal for after Dirk died. You do have a lot of theories, but they're not that numerous and none of them are good.

You run into Argo down the halls, and they look frantic.

"Roxy! You're back!" They say.

"Not for too long, I gotta grab some stuff for back home but-" you stare around at the panic of everyone rushing around. "What the hell did I miss!?"

And thus Argo proceeds to tell you thusly, in sufficient summary, of two different layers of story narrative happening at the exact same time over the last two days.

And thus you, the audience, proceeded to read those events over the next two numbered Atlantis chapters, baring the potential for pauses of intermissions to digest such information, because we all know how much a good pause is needed for narrative absorption.

Chapter End Notes

So, I'm gonna touching on the Epilogues in a bit, so feel free to skip the rest of this end note if you haven't read it yet. Just. When you see the huge gap of space. That's your cue to skip.

So, on an unrelated note. Yes. Damara is getting Hal to clone her a new body that isn't possessing of its own spirit. She's being a bit considerate like that. This is somewhat in setting up for her vaguely replacing Adria as a character, who I already killed off twice already- once via Ba'al possession even.

While Janet Fraiser is more DOOM Aspect-aligned, her cloned self, Missy, has seemingly started to drift towards a SPACE Aspect Alignment. The reason for these deviations? The thing that settled Janet on DOOM was her near death experience. Given Missy branched off of her before that point, she's had a bit longer to divert into her own different sort of experience. There's something to be said about that on the matter of the HEART aspect in the Epilogue section.

Tomorrow: Atlantis Episode: The Tower. Taking place roughly at the same time this
chapter's taken place. Same as the following chapter, The Long Goodbye.

...Yeah I'm just condensing the timeline a little here just because I felt like it. As it is there's going to be a couple longer time skips in the next few Atlantis episodes, so I'm just... idk. Giving myself breathing room? IDK.

Okay, epilogue stuff below. Stop here if you haven't read the rest yet.

....scrolll....

...Keep Scrolling... I'm serious about this spoiler avoidance thing.

Don't get me wrong, but Dirk Strider had to die. It's not out of any inherent dislike of his character as it's turned out in the Epilogues, but rather... That window that Meat!Dirk could have, peering into my universe and the story told within? That window needed to be closed, or at least half blinded. Given the sheer potential of exploitative energy that the Rift provides... Were a version of Meat!Dirk to ever find his way into my multiverse, he would be going in blind from this point on. And arguably, it's a quarter blinding given Hal... and also Rose. If Meat!Rose is able to peer into this verse just the same as Dirk could, there are two windows she still has to peer in.

Dirk Strider had to die here, but it's not out of any ill will towards the character.

The Prince of Heart must be Stopped... but arguably in this universe that is not Dirk or Hal Strider. Thinking on it, it's very definitely Ba'al I think in this universe. He parades himself around with puppets of himself, playing long cons and politics and longterm stratagems. He plants splinters of himself into people, not caring what happens if they get caught beyond the fact that his plans have been spoiled somewhat.

And arguably, if Meat!Dirk did have any odd control over the fate of his splinters... I think he too would agree that having one of his splinters be subverted by Ba'al of all snakes is just as bad of an outcome and that having both be taken out by falling electrical pole would be Just. However... I don't agree with his self-destructive outlook on life. That Dirk has made himself out to be the villain. SGAlt-Verse Dirk was trying
to not be that person and got Snake'd over it.

Heart is a tricky Aspect to deal with, even with Characters that don't deal with it exclusively. The matter of the Soul- the Self- that's something this story has always dealt with on some level. The matter of parallels, and clones, and alternates. On Missy/Janet developing different Aspect Alignments, we've already seen that with the two Roses and Nepeta/Argo. Aschen!Rose leaned heavily into Void, while Kid!Rose is Light. Nepeta leans Heart, Argo leans Time. And given Ford... Well, this promises to be an interesting ride.

As an aside, I'm leaning towards that What-If chapter from 4/13 being a bit more canon than non-canon, as if those words even mean anything in this kind of setting.

Reader Q: if Meat!Dirk shows up, which Prince of Heart is the greater threat? Dirk Strider, or Ba'al?
So. My eyes aren't deceiving me, right?" Your name is John Sheppard, and you stare out at the rather large, imposing TOWER home to the LOCAL ROYALTY who have the "LIGHTS OF DOOM" Security System Upgrade.

"No," Teyla agrees. "It very much looks like the central spire of Atlantis."

"Over grown, of course," Rodney Mckay says, staring at it. "But yeah. That's Atlantis' tower, alright."

"You know what this means, right?" You ask, staring at it.

"Golden Lights of Doom?" Mckay chuckles. "Yeah, I think we know what that is."

"Indeed," Teyla agrees.

"No?" Ronon asks, "What does it mean?"

"Drones, Ronon," you say. "Big glowing squid things that fly through the air and go kaboom."

"Drones that Atlantis has been out of for several months," Teyla adds. "Do you think they have a production facility, or simply an enormous stockpile?"

"Dunno exactly," Mckay says, "but I'm eager to find out."

"Aren't we all," you say, and then turn to your guide. "How exactly do we get in contact with these 'Nobles'?"

And then he tells you that you don't. They get in contact with you.

"Lovely, that," Mckay laments. "Always did hate those 'don't call us we'll call you' types. You can never get a decent job when an interview ends like that. Especially not without a handshake."

"Mckay?" You start, "Head back to the Gate and let Atlantis know what we've found."

"Why me?" He asks.

"Because I've got a bad feeling about this," you quote.

"Star Wars, funny," and with that, Mckay trudges back the way you came, towards the Gate.

Yeah. Your name is John Sheppard, and you have a feeling this is going to be a long day.

"Hold on, wait. You're saying they found an Ancient Settlement styled after Atlantis?" Roxy asks.
"Not just styled, the same Make and Model!" Argo answers.

"But... Where's the rest of it?"

"That's what Mckay wanted to find out, so after he radio'd Atlantis he went exploring into the forest to scan everything. Turns out it was all just buried underground for so long that all the other surface buildings had collapsed over the ten thousand years, leaving only the Central Spire behind."

"Because it's the most protected part of the city, right... So what happened next?"

"The rest of John's team went back to the village when they ran into some soldiers the local 'Noble pricks' sent. They were harassing the villagers and John and Ronon and Teyla made them stop... Then this jerk Otho showed up and scanned everyone and decided to bring John to the Tower."

"Only John?"

"They wanted his ATA Gene."

"Oof."

"The king was dying, his daughter wanted a fucking- just- boy toy to serve as king so her kids could inherit John's gene-"

"They what-??"

"But John turned her down. And thank god she took 'I have two wives and a kid already' as an answer for no. But..." The relief on their face is relieving to anyone who saw it, save only for the tension that followed.

"But??"

"John asked Kanaya to come in and check the king and she found out he was being poisoned."

"Then what happened?"

"...The King died, the Brother was framed for murder, Mckay went looking to find Drone Storage, Ronon killed a guard when he tried to rape a woman in the village, and John and Kanaya got arrested by the genealogy guy who REALLY poisoned the King so he could become one himself. They got locked inside a room without a force field blocking the Very Gap-y metal frame covering the door, and, well..."

"Oh. John did the windy thing?"

"Stole his stolen radio back, and called Mckay, who was in a bit of trouble too."

---

**EARTH DATE: FEBRUARY 22ND, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 09/02/0005.**

"Well, this royally sucks," your name is Rodney Mckay and you are once again entrapped in a closed space due to collapsing metal.

You'd think Ancient Architecture could withstand a solid chunk more pressure than it did. Stupid Jumpers. Stupid Ceilings.
Run a simple charge of current through a wall to turn on the lights for the Drone Room and suddenly a ceiling collapses! What stupid, dumb--

You laugh as you get the Buried City's remote drone control online.

You select a single drone, and target the most structurally sound section of the ceiling near to you.

Power on and--- FIRE!

_PCHOOOM! BWOMMF!_

And there it is- sunlight pouring down from above. You peer upwards at the perfect hole, and grin.

"AR-1, this is Mckay, please respond!" You tab your radio.

"Rodney! There you are! Where have you been?" Teyla asks.

"Stuck inside an Auxiliary Control Room because the ceiling caved in," you say. "Why?"

"Mckay! Good to hear your voice!" Sheppard chimes in. "What's the City's ZPM power levels looking like?"

"Nearly dead, why?" You ask.

"Drain it. ASAP. Before the New 'Lord Protector' can claim the Throne and turn the village Teyla and Ronon are at into a crater."

"I was just about to suggest that as well," Teyla says.

"...I think I can do that," you say, moving to turn on the inertial dampeners. "Also, you'll never guess how many Drones they have."

"How many?" Ronon asks.

"Twice as many as they should have!" You answer. "I think this City was serving as a production plant or storehouse that-

"Fascinating History Lesson, Rodney! But could you cut to the chase before we're half dead by drone?" Sheppard asks.

"Right, yes, of course," you power on the Inertial Dampeners. "Powering on just enough to Drain the ZPMs right about-

The power cuts out faster than you thought it would.

"...Huh. Guess that ZPM was a little more dead than I thought it was." You answer... "Either that, or I severed a power conduit blowing open the hole I'm using to communicate with you guys."

"Well, lights just went out in the main tower," Shepard says, "so it worked either way."

"And with that, John confronted Otho, dethroned him, and started helping the people there transition from a monarchy to something a bit less exploitative." Argo concludes. "Also, We got their Drones AND their entire STILL FULL Jumper Bay! We really came out on top of that trade, and pretty
much the whole two days worth it, really."

"So," Roxy starts, "What happened on Atlantis that's got everyone in chaos here?"

"That's... Ah. That's a bit more... well...." Argo then proceeds to rewind two days. Again.

And we proceeded to listen as a much more concerning tale was told.

Chapter End Notes

Short one today, short one tomorrow. Two intermissions Thurs and Fri.

DIASPORA DATE: 09/01/0005.

"Okay, maybe I missed something, but I don't get why the last planet wasn't perfectly suitable for relocation," your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you're busy flying a Puddle Jumper through space from a Spacegate to the nearest uninhabited water planet. "I thought it was pretty good?"

"Because its sun acts like Haven's," Daraya says absently, checking at her tablet for data. "Long term that's bad news for us. We don't want to get caught up in perpetual solar flares."


Silence falls between you two as you get closer to the planet.

"So, how's this one contending?" You ask.

"Atmosphere's buggered up," Daraya frowns. "Looks like it might not be suitable long term. I'm picking up a lot of radiation in the atmosphere, residual, of course, but..."

The Jumper beeps at you, and a screen appears.

"That's not all we're picking up, Debris field ahead," you report. "And... Two Lifesigns."

"What?" Daraya looks up, and beholds as you enter what at first seemed to be some dust clouds, but really was ship debris.

"Two life pods, dead ahead," you say, navigating towards them. "Single person sized... Looks like we can fit one inside the Jumper's rear compartment."

"Let's get one onboard and back to Atlantis," Daraya says.

"Aye aye," you agree, and move into position for a pick up.

You don't think this planet is worth relocating to, but... well, you might as well find out what happened here.

"So, while Daraya and Tyzias went back and forth to ferry both pods back to Atlantis, Daniel and Sarah worked on translating the writing on the side of the first pod... Then Doctor Beckett had them open it because the passenger's lifesigns were fading." Argo explains.

"Oh no!" Roxy gasps.

"Oh no, indeed. Just... not for why you think"

"...What happened?"

"The pod beamed a burst of light into Sarah's face and she collapsed."
"Oh No."

"-And when she woke up, she wasn't Sarah anymore-"

"Oh Nooooo..."

"-Because the life pods had a black box quick save feature incase of ship crash that temporarily imprinted the mind of whoever was in the pod on the first person to enter imprinting range-"

"OH. NOOOOOO!!!"

"...That's not even the worst of it."

"...Don't tell me whoever it was convinced Daniel to imprint with the other pod?"

"Her 'husband' who wasn't. Like, they pretended to be Matesprites at first but probably fell closer to a pair of Kismesises in desperate need of an Auspitice."

"And then?"

"And then they escaped into the city and started hunting each other down."

"Let me re-iterate. **OH!!!!!!! NO!!!!!!!**"

---

"This is Mkari Aiikho to Security Teams Only!" Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you just got fucking STUNNED. "Attention! Doctor Jackson and Doctor Gardner have been bodily possessed by the spirits of two aliens with a hate on for each other and are in a desperate need of Ausptiization. Stunners only. Make sure they don't hurt anyone. Let alone each other."

"Auspitization?" Colonel Caldwell asks, seemingly unfamiliar with the term as he gets to your feet. You give him the benefit of the doubt and assume his brain is scrambled from the Wraith Stunners that Doctor Gardner- or whoever that was- managed to wrangle out off of the security guard.

"At its most basic, when two people hate each other in the way that makes them want to kill each other instead of jumping each other in the nearest bedroom," you summarize in the most simplistic way possible. "You get a third person to come in and keep them from actually killing each other. There are other uses for it and other quadrants it can be used for beyond stopping Pitched Murderlust, but we really don't have the time right now to be going through every single possible format of Ashen Alternian Romance, now do we?"

"Fair enough," Caldwell grunts, and radios, "This is Caldwell to Security Only. Confirming that order from Miss Aiikho."

---

"...Please don't tell me it went on all night long," Roxy begs.

"It went on all night long. Jade basically lead the charge looking for them," Argo answers. "...It got bad."

"How bad?"

"The alien ghost thing possessing Daniel shot up the ZPM power station with a P-90."

"Oh FUCK!"
"Keiko, status report?" your radio buzzes with Mikari's voice.

"The good news is the ZPMS are still intact," Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you huff, annoyed, as you stare at the shot up section of wiring. "The Bad News is that the power relay's been damaged by gunfire. Like that one grounding station ended up."

"How long until it's fixed?" Mikari asks.

"Dunno," you answer. "Just got here."

"Keep me informed," Mikari says.

"Will do," you say, shaking your head, wishing you could be anybody else right now.

You are now Jade Jackson, and feeling so very alone despite the fact that you're definitely not alone right now.

"Colonel Caldwell, Miss Aiikho, this is Jade. I'm at the base of the central tower tracking Doctor Gardner," you report as quietly as you can. "And if she's here... Dad's here too, somewhere."

You peer around a corner with your Wraith Stunner and squint in the shadows.

"Some reinforcements would be appreciated if you can manage it," you say.


As you move through what you're sure is a storage room your ears hear the Firing sound of a Wraith--

"Ow," you mutter as you wake up staring at the ceiling- that now has the lights back on.

Stunners suck.

You close your eyes, and tab your radio without getting up. "Jade to Command. Status report?"

And then Tyzias replies, informing you that the Alien in Sarah Gardner had locked herself into a science lab and was threatening to flood the entire City's residential district with a fire extinguishing gas if your Dad wasn't brought to her.

She'd ALSO locked down the entire city due to lucking into a computer that SOMEONE had left logged in with full Admin Credentials. Because OF COURSE. Luckily, you were in the same section Dad was in.

....

....

Fuck it, you're going to have to stun your own damned dad, aren't you?

Fun.
Fuuuun.

You sneak through the hallways, trying to follow his familiar scent... except you're realizing that it's not so familiar right now. He's either done something to mask it, or you've skipped enough quality time that something about his scent changed and you didn't notice.

...Of course since he's the only person in this section, you've got no other choices, but still, the thought is somewhat disconcerting.

...You find the bastard possessing your Dad struggling to open a door, back exposed.

You stun him without pause.

...Okay, that felt a little good to do.

You follow instructions and move dear ol' Dad infront of a camera, and you wait for Not-Sarah to make her demands.

...

Of course, when she does, it's to demand you kill your own father the minute he wakes up, otherwise she'll kill everyone in the city.

So you ask how it's possible she can do that? ...You find out that apparently Sarah had come to Mikari with concerns a few days back about the new fire suppression system in light of all the Trust shenanigans, as Mikari also had her own concerns over it, changes were supposed to be made...

Next week.

So the threat was very real. You only had time until your dad wakes up.

Your dad.

And Sarah's voice telling you to kill him.

...This whole fucked up family situation from Christmas just keeps getting more and more screwed up, doesn't it??

And then he starts to wake up.

"...So what happened?" Roxy asks, hesitantly.

"Tyzias and Keiko managed to break the pass code running the lock down and the fire systems in time, Jade refused to kill her own Dad, and the ghost in Sarah came running to kill him, not knowing it. Then the alien ghost possessing him basically evaporated, so she gave him a stunner, pretended he was unconscious, and they stunned Sarah when she came in to try to kill him."

"That's..."

"Messed up, right?" Argo asks. Roxy nods.

"So... everyone's running because of that?"

"Oh, um. Sort of? Daniel and Sarah are chilling in the infirmary right now. Everyone else is running around because they're rushing to disassemble the fire suppression system."
"...Why didn't you lead with THAT!?” Roxy asks.

"Because you asked something different?” Argo scratches at their head. "I think? I'm honestly a little sleep deprived at the moment actually.”

And thus Roxy escorts Argo back to their room and hands them off to a concerned Jade and John before heading off to do what she came back to Atlantis to do in the first place.

...

But what was that again?

Roxy couldn't remember.

Chapter End Notes

Well, there's THAT chapter.

I'd considered making this into a somewhat longer chapter/episode, but I couldn't draw up the energy for it, not with such a nice summary mechanism like Argo talking to Roxy.

It'd play out just about the same as the canon episode save for the character swaps.

...The Computer with the logged in account was Rodney Mckay's. >_<;
Dave mourns.

Your name is Davis Strider, and you can't help but feel... underwhelmed as a custodian places a small box of ashes into a just-as-small stone box in a wall, and close it tight.

The name reads "RICHARD 'DIRK' STRIDER" and has his year of birth and year of death carved into it. Below it, "Loving Uncle, Irony Master, DJ Rapper Extraordinaire."

And then, as per Dirk's will's insistence, a passively phrased mention of how he died.

"Fresh Lightning Dropped like it was Hot while the Pimp was In the Crib."

Like it's over too fast.

Like it wasn't supposed to go this way.

Like someone's consolidating their resources and there was one Dirk too many for the universe to handle and so they opted for the younger, hotter model that's more hip with the newer generation and will draw in more ad revenue from the television audiences.

You feel like you want to cry, but there are no more tears to come. You've already cried all of the tears you could cry about this. Privately, in the company of Karkat, of course.

It's with a heavy head-still-held-high that the funeral stuff passes on by, and you eventually return "home."

Home is dark as the power line is still down.

Home is filled with boxes and tarp-ed up furniture ready to be catalogued and shipped out.

Home is a bedroom still left untouched because its owner isn't there to pack anything up.

You stare into the darkened room full of sparse, barely filled in details, Luggage suitcases and boxes full of shit from another life lay where they are, as if Dirk still thought he'd be able to get back on his feet more solidly and move out again any day now.

As if he thought he was intruding on your life still.
You look around at the mess in here—indistinguishable from the mess outside save for the fact that the words on each box are in orange sharpie scrawl instead of red.

Dirk didn't have much in the way on books—but what he does have are all related to cooking. That box is small. The rest of it is filled up with loosely packed t-shirts and pants.

Shoved haphazardly beneath the bed, you find LIL CAL'S OLD CARRYING CASE, and you hesitate to open it, but do so and find that yes, Dirk really did get rid of the damned puppet like you asked and instead is using the case to store a bunch of SELF BURNED COMPACT DISKS, orange marker scrawl on the cases informs you that these are HOME MOVIES, or perhaps some form of VIDEO JOURNAL or other such important milestone markers.

You pick up a disk that reads "My stint on !NSIDE ACCESS. Thanks Julia" and you just KNOW what's on it without even watching it. You put it back and peer at the rest of the collection. Dirk had his own filing system, because you're pretty sure none of this is in chronological order if you're parsing the titles right.

You suppose Dirk decided it wasn't worth losing the carrying case over when he got rid of that fucking puppet. And it is a nice case, all things considered.

You close the case and Captchalogue it.

Time to start doing this thing, you guess.

You meander through Dirk's room, finding the shit that you want to keep as mementos, and personally captchalogue those. Box of old Trophies and medals? Hell yeah. Box of undies and socks? Hell no. Box of Pho-

...Box of Photographs?

You peer into the box of fucking photographs from way back when you and Dirk were kids. Your parents weren't the best, but they at least seemed fit to try to document the moments that could be plausibly considered "good" by any normal child's standard.

The calm between storms, as it were.

You swallow as you catch sight of you and Dirk as kids playing cards with your Dad—the photo seemed to have been purposefully angled to cut off the man's head at the neck—either that or Dirk trimmed the damned thing off with a pair of scissors and you wouldn't put it past him.

Either him or Mom, really.

You search through the box more and find another rare photo of you and Dirk getting along. More than that, you wonder how the hell your Mom captured this rare moment of weakness without deciding to go off on your and Dirk's asses over it.

You're framed from the back, you leaning into and hugging Dirk. You remember that shirt Dirk's wearing, with the missing sleeve torn off because of a fight he had with some neighborhood bully who was harassing you about—

About, well...

Being Gay, you suppose? You didn't know what that was at that age, but that Bully sure seemed to
take offense to it. Hell, you can't even remember the jerk's name, but Dirk came along and they fought and afterwards you both had that rare moment of just... no sibling animosity between you at all.

Your BROTHER sat there with you, holding you, comforting you, telling you it'd be alright.

It was one of the exceedingly rare times you can remember Dirk or you getting into a scrape that your parent's didn't get mad at you over. You thought you'd just gotten away with it without them noticing but...

...

...You just feel all kinds of conflicted, now.

You captchalogue the entire box of photos with a shaky breath.

Alright Strider. Gotta finish all of this before you dig yourself into a pit of despair you can't climb out of. Get this shit done first, then have another breakdown with Karkat there to help keep you out of that endless black hole of grief.

It's a goddamned wonder you came out as well adjusted as you did, given your childhood.

Neither you or Dirk really talked much about it after he came to live with you and especially not after he got work at the SGC.

Nepeta was a good enough excuse to not dredge that shit up, but keep it in mind enough to not retread those failings. But damn it all... you really wish you'd gotten a chance to talk to him about this stuff before-

...If...

...WHEN you can find Hal safe and sound, you are going to have that talk.

You promise yourself that.

...Huh. You guess you haven't cried yourself out yet after all. Must be the dust.

Chapter End Notes

As I mentioned in a recent comment, Dirk dying had always been a card I was holding in reserve since from about the point in time he originally debuted. I was never sure when/where/how the deed would go down, but given the Strider family's canonical reluctance to ever talk about their family situations, and given the minor allusions I've given mention of before, a death was really one of the only means I could really think of using to provoking any meaningful insight back on their lives growing up. Especially so many years after the fact.

Sometimes you just get shitty parents who, while well meaning, are the worst in existence. Controlling, manipulative, jerk-asses, making demands they themselves barely even want just because it makes them feel powerful or in control. Occasionally, they do right by you, but it never feels like it makes up for everything else they did. Never feels enough.
On the subject of Hiveswap Act 2, according to some steam traffic data sniffers, apparently an unnamed DLC pack has been uploaded to STEAM's distribution network for Hiveswap, yet to be announced or released. That, and the fact that an official twitter made a very suspicious mention of the new Month turnover... well... *something* is coming. I'm still digesting a few bits here and there of the Epilogue stuff... Not sure if I'm ready to handle all the lore or heavy story impacts of Act 2 just yet. But yeah, if it drops any time soon, expect Early A6A3 to be Intermission, Minisode, or a little short chapter heavy.

On the matter of the Epilogues, my thoughts on Dave and Karkat, in brief, follow. Feel free to stop here if you haven't read and are still in the process of it.

---snip---

Dave Strider is a man who knows his shit. Mostly about Economics. And Presidents. And also Karkat. Oh GOODNESS the whole moment of Davekat finally happening was the *cathartic tension release* of the entire Meat arc, if not the entire Epilogues as a whole. Dave is someone who really has no idea how to express his love and adoration for people properly. In this fic, he's gotten somewhat of a better headstart on that, somehow, somewhere. And yet this is still the late 90s/early 2000s. Not an easy time, all things considered, for mainstream Earth at the time, let alone romance in the Military. We've seen how that affected Jack and Sam, given the chain of command. Dave and Karkat really lucked out with being part of two different militaries from two different galaxies. Not much of a chain of command there at all.

One has to wonder how much Younger Karkat is even aware of his older self's relationship? Truth is, younger Karkat is just kind of oblivious for the most part when it comes to things that don't directly affect him. I wonder what he's up to right now for the most part? (A: He's starting to actively be prepared to start training for his future time traveling mission. Still not even actually paying attention to events all that much though he's supposed to be doing it, though. Alternia as a Galaxy is *quiet* with English's defeat. All the Action is in Pegasus... Hrm, maybe he'll transfer there, he no doubt wonders.)

Either way, Davekat is canon and that's really all there is to say on the matter. Dave's going to need the support.

DIASPORA DATE: 09/13/0005.

Your name is Roxy Lalonde, and you sit on the back patio deck of Joey's house on Diaspora as a "small" party is held in the back yard. Other You's idea, really. Get everyone (and you mean EVERYONE within your very convoluted and complex looking family tree structure) together when their schedules can allow and just...

Reminisce about everything and anything.

Ain't nothing like a death and kidnapping in the family to get people to come together and talk.

It's a "Small" party only in that it's being held in a back yard rather than in some fancy building somewhere like a Hotel or some shit. "Small" as in "Informal" but...

You don't know, it all seems pretty much like it's a big huge family reunion at this point.

It's a bit too much.

Argo sits down next to you, smiling kindly as they place their hand on your leg.

"Hey, Rox," they say. "How're you doing?"

"Oh, you know," you say, "just... existing. Why you ask?"

"You haven't really talked with anyone tonight, is all," Argo says. "I noticed you've been just kind of... drifting?"

"Yeah, suppose I have," you say. "Lot on my mind, you know?"

"Mind if I serve as a sounding board?" They ask. "I've gotten pretty good at that lately."

You work your jaw for a moment, then...

"I have old me's memories, right? I was happy to just be a mom and raise my kids and..." You pause after such a strong start. "And I think I could ignore everything that I hated about myself like that. I had a purpose, you know??"

Argo nods curtly, humming in agreement and as a 'carry on' sign.

"But then I get cloned and suddenly I get that ripped away from me and then I'm doing everything I can to stop thinking about all of it and then I'm on Atlantis with even more free time to think and I see you all being happy and..." You pause after such a strong start. "And I think I could ignore everything that I hated about myself like that. I had a purpose, you know??"

"And?" Argo presses, delicately, like you're a vase about to break from too much wind pressure.
"And then I tried doing some prank shit with my other self- and she started it!!- but it just still feels so..." You frown. "So hollow, you know? Like we're each fighting for something we don't quite understand. Perspectives I guess? But like... I feel like... I... Like she's... like I'm..."

You trail off for a few moments, and Argo doesn't say anything, though they move their hand to grab yours and give it a squeeze.

They're so nice to you, even after all of this.

"I guess..." you turn to look them in the eyes. "I just have to ask... How did you... know?"

"Know what?" Argo tilts their head.

"Like. Know you weren't... I dunno how to say this... fully a girl, I guess?" you hope you didn't offend them.

Argo sits there for a moment, staring out into the crowd and you follow their gaze to find John and Jade talking with General O'neill about something.

"I've always been the odd one out, you know?" Argo starts. "Wings, ears, glowing hair and eyes... Back on Abydos, I was still the odd one out. Out of the five of us... Jude and Cassie seemed so sure of themselves, and John and Jade were being so supportive of me, but... even though I was running the whole time shield, I still had way too much time to myself to..." They shake their head. "I'd been thinking on it for a long while before then, even if I wasn't sure sure for myself... But, honestly, it all came out in a rush one night. I was ranting to John and Argo about how tired I was of... a lot of stuff, and somewhere in there, I just said something like... 'I don't want to be a girl all the time!'"

"Something like that, huh?" You ask.

"Well," They smile. "I was really stressed and rambling and I can't even remember most of what I said that night, but... that thought struck with me on some level and the next day I just... talked with the rest of them about that. Less yelling and rambling, I mean. It... it felt good to get that weight off my shoulders. I just knew at that point, I think. For sure, I mean. But even then, sometimes I still feel like a girl, y'know? Sometimes people screw up and then immediately bend over backwards to fix it as soon as it gets pointed out to them, but even my brain clicks back to she/her and then later it clicks back to they/them again sometimes. And it just makes me feel weird that that happened because that's how other people act when it happens, and it's weird. Feeling like I'd betrayed something by doing that, you know what I mean?"

"Kinda," you say, staring out at your other self, so confident and sure in her femininity. You used to be like that once. "Like... if I decided to change who I am now.... would I be betraying who I used to be back then?"

"I guess that all depends," Argo says.

"On what?"

A coy, cat like smile spreads on their lips, "Which you do you fear betraying more? The you who you used to be and still exists over there, or the you who you could still grow to become, whatever and whoever they could be?"

"That's... a good question," you say.

"Here's my take on it," Argo says. "Yeah, I had a kid. But am I a 'Mom'? A 'Dad'? We talked about what terms we wanted to use before Lizzy was born and... No, John and Jade felt like they'd fill..."
those titles better. But as for me? What does it make me?" They smile. "It's kinda silly, but we went with 'Sprite' in the end."

"Sprite?" You ask. "Why that?"

"Dunno," they shrug. "it just felt right for us at the time, and still does for the moment, but we'll have to see what we roll with when Lizzy starts talking."

You blink, and stare, processing and considering all of that.

The other you, the original, the older, the female you that became a mother is still here and isn't going away even if you- the you right here and now and thinking these thoughts- decide to change some fundamental aspect of yourself.

You're fundamentally the same person, after all. Just... diverged a little.

But you- this you- you've HAD those experiences, and you don't have to force yourself to repeat and relive them.

You... you DON'T have to hitch yourself to the first man you fall for and have 2.5 KIDS and be a doting housewife for a SECOND TIME, because...

Because...

...For starters, you're not sure you'll ever find someone else quite like ALEC EGBERT ever again. He's one of those one in a million types, you've always felt that. You'd been lucky then to find him but...

...

Given everything that happened with Joey, was that necessarily the best option for you yourself?

This whole cloning thing is a second chance and you've been trying to figure out how to do things the same way again wasting time and...

...

You don't have to do that.

There is literally nobody telling you that you have to do things the exact same way you did before, and especially not when that other you is still alive and kicking and doing things HER own way.

You're the other side of the same coin, not the same damn side. Hell, you could very well be the transitional state between who you were and who you can be! The literal EDGE of the coin, tumbling through the air, yet to settle down and choose a damn face to front.

...

"I dunno what I want to be yet, Argo," you smile at them, and grab their hand and squeeze back. "But thanks."

"Any time, Roxy," They say, smiling back. "You know where to find me if you want to talk more."
Hefty Epilogue Discussion below the cut. Same as always. Skip if u don't wanna read.
NOTE: For Personal Reasons, I may be taking a posting pause for mental health reasons after the end of this Act for a short while. So next week when the last chapter goes up it might be a while before the next Act gets posted. Make sure you're subscribed to the Series page for keeping an eye on it when it comes out again.

I'm still going to be writing, because I need to vent my emotions somehow, but it'll be a while before more gets posted.

Epilogue and Personal below cut.

----Snip.----

EPS:
Roxy's two choices and paths in the Epilogues gets explored on a bit here. Originally somewhat really accidentally given the cloning situation. RoLal getting cloned and splintered off had always been building to a sort of Identity Crisis arc for her as I'd envisioned it then, but I wasn't sure how that was going to play out and built upon it bit by bit. Revisiting canon Roxy's alcoholism for a bit was just a start. Moving to Atlantis and trying to build a new life there was one thing. Attempting to start a prank war with RoEgb was another. More pieces of Roxy trying to put their new life into perspective.

Ironically, her arcs here ended up mirroring the Epilogues unintentionally. CandyRoxy dived head first into romance and the motherly thing, same as Roxy did here, becoming RoEgb. With a splinter of her branching off with that life experience, and having a chance to re-evaluate, the Cloned Roxy follows closer to MeatRoxy's path for the moment. For a time being NB/They/Them, and probably leaning fully He/Him in the further future, when-ever that falls into place. I'd like to say that I'd planned for similar, and I probably should have given the foreshadowing in the comic proper, but... Meh.

The problems with on the fly writing is that these things sometimes get derailed by official story content whenever it rarely drops anymore.

Personal Shit:

EDIT: Too Long, Don't Read. I'm going to be finishing up this Fanfic and it's going to be the last thing I ever really write for fanfiction. Original all the way. I'm done with Fandoms. I'm just. Done. All the Done. I'll finish up outstanding obligations but then I'm out.

EDIT2: TO CLARIFY: I will be taking a pause after A6A2 to build up the rest of the fic to some degree, and then likely will post it in larger chunks. An outstanding obligation is finishing this fic to Act 7. I'm seeing this through because thematically, LOOPS NEED TO BE CLOSED OFF.

DIASPORA DATE: 09/14/0005.

Your name is Jade Jackson and you've... you've put this off for too long.

You knock on your dad's office door, and wait.

"Just a minute..."

Thoughts whirl around inside your head and storm like mad, and any semblance of order you had to them flies away like the wind.

God. Just...

You can do this, Jade. You can DO THIS.

The door opens, and your Dad pauses, and then smiles, a bit tensely. "Jade."

"Hey, Dad," you start. "Can we talk?"

He steps aside and motions for you to come inside, so you do, and you close the door behind you.

You take a deep breath before finding a chair and sitting down.

"So," Your father, Daniel Jackson, sits down across from you. "..."

"So..." you echo. "..."

After a few moments of neither of you seeming to want to start, you take initiative and start to talk, "I'm sorry for almost shooting you to death."

"That's..." he shakes his head. "You don't have to apologize for that. There were ghosts possessing us, and that's-"

"And I'm sorry I didn't just come talk to you sooner instead of avoiding you guys for so long," you interject. "I was being childish and stupid and I-"

"No no no, don't-!" Dad starts. "It's not your fault. I was the one who forgot and then didn't notice and-"

"I was being a brat over it!" you say. "It was just dinner and I-!"

"And I forgot that we had plans for Christmas. It's more my fault than yours!" he interrupts you this time, "Look, Jade. I'm sorry. I've been the worst parent in the history of parents. I wasn't there for you for so long and without Sha're... I..." He shakes his head. "I've just been the worst. I wanted to be there and do right by you like my parents couldn't and I've screwed it up so badly. I left so many times and I've been gone for so long it's-"
"It's not your fault!" you say. "You got snake'd! You died!!!"

"And I should have came back immediately after!" he insists. "I should never have trusted those Andromeda Ascendants. I should have known they were bad news! I should have KNOWN BETTER Than to just abandon my family again!"

... 

"I..." You swallow. "I can't say you're wrong about that."

"I keep screwing it up," he says, not even looking you in the eyes, but instead down at his feet. "i got tricked. I thought that ghost was Sarah and I got body jacked AGAIN. I can't even find Janus' lab to make sure the Control Crystal for the Attero Device is actually destroyed."

You...

You run your hands through your hair and groan. "Dad. Just. Shut up on the self depreciation! Would you Kindly!?"

He blinks, then says, "Sorry."

You both sit across from eachother for another few long, tense moments of silence.

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"Jacksons are just incapable of actually communicating with eachother, aren't they?" You ask.

"Ironic for me," he says. "And I speak god knows how many languages at this point."

You both smile, just for a moment.

"...Are you mad that I'm dating again?" He asks.

"What?" You ask in turn. "Didn't we have this conversation already? No. I'm not mad that you're dating again. Mom died, and I never even got a chance to know her.

You don't have anyone to replace her with, as far as my mind goes." You see him flinch and you hastily add, "And I know that's sad for me like it is for you! It's probably even worse for you since you really knew her! But... Dad. Daniel!!" He blinks, finally locking eyes. "I don't want you holding yourself back because she died. If being with Sarah makes you happy then chase that. Okay?? I'd be a hypocrite for saying otherwise."
He sighs as well, though it turns upwards in a happier lit near the end with a faint smile. "I'm glad to hear you say that. I've been... really worrying about that. I... I don't think we have had that conversation before."

"Maybe I psyched it up inside my head too much," you admit. "Or maybe I said it to someone else and just forgot to." You shake your head. "It doesn't matter."

"I guess it doesn't, no," Dad agrees.

Silence falls again for what feels like an eternity.

"So... where do we go from here?" he asks.

"I don't really know," you shrug. "I just... I don't know what to even say from here."

And neither did Daniel Jackson.

Chapter End Notes

Jade and Daniel finally talk to each other like family should and don't over-react and make assumptions. This scene probably should've gone into a fuller adaptation of The Long Goodbye but *SHRUGS.* Doesn't matter too much there, I guess.

Make sure you're subscribed to the series listing if you aren't already for when this act ends. Gotten some more progress written on Friday's chapter. I don't think I'll need to take too long of a break after this act closes before posting again, but just to be on the safe side I'm making that suggestion for when the new Act does finally land.

Remaining Chapters for this Act:
SGA:02X17: A Meanwhile Coup D'etat
INTERMISSION: Afforded Evil
SGA:02X18: Michael
SGA:02X19: Inferno (WIP, EOA6A2)

I'm thinking I'll probably condense some arcs together in A6A3 to make for longer chapters, and make it a shorter chapter count overall, at least to start (For example, SGA:02X20, 03X01 and 03X02 would be a whole chapter rather than three separate ones if I were to go this route). Same for A6A4, potentially. A6A5... Well. It'll be covering the SG1 movie Continuum. I very well may just write that whole thing out and upload it as a whole chapter/story without breaks inbetween scenes. We'll see though. Things to think over as I take the pause, eh?

Reader Question: What has been your favorite Character moment through this act (Or, if you dare cast back a net wide enough, the entire story) so far?

Epilogue Thoughts below cut.
A major theme in the Epilogues is COMMUNICATION, and the problems with the FAILURE there of, in CANDY especially. So many failures of communication, so much avoidance to not talk to avoid rocking the boat. So much everything to do with communication failures. In MEAT, we see this to a lesser extent, where Dirk is actively sabotaging communication between his friends as best as he can. Even Alt-Callie has her problems with not communicating to the others about the problems that are going on.

The parts of the Epilogues where people finally get their heads out of their asses and *talk* to eachother to start sorting things out and piecing things together were honestly the most emotionally cathartic of the lot, especially near the end. It's ironic, really, these kids talked to eachother more over text than they did in person. Honestly, I find I have the same issue. I'm better at expressing my thoughts and perspectives in text rather than in person voice to voice face to face. I stumble a lot more with a lot of 'uhhs' and 'ahs' than I would, say, here in the Authors Notes.

It's a cautionary tale in that regard, and the endings both showing that people are not only talking but preparing to fight to fix things? That brought me so much hope at the end of it. If there's anything I hope that can be taken away from them for applying in real life, it's that. Communication is important. Understanding where someone's perspective is coming from is important, even if you disagree with it, because... if it's a bad enough take that needs to be stopped, understanding may be the key in dethroning it and ripping out the roots.

Here, we see Jade and Daniel working to fix some of their own recent communication failures. Some things that definitely needed to be cleared between them.
Chapter Summary

Genii shenanigans play on in the background.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


DIASPORA DATE: 09/20/0005.

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you glance down at the Stargate as it starts to dial in.

You get up from your office and head over to the control room as it goes KAWOOSH. "What do we have, Chuck?" You ask.


"Put it through," you order, and then on the nearest screen, Sora of the Genii appears, hunkered down behind what appears to be the DHD.

"This is Sora Requesting a Dialogue with Atlantis. Please respond," She says into the camera in hushed tones. "This is a matter of grave importance Regarding the fate of my people."

"This is Mikari Aiikho of Atlantis," you reply, "what seems to be the situation?"

"Miss Aiikho," Sora starts, "as you know you and your people have been attempting to aide us in healing the longterm damages from our exposure to our own improperly shielded bombs. Unfortunately, I recently learned that Commander Cowen has, in secret, ordered a group of scientists to continue off-world work on the previous bomb development in addition to the work being done with shielded outputs."

"Why would he do that?" you ask.

"Because one of Kolya's sympathisers has convinced him, somehow," Sora shakes her head. "Already some of our people are regressing to their pre-treatment states because of direct exposure to the non-shielded Naquadria. Not only that, there are... complications. Complications that have made this nolonger an Internal Genii matter."

"What kind of complications?" You ask.

"Do you remember Ladon Radim?" Sora asks.

"I believe he was on Kolya's strike team, yes," you say, remembering Sheppard's mission reports.

"He is the one behind this, and I believe his intent is to kill Commander Cowen and dispose of his
entire leadership and regime to free Commander Kolya from imprisonment," Sora says. "...If I am right? He will be making his move and contacting you within the next few hours."

You think about that, and then say, "And what makes you sure that he's making this move now?"

"Because he just stole what they think is the real ZPM from the Brotherhood," Sora answers. "And they made it very clear that they were not taking no for an answer. Several people are dead."

"They got the drained decoy ZPM we left them instead," you realize.

"Thankfully, yes," Sora nods. "That said. Ladon's plan has gotten people killed. A survivor of the assault heard them mention that their next phase of the plan would be to contact Atlantis... I decided to beat them to the punch, as I believe the saying goes."

"Thank you for the alert, Sora," you say. "We can lower the shield and let you through if you require aid or assistance."

"No," she shakes her head. "The offer is appreciated however I cannot waste time. And time is very much of the essence. If Cowen is so easily swayed as to restart the unshielded programs after being healed of their after-effects, he must be disposed of, of that Ladon is right... however, Ladon himself must also be dealt with. We cannot allow him the chance of freeing Kolya and I must make preparations to do ensure that this does not happen."

"Alright," you say. "If you need help, though, give us a call and let us know."

"I will consider it," she says. "Please send someone to visit us after Ladon contacts you. I will meet you at the Stargate and we can discuss things further after that. Sora out."

"Atlantis out," you say, and the feed cuts short. A moment later, the Gate shuts down.

...You get the feeling this is going to be a very messy day.

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you peer over your paperwork at the gateroom as John heads through the Gate with Mckay at his side- going to the GENII HOMEWORLD to talk with a girl about a potential COUPLE COUP.

Coup. Such a funny word. There's Chicken COOP, and then there's a COUP D'ETAT. Despite them being spelled so similarly, they are pronounced completely differently and mean absurdly different things.

This whole day is concerning to say the least.

The GENII make you nervous, despite ostensibly being allies. After everything that Kolya did, and Cowen ordered, and Ladon made happen, and Sora and Teyla worked to undo...

Weir died because of them.
John nearly got shot so many times and...

You know it's unfair to look on them so poorly, and yet you can't help it considering everything.

And now your tentative alliance with them is in the air like a coin flipping around waiting to land.

...Roxy's been a bit fixated on the coin metaphors lately, and you think it's rubbing off.

You're somewhat glad you have this GENII THING as a distraction. It keeps the idea that Major Lorne's team is possibly dead well at bay.

Kanaya confirmed when the bodies had come in that the DNA didn't match the team- most notably, the corpses lacked the ATA GENE that all three men had. That said, Janet was running a thorough autopsy to confirm the results, and Beckett was checking dental records.

You're pretty sure deep within your heart that Lorne's team got captured and fakes were burned to make you think they're dead, but at the same time... you don't want to think about who captured them or why and where they might be.

That's what Teyla and Ronon are investigating back on that planet Lorne's team had been on.

And so you shove it aside. Because there's been far too much death already this month.

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you muse over the engine output data.

"Can I ask you a question?" Keiko asks suddenly.

"Uhhuh," you hum in agreement, not looking away from the string of code.

"Do you think this Gene Therapy stuff is going to work?" Keiko asks.

"Mmmmh...." You consider it. "It's probably gonna backfire in some way at first."

"You really think so?" Keiko asks.

"Tell me five times when anything we ever do works perfectly on the first try?" You ask in turn.

"...Admittedly I can't think of anything but I'm sure there's atleast five things," Keiko answers.

"Changing subjects. How're things with your family back home?" you ask.

"Silica's keeping me informed of stuff, though we're all worried about Touya and Yuuki. Haven't heard anything from them since they summoned the Kyoretsu Zords," Keiko says, and you glance over in time to see her frown thoughtfully. "Hopefully they're alright."

"They better be. They've got a Fraiser and a Carter and a Harley with 'em," you say. "That's a triple team of 'don't fuck with us' if ever there was one."

"...I guess that's true," Keiko nods, and you both get back to work.

Not half an hour later, you hear word that John's team is going to help SORA of the GENII in the dethroning of Commander Cowen and the halting of Ladon Radim's activities in the same stroke.

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and it is with a sigh of relief that you confirm the third method of identity
confirmation failed to confirm that the dead men in the morgue were Major Lorne's team.

That is to say, such a convoluted sentence was meant to mean the following:

Someone had swapped in already dead men and burned their bodies in the Team's clothing to make it seem like they weren't actually the people they were.

And who were they?

Going by the severe "death by radiation poisoning" signs you've only seen once before?

Genii scientists who accidentally touched raw, unshielded, energized Naquadria. Just like Daniel had all those years ago.

That would also explain why the bodies had been burned, to more easily conceal their already burned states.

You went to report this to Mikari right as Teyla and Ronon returned from their mission, with a folder full of photos of Atlantis Team Members with the ATA Gene.

The conclusion was obvious: One of the GENII FACTIONS wanted Atlantis Team members with the ATA Gene, and were willing to pay a lush, extravagant price for it.

Your name is Aradia Megido, and you're quite frankly FED UP.

"Okay! This is insane! I've searched everywhere in my room but I can't find my fucking hairbrush!"

You elaborate as you barge into Tagora Gorjek's office. "So you know what! I cave! I bow to it!"

You hold out your hand expectantly. "Please give me my fucking hairbrush back, Gorjek!"

"...As much as I'd love to say I had something to do with your hairbrush going missing, Megido," Tagora says, blinking at you from behind his own well groomed curtain of hair. "And while I can understand why you'd assume I'd taken it given my increasing remarks over the last few days as towards your increasingly rats-nest bob of hair... I didn't take your hair brush. That said, I can loan you one of mine."

"...What?" You stare, blinking intermittently as he gets up and searches a cabinet for something. "I thought you took it because you had a pitch-crush or something??"

"While the subject of romance should be tabled for another time, no, I didn't take your hair brush," Tagora says, drawing out a hairbrush and offering it to you. "Either you lost it somewhere outside of your room- considering your own 'searched everywhere' criteria- or someone did indeed take it. But if that's the case, all I can say is that it wasn't me. I'm not THAT petty or evil."

You continue to stare at the offered hairbrush for a few more long standing moments, then take it from him, go to the nearest mirror, and start brushing your hair back into place. "Guh! Who the hell is then!? I was sure you'd done it cause you were poking fun at how messy my hair was getting!"

"Sorry, but no, I just was wondering what was going on that your hair was getting that bad," Tagora answers. "As for who? I don't know. Why steal a hair brush? There's no logical reason for doing something like that, pitch-crush or otherwise. It's just so... Petty!"

...You end up agreeing with him over that.
Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and you have a very short list of planets to select from for moving Atlantis to, as far as the Database is concerned. And despite very specific criteria, it's a short list that grows longer by the day, and the only way to cull it is to send people to investigate.

Stargate present within the same system? Nogo. Any world that was already inhabited was a nogo. Any world that had significant issues like solar flares? SUCH a nogo it wasn't even funny. It was like selecting the Alpha Site all over again. How do you keep getting involved in this kind of job?

It doesn't matter, in the long run.

You drag the full list of location candidates into a file and set it to print.

As you wait for the whopping TWO whole pages of Gate addresses and potential locations to print out, you hope this is the last reloaction plan you have to work on for the foreseeable future.

You finish compiling your list for the day into a folder with all the remaining contenders from the LAST few batches, get up, and head out to Mikari's office to turn the current list of contenders for her to evaluate.

Honestly, your wonder how much of this work is ever going to see the light of day?

As you arrive in the Control Room, you watch as the Gate shield gets lowered, and John's team emerges through the gate. Unsurprisingly, Sora and a few Genii men are with them. Slightly Surprisingly, Major Lorne's team is with them too.

ABSURDLY SURPRISINGLY, though, is that jerkface LADOIN RADIM being with them too. What the hell is he doing with them?

You hear a buzzing radio, but are a bit too far away to catch it.

"This is Ladon," Ladon radios back. There's a pause, mumbled noise over the air. "I'm sorry it had to come to this, Cowen. You served us well, but you were too easily blinded with greed."

And then Ladon presses a button on his radio, and John calls out, "Shield Up."

The Gate shield raises, and then there's a flash of light through the shield and the room shakes, before the eventhorizon shuts down.

You hang around as Sora and Ladon go up into Mikari's office along with John and Lorne. Old habits die hard, and you LISTEN IN. Casually, like. Only so you can give your report.

You hear quite the story.

Ladon, apparently, had his suspicions that Cowen was insane even despite being cured of his radiation poisoning, and concocted a plan to test the man. And the test failed in all the worst ways, and Ladon became aware of so much more than he'd ever thought was going on. Cowen's men raided the Brotherhood on Dagan for their ZPM, ordered the capture of SG-teams, and wanted to steal Atlantis' JUMPERS for his own gain. Ladon knew he had to push his agenda fast. Sora, meanwhile, had no idea of Ladon's plan at all, and had been as blindsided as everyone else had been, apparently.

It's really quite the heart wrenching tale of Ladon's sister being forced to work on unshielded Naquadria bombs and got sick from it. You feel like it's all in summary, though, and not QUITE as heart wrenching as it could have been.
In the end, Cowen's entire conspiracy group had been left behind on another planet with an exploding bomb- non Naquadria, as it turns out. Just plain normal radioactive.

...You catch the Gate Address of that planet and quietly open up your folder of planets to double check.

"Ah. Shit." You whisper, decaptchalogue a pen, and quickly cross off one of the planets from your list. You didn't realize that Gate was on a planet, the Database said it was a Space Gate, not ground bound. Someone must have moved it at some point.

...Not like the planet's viable for life anyways right now. Gonna be another couple decades or so for the fallout to settle.

Your name is Daniel Jackson, and you hum a few notes to a song you can't quite remember as you read a report in bed late that night.

There's whirring sound as the bathroom door opens, and Sarah steps out, toweling off her hair, wearing only a bathrobe.

"So," She says, sitting down next to you on the bed. "I heard the Genii named Ladon Radim their new leader."

"Considering he pulled off a 'bloodless coup', that's not surprising," you mutter, putting your report down. "The Loyalists all surrendered with Cowen out of the picture."

"'Bloodless' indeed," Sarah scoffs. "It's all spin."

"That it is," you agree.

For a moment, flickers of memories blink across your eyes- recent and ancient alike.

Abydos stands at the forefront, however.

You hope Sam's doing alright.

Your name is Raddek Zelenka, and despite everything that happened today, you're just happy you've got LATE NIGHT LONG RANGE SCANNER duty and not anything more troubling.

"Tonight is quiet, and quiet is good," you smile to yourself.

The moment you say that, however, the damned things beep in alarm as they detect a small Wraith Ship heading directly towards Atlantis.

"...Why did you have to prove me wrong, Universe?" you ask, feeling a bit pale on the outside, and sick on the inside.
Nothing much to say here save that things are happening. Didn't feel like rehashing the whole episode over and focused instead on different details. Don't got too much else to say on that front or even on Epilogue stuff. Made more progress on the EOA chapter, just debating whether or not to cap it off with a musical sequence or just write it normally.
Your name is Aiden Ford, and you stalk through the forests of some random ass planet, heading from the Gate to the nearby village.

In other times, Ronon Dex would arrive here within the next few days, and cause the Wraith to attack because he still had a tracker in him.

But that's not going to happen because he doesn't have that tracker any more,

You glance at the tracker device in your bag, and grunt.

Some people can be so stupid.

With a bit of grim focus, you flicker between worlds and start to steal, ever so slightly, aspects of other yous so as to make yourself look different.

You're not far from the village now, and neither are the Wraith.

Within moments, you're as close to looking like Ronon Dex as you can, and begin to play the part you have to play.

Sometimes, a story needs a villain. Sometimes, a story doesn't need one.

There's nuance, and history, and backstory, to every single encounter and you're so fucking TIRED of people assuming that all of human history isn't just some story and that it'll never repeat itself.

But it DOES. Again and again across who knows how many dimensions and parallel worlds.

You stumble in. You put on the mask, you say the lines.

It's all to set things up for the death of a Wraith who deserves it... And in the process, get your way onto a ship to set in motion other such events.

The sound of the Darts buzzing in sounds like the music in your ears that it isn't to everyone else.

You do what you do best and survive.

You duck and weave, and play the strings of this story to set it all into motion.

You know what you must do, and your stomach growls in hunger for the satisfaction that is yet to come.

...Either that, or in hunger of a real meal. When even was the last time you ate?

It doesn't matter, the Wraith Enzyme stolen from other yous pushes you onwards to victory.

During the chaos of the Wraith blasting everything, you duck behind a tree and flicker your form again. Thus disguised, then you sneak aboard the Wraith Cruiser through the Darts, and you fight your way to find a torture lab.
You return to your normal self, and burst in through the door. The Scientists inside never knew what hit them, and then, you find the target you seek.

You peer into his soul to confirm it.

Yes. This is him.

You bundle the injured man up in a Dart, and reprogram its computer to fly towards Atlantis at top speeds.

You re-disguise yourself, and go about your merry way.

The Wraith never knew what hit them, but assume it was their rogue Runner causing trouble.

When they finally get word of Ronon Dex, that will be their downfall.

By the time you make it off world through another gate, things are in motion and you take the time to center yourself back as the you of this world line.

Your head hurts from briefly absorbing the image of a Wraith, but you can handle it.

It's no more different than absorbing the hundreds of you that went insane off of the Enzyme.

You find yourself at your SECRET BASE soon enough, only to discover that you have COMPANY.

Events unique to this world line leave you blindsided for the gaggle of Trolls, Carapacians, and Mofang squatting in your perfectly fine and generically abandoned warehouse.

You draw your weapon, and threaten them, "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Names Elwurd," the girl with blue dyed hair and a sand stained leather jacket stands up. "This is Marvus-" A tall, muscly fellow in stage show clothes that have definitely seen better days just waves from where he's lounging. "-And the rest of my crew. We heard through the grape vine that you were the guy to see about acquiring some Spaceships, Aiden Ford."

They know your name- not surprising given the racket you've been causing. But what is more surprising is "Spaceships?" You ask, marveling at the question. "Don't know who's got loose lips, but you've got my curiosity. What KIND of spaceships?"

The girl grins, and you start to feel the pieces of another plan start to fall into place as the tall fellow takes his cue to tell you they want to steal a "Motherfucking Wraith Hiveship."

It may not be how you were going to make this next Act of the Story play out originally, but what the hell?

"You've got guts, I'll tell you that much," you say, considering whether or not to pocket your gun...

These people are unknown variables. They're disconnected from the script you'd been crafting in so many ways.

...You decide that you'll have to make an exception to the rule and write them out at the earliest convenience.

But that time is not now.
You holster your gun, and say, "It's lucky you came along when you did. I was just about to steal one of those things for myself and was thinking about recruiting a crew. You want a Hiveship? You're going to have to put the work in for it."

"Oh, we're nothing if not VERY dedicated thieves, Aiden Ford," 'Elwurd' smiles.

Yeah, you're pretty sure she's going to back stab you the first chance she gets.

The name of the game here is speed chess. And unfortunately for Elwurd's group here... you're in control of the rule book.

Chapter End Notes

Oh, these guys again. Almost forgot about them after all the trouble they caused. Almost as if they've become unmoored from reality itself....

Oh, yeah, Ford continues trying to make reality follow the status quo script of canon Atlantis, setting up for things that weren't being set up for. You'd think that they- huh? What?

Oh, these guys again. Almost forgot about them after all the trouble they caused. Almost as if they've become unmoored from reality itself....

Ah, but yeah. Ford is edging into the line of villainy here, causing trouble that otherwise wouldn't be caused. I can't imagine this is going to go well for him down the- Huh??

...What do you mean repeating myself? I only was talking about Ford the once here and once below the Epilogue Cut.

Finished End of Act 6 Act 2. After that... Well, I think I'll take atleast a week, maybe two at a minimum for break before resuming posting. Might take longer spans between chapters. Don't know exactly yet. We'll see.

Epilogue thoughts below.

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SNIP

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I honestly was a little surprised that Meat Dirk went down the same route I was nudging Ford down, except a lot harder and a lot more, ah... self-terminatingly-fatal-ly. Heart Aspect is an interesting thing to delve into, and I suppose it was only natural that
thoughts on that Aspect itself from various sources would echo similarly. The only difference between Ford and Meat Dirk is that Meat Dirk wishes to be the villain because he thinks he has to make things go his way or else things won't be relevant or real. Ford, on the other hand, is following a script he's seeing from other worlds. He's not exerting his will except to enforce a standard of experience that otherwise shouldn't be enforced due to timeline differences. Things... are not going to go well for him going down that road.

There's a difference of interaction and intent given Ford is being the villain because he thinks things HAVE to happen a certain way or else it's wrong as a form of predestination. They're both arguably tearing the foundation of self-will away from people, but at the same time, Dirk leaves open the potential for his own demise, while Ford... Ford thinks he's invulnerable given some of the tricks he's developing.

(Also, incase you didn't get the joke up there, I was implying Elwurd's crew were flickering out of memory for the sake of comedy here in the notes. They may actually be somewhat unmoored from "the Narrative" given the Rift shenanigans they caused, but it's not to THAT serious of an extent.)
Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes.


DIASPORA DATE: 10/03/0005.

A book on AUTHORED NARRATIVES lays open on Mikari Aiikho's desk- propped open at an angle by a book stand.

Mikari stares at the book, turning a page as she finishes it and starts another, when her radio buzzes.

"Mikari?"

"Yes, Doctor Beckett?"

"He's awake."

And thus, Mikari Aiikho gets up and heads to the isolation room.

Argo Lalonde pauses to get up from their desk, grab a bookmark, and place it into the pages of the book before closing it. They stare out after Mikari, and then says, "I've got a bad feeling about this."

Mikari arrives in the scene in the isolation room with John Sheppard at her side. Doctor Beckett is shining a penlight into a patient's eyes, a young man who seems bewildered and confused by everything.

"Blood pressure's fine, pulse normal," Beckett smiles at the man. "You're bouncing back quite nicely."

"Bouncing back from what?" the man asks.

"Hello, Michael," Mikari starts, making him jump within his bed slightly. "Do you remember us?"

"No," he shakes his head.

"I'm Mikari Aiikho, this is Lieutenant Colonel John Sheppard," Mikari informs the man, and then speaks. "As far as we can gather from the remains of your personal belongings and the notes left to us..."

"Your Name is MICHAEL KENMORE, and you were kidnapped by the WRAITH and experimented upon," the strange alien woman says. "A man by the name of AIDEN FORD rescued you, and sent you to us on a Transport Vessel. Right now, you're in a private room off the Infirmary here in ATLANTIS."

Somewhere within the void of your memory, those facts ring as TRUE within your empty, hollow existence.

The words that ring loudest feel as if they were shouted despite the fact that she spoke calmly and clearly.
Each of them brings with them CONCEPTS. IDEAS. LINKS.

MICHAEL KENMORE- a name, RESPECT given to you from a WARRIOR.

WRAITH- ships, shadows, space, cold, death, life, hunger. TERROR.

AIDEN FORD- a man with a dark eye that pierces like the VOID.

ATLANTIS....


"Atlantis?" You pause. "Yes. I think I remember him saying that..." The words swirl around like a leaf in the wind, and you barely pin it down. "I would be safe here?"

"We've had you here for some time," the doctor who was treating you when you woke up- BECKETT wasn't it?- says with concern in his voice. "You were quite badly beaten. We weren't sure if you were going to make it through the treatments we had to give you while trying to save your life."

"I can't remember much of anything," you say. "But those names... They're familiar somehow. You say my name is Michael but it... part of that doesn't feel right."

"Well, it's the only name we've got since it was on the note Ford left us," the man- SHEPPARD- says. "And Ford is... well. Who knows what he's thinking at the best of times."

You stare, then you ask. "The Wraith... what did they do to me? Why can't I remember anything?"

"I could give you the full list of physical trauma," BECKETT says, "but that'd more than likely send you into shock. Needless to say, the amnesia may be a result of physical trauma, psychological, or even an unintended side-effect of the procedures we undertook to help you survive. It's impossible to say until your memories begin to come back to you."

"And in the mean time," the woman, MIKARI, says. "I can assure you that we will give you the best possible care to help you in your recovery."

The smile she gives you is supposed to be reassuring, you're sure...

But it does nothing to quell the confusion and uncertainty within your heart.

"Keep a close eye on him. Until we know more, we need to proceed with caution," Mikari says. "This is just the start."

Your name is MICHAEL KENMORE, and you peer at the vial of green liquid Doctor Beckett is preparing. "What's that?"

"Part of the treatment we're administering. Among the other injuries you suffered, part of what the
Wraith did to you resulted in your genetic structure becoming highly unstable," Beckett says. "This is to help stabilize it, and prevent things from getting worse. It's the only treatment that's stuck so far."

"...What exactly kind of... unstable are we talking about here?" you ask.

"...At the mildest, your skin was highly discolored a rather angry red," Beckett answers. "The rest is... well. We will tell you more once we're certain your mental state can handle it."

"I'd really like to know what happened to me, Doc," you say.

"I would like you to know too, but I'd rather not send you into a shock induced relapse where you forget everything again after having it dredged up," Beckett says.

"Please understand, you were in a very bad way when you got here. We weren't sure if anything we did was going to save you. Frankly, it's a miracle that what worked even did put you right as much as it did."

You consider the implications of that, looking your whole body over. "I feel fine and I look fine... must've been one hell of a miracle cure."

"Even our usual Miracle cure barely worked in that regard," Beckett remarks, shaking his head, and then injecting your arm with the miracle drug beyond all miracles.

"Excuse me," an alien girl knocks on the door. "Doctor Beckett, I heard he was awake?"

"Aye," Beckett nods. "Complete amnesia, though, Miss Soleli, for a vast majority of everything."

"May I speak with him?" the girl asks.

"Of course," Beckett heads off, and you're left alone with the grey skinned, purple eyed girl.

"Hello," she greets.

"Hi," you say. "I'm Micahel, or so they tell me. ...You feel... familiar somehow."

"I'm Barzum Soleli," she says. "I'm something of a psychic. I was called in to help check your mental state during your recovery so far. You're probably recognizing me from that."

"Psychic, huh?" you stare at her. "So, what, you look inside my head and judge if I'm stable enough for whatever?"

"Whatever, yes," she smiles, a bit mysteriously. "Mostly, I'm just hoping to see your mind remain stable for long enough that it doesn't adversely affect your physical health."

"...Was I really that bad off?" you ask.

"Let's just say I've had personal experiences with how certain bits of information can just... shut down a mind in really unpleasant ways," Barzum says, and you feel a bit mollified with that.

Over the next few days, Michael Kenmore was given more treatments, and soon was able to get out and take walks through the city, escorted by two military nurses at all times just incase of relapse.

He would eat meals in the cafeteria, have brief conversations with random people, and return to a private room he had been given.
Within it were his PERSONAL BELONGINGS and not much more. A TATTERED HAT that he felt like he should recognize but didn’t. A few tattered photos in an equally beaten wallet of people he didn’t know. A well worn Jacket that had huge chunks of it recently replaced and did not bode well to his own body when he had been wearing it.

Finally, there was a pair of letters.

One, it seemed, was addressed to the people of Atlantis.

"Atla's-

His name is Michael Kenmore.

I rescued him from the Wraith.

Take Care Of Him.

-A Ford"

It was short, simple, and to the point.

The other letter was directed at Michael himself.

"Mike-

Hey, buddy.

You were beaten up pretty badly when I found you. The Wraith did a real number in on you.

I'm writing this letter just incase you forget about what happened (I know, I know, memory is SUCH a tricky thing to deal with after nearly getting your skull caved in).

If you ever have any doubts about why you're there, check back here and start from Word One. Got it?

Take care of yourself. Maybe I'll be lucky and see you around one of these days.

-Aiden Ford"

Needless to say, that concerned Micahel dearly, and so when he reached his breaking point, he asked again for the first time what had happened to him by finding the first doctor he could meet, one Gina Kae, and, well, just asking.

"Oh? Your injuries? Yes, you suffered quite a great many of them. Your skull had multiple fractures, there was swelling of the brain, half of your ribs were broken, several internal organs were bruised or heavily damaged, your left leg was dislocated, your right arm was fractured in multiple places- and, oh, sorry. That was probably too much too fast."

"No, no," Michael waved it off, looking as pale in the face as a ghost confronted with his own near death. "That... I Really should have taken everyones words for it that I was messed up that badly."

The nightmares were horrendous, coming in bits and pieces and making sleep hard to come by.

In tidbit morsels, he had visions of himself as a Wraith, and then visions of himself strapped to a table, being cut into or stuck in a cell being beaten.
He remembered injections that made his blood boil, and his skin crawl, and his head hurt.

Sometimes he woke up to nightmares of looking into a mirror and seeing not only himself as a Wraith, but himself, and himself, and himself, and himself, and himself, and himself, and--

An endless recursion of Michael Kenmores just streaming on in all directions, some Wraith, some human, some the odd race of Alternians, and Rarest Still some kind of pointy-eared sprite with glowing wings. Some Wraith wore Human clothes, some Humans wore Wraith Clothes. Others still wore oddities like blue jumpers with yellow stripes- or red for that matter- with patches of odd, saucer shaped ships in places.

But there was one commonality:

All of them glared back at him, judging him for wanting to remember. Begging, pleading, for some version, some ASPECT of himself to just FORGET what he once was and just move on with his damned life in the relative peace he had been given.

And then, ending it all, was the man with the piercing void of an eye- Ford himself- walking out of the shadows and telling Michael that it wasn't TIME to remember yet.

His past was a mystery, and even DOCTOR HEIGHTMEYER seemed to advocate not rushing the process. Letting the memories come back to him slowly over time rather than forcing the issue.

...But Michael was many things in life, however, and a quitter was not one of them.

And so happenstance allowed him the opportunity to go looking through Doctor Beckett's lab one evening when the man was asleep, and found a case of CDs labled with his name and patient numbers.

Did he really want to look at his own mutilated, beaten, battered self, and watch the process of healing through?

...

....... He BORROWED the CDs with ease, and returned to his quarters surprisingly uninterupted. He angled his DISK PLAYER away from the cameras places "in case of medical emergency during the night" and...

He was tempted to start at the end. "DAY 12" it said.

...No. He decided to heed Ford's note's advice and start with Word One. Or rather, DAY ONE.

He was greeted by the image of a medical team prying open a Wraith Dart's canopy, and carefully pulling the badly beaten man out of it.

He caught sight of purple skin, rolling flames between blue and red and a lot of blood.

Oh there was so much blood.

The footage cut to the Isolation room, with the camera focused on a badly beaten man, wheezing as his lone eye- golden and slit like an animal- fixed on the camera and spoke.
"I do not have much time left as who I am," he states, "I am beaten. I am battered. I am dying. I know I will not survive the day... even if my body does live beyond... I have peered into the void and I have seen..." He wheezes a dry chuckle. "I have seen myself. In infinity." There's a moment of quiet. "In the event I forget this entire thing happened as has happened so. Many. Times. Know this. Where elsewhere it may have been forced on me. Today? I. Choose. This. I seek revenge against the Wraith. For what they've done to me. What they continue to do to their own kind."

He spits out some blood into a nearby bin- the metal rings wet and sticky from the impact.

"They torture us who manifest powers beyond what we had before, and they kill us, and experiment on us, just to find a way to make it stop-" the man grunts as a rolling wave of oddity circles over his eye- transforming the golden parts to white and back again. "And for... For that they made my body begin to collapse. I have no idea if... if I may yet survive. But they have a machine. A genetic manipulator. These Atlantians... to think I'd trust them with my life." He chuckles again. "If I am to live, to get my revenge on those who have wronged me... know this, I die today, but I will be reborn. And if I am watching this..."

His lone eye narrows.

"Know this, Michael Kenmore. There are worse enemies to be had." He coughs. "Watch what follows at your own peril."

And so Michael Kenmore closed the player and backed as far away from it as he could.

And then he did the reasonable thing and fainted.

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**EARTH DATE: MARCH 30TH, 2002.**

**DIASPORA DATE: 10/08/0005.**

"Well," your name is Mikari Aiikho, and you massage at the bridge of your nose as you stare down at the man in isolation once again, still out of it after collapsing the night before. "I can honestly quite say he was asking for it, but at the same time, I wish he could have just waited for us to tell him properly."

"So he found out he used to be a Wraith," John says. "He watched the message he left for himself. If he gets mad at us for this, then he's also gotta get mad at himself."

"I just wish Ford would stop playing games with us like this," you say. "What is even the POINT of sending us a badly injured Wraith with a bunch of notes telling us to use the Gene Therapy- that Ford couldn't possibly know existed- on him and tell us to Take Care Of Him!?"

"It's all apart of whatever script Ford's looking at," John says, motioning at the roof far above you on the other side of the window. "Out there in the Multiverse, Ford's got a bunch of himself spying on events and learning things he couldn't know otherwise. And he's using it to write some kind of story for us based off of it. I don't even think he HAS a plan except make our series of unfortunate events follow some invisible pattern we can't look at."

"You know," you say, "I'm really not a fan of puppeteers."

"Agreed," John grunts.
Your eyes flutter open, and you realize once again...

You know who you are.

YOUR NAME IS MICHAEL KENMORE.

YOU USED TO BE A WRAITH, NOW TURNED HUMAN THROUGH MEANS OF GENETIC MANIPULATION.

That is a truth etched firmly into your soul- your very essence of being- for a VAST number of selves.

You don't remember anything else all that solidly, but you do remember Ford busting into your cell block, and gazing into your very soul.

You saw as well, and what you saw was beautiful and terrifying all at the same time.

That much knowledge- the parallel worlds and events and timelines- it could all... just... Cause a soul's ultimate manifestation to go down some very dark paths.

It's no wonder your mind basically sealed it all away, even the stuff from your life up before that moment. Not even just the trauma of everything specific to the you of this WORLD-LINE- the term comes to you like smoke on the breeze without origin- which has its own reasons for being blocked out.

You have lived so many terrible lives fraught with chaos and war and terror...

Your soul is tired. So very tired. And it craves a unique HUNGER.

That Craving, that HUNGER...

Is PEACE.

And it is with that thought that you succumb to your sleep once again.

For the first time in many nights, you have no nightmares.

Chapter End Notes

There's not a lot that I can say about this chapter that doesn't touch on the epilogues, so I'll just say here that things are going differently and yet the same compared to canon, and we get to see who Ford rescued last chapter. And yes, there was a mild Star Trek: Enterprise nod in there somewhere. Beyond that, one more chapter will be posted (tomorrow's/friday's) and then I'll be on break for the previously mentioned two-ish weeks.

Now then, onto the Epilogue Cut.
This is the first chapter I heavily dug into with the Epilogue thematics. The subject of MANUFACTURED NARRATIVES. In canon Atlantis, the team pulled some very questionable manipulations on Michael, and it never really sat right with me on some fundamental level. Every time Michael appeared it felt... forced idiot-ball tier levels? To a degree? Here, we start off with the same general framing of that episode, and then upend it. The team is entirely truthful and has no reason to hide anything from Michael save for out of fear for his mental health given everything he'd been through in this timeline.

Here, we see that yes, the Wraith are being horrible to their own people because of the Rift induced transformations and power generations. Michael ended up the unfortunate labrat in this case, and Ford... Ford set up a drastically different scenario than how other things have gone in other worlds. This, arguably, is Ford's first very major deviation from the "canon" script of Stargate Atlantis, and might well bight him in the ass later. It's a deliberate butterfly on his part, despite otherwise setting up events to follow a similar course of action. (I.E.: Mike goes to Atlantis and takes the Gene Therapy.)

Michael has always been a character driven towards vengeance, that much has not changed. Ford has chosen to take the risk that he can direct that drive back onto the Wraith while shielding Atlantis from it. And here, Ford has, either intentionally or not, dragged from beneath the surface multiple instances of Michael and meshed them together when he rescued him from the Wraith.

So, on that subject, Ford has begun painting himself as a similar figure to Meat Dirk, a path I'd had intended for him to begin with, but not quite to this degree and definitely without Dirk to compare to. Doc Scratch, maybe just a smidge, but... It had meant to be something a bit more background, and the Epilogues are pushing me to explore it a bit more thoroughly with Ford's character here than I might have otherwise. I can't say I'm regretting it much.

Ford's character direction had originally been developed w/ the Enzyme in canon because his actor wanted more relevance for Ford. And now that desire is resoundingly echoing within this version of Ford, pushing himself to become something greater and more important to "The Narrative."

To Manufacture a Narrative, to tell a story... there is a lot of weight to something as simple as "A martyr said fuck and then died"... In this case, I think it can be summarized as simply as "A Star wanted to be the Director." Something I've debated in this story over time WAS that voice of authorial intent, before the Epilogues voiced the question directly. "Who is telling this story?" I've been asking myself at times. Given the fourthwall breaks I've done with Martin Lloyd, I'd have been inclined to say it's him 100% for everything... but Given Ford's Desires?

Within the Pegasus Galaxy, that question is answered as Ford, certainly, doesn't it seem?
But what about the rest of the Universe? Is it Martin still? Or is he just the author for Milky Way? And if that is the case then who tells Alternia's Story: Joey? Callie? Dammek? Someone else?

And then there is one more important question I'd like to ask you Readers:

From your perspective, does this story feel as if it is told as:
A: a Collaborative Effort between Narrators?
B: Multiple Narrators Feuding over control?
C: A Singular Narrative told by one person?
D: A Voiceless Narrator telling the Story with no known Identity?
E: Multiple Narrators handing off the baton over the course of multiple acts?
F: None of the Above?

I'm genuinely curious if anyone has had any thoughts on this subject over the course of the story, or especially now that the Epilogues have dropped.
"Zelenka reports the repairs to the Aurora are stalling without some proper reference material to functioning parts," your name is ARGO LALONDE, and you're doing your job as Secretary, briefing Mikari Aiikho on the day's business as you both leave the Atlantis Cafeteria/Messhall/Only-Dining-Place-Of-Choice and head to the control room/ your shared office space. "'Blueprints are only getting us so far when they only call for specific generators and parts without detailing those generators and parts', his words."

"Mmh," Mikari sips at her coffee. "What of the crew?"

"Xefros just left back for Alternia with the last batch of their souls copied onto Reaper for depositing into the Memorial Pyramid Matrixes on Lopan," you report. "We're disposing of their bodies as they requested via Cremation on the Mainland."

"So they're still of the opinion they'd rather live out the rest of their Digitized Lives as holograms on a peaceful planet than offering any help against the Wraith?" Mikari asks, sounding a mix of disappointed and approving.

"They've spent the last ten thousand years reliving the same final day of the War over and over again," you allow. "They'd like a chance to rest from that before they even consider helping out with anything."

"Fair enough," Mikari says. "Next?"

"Roxy says they can probably Void-magic up replacement parts if they can get a good enough mindset of what's needed to go into the Aurora to fix it," you continue. "But again, we'd need proper reference material for them to copy."

"Right," Mikari pauses as you arrive at the teleporter, step inside, and select the Control Room Port. FWASSSSSSSSH! "So, what else is there?"

"Ah..." You page through the files. Paperwork, paperwork... "The IOA put in a formal request for a face-to-face meeting sometime next month. They're talking Job Evaluation."

"Oh, lovely," Mikari rolls her eyes as you start up the stairs into the control room.

"Barzum says that Michael's mindscape has stabilized a lot overnight, and that if he wakes up this
morning, depending on an evaluation from Beckett, Fraiser, and Heightmeyer, should be cleared to return to his quarters tonight,” you continue on. "She doesn't see any flight or fight risks in his psyche right now."

"Good, good," Mikari nods as you enter the Control Room proper. "Anything else?"

"Um, well, there's..." And then you're interrupted by an unscheduled offworld activation. "There's that?"

"What do we have, Chuck?" Mikari asks, moving over to the technician.

"Radio Frequency Transmission... Ancient Codex format," Chuck answers.

"Put it through," Mikari says.

What you hear next is a distress call from a group of human scientists working within an Ancient Outpost on their planet. Apparently, they're having problems with their shield generators that started with a series of Earthquakes that were presently ongoing, and in their Database were several locations that could serve as "Tech Support"- among them?

Atlantis.

Mikari Radios back stating that a top team would be heading through the Gate to aid them in figuring things out. Then, she requests you assemble a team to do just that, before taking the bundle of paperwork and adjourning to her office.

Your name is Argo Lalonde, you take a deep breath, and exhale, before going to find AR-1 or AR-2. Or both, even.

You get the feeling this is going to be a long day.

O<--STARGATE: ATLANTIS-->O

Your name is Mikari Aiikho, and less than an hour after AR-1 and AR-2 left, you look up as John Sheppard enters your office along side an excited Tyzias Entykk. Both immediately begin elaborating and explaining in detail about the people of the planet they left their teams on to do work while they came back to report.

A Geothermal powered Shield Generator? Interesting but not unexpected... An AURORA CLASS BATTLE CRUISER on the other hand?

...You are honestly caught off guard by this startling revelation.

You quickly begin to pack up and prepare to go off world to meet with the leader of these people to secure VISITATION RIGHTS to fix your own battered Aurora.

The planet in question, TARANIS, hosts its stargate in a rather humid open air plaza next to a tall cliff-face, within which a large building has clearly been implanted.

You briefly check in on the others, finding Rodney Mckay talking with a local scientist woman
named NORINA, about earthquakes and tremors and the like.

You hear a brief snippet of conversation:

"Yes, there's an enormous amount of heat beneath the surface," Norina is explaining. "When I noticed the fluctuations in shield strength, I managed to override the alarms and make some adjustments, but then other lights began blinking and I was unable to understand what they meant..." McKay leans against a console, gazing at her for a moment before Tyzias coughs as she takes up at a different console, and then righting himself. "But shortly after that is when the tremors started."

"Oh, Tyzias. Sheppard. Miss Aiikho!" He snaps to attention. "What are you doing here?"

"Negotiations," you explain. "How goes it here?"

"Well, we're, uh-" Mckay fumbles.

"We're running diagnostics still," Keiko says. "But we're fairly certain that something in the failsafes has stopped working, or was accidentally shut down. As for what? Not sure yet."

With that knowledge secured, you go to meet CHANCELLOR LYCUS.

The discussions go well at first, barring a moment of hostile concern over the absurd idea that you want to steal their spaceship.

And then your radio buzzes, and the world quakes.

---

You are now Mallek Adalov, and not a few minutes after Mikari leaves, one of your diagnostics finishes.

"Wait," you say suddenly, "you've been running the shield constantly for almost a year?"

"Yes," Norina says, "When we first activated the, uh... oh what was it?"

"Long range scanners," Mckay supplies. "That's what we call them."

"Yes, those, when they detected a sudden increase in Wraith activity last year, Chancellor Lycus ordered me to increase the shield's strength," Norina says.

"Oh no," Keiko hurries over and looks at your screen's data, then back to hers. "Oh, fuck..."

"Let me confirm that," Tyzias says, checking their data and- "Oh FUCK."

There's a chill through the room, and Daraya speaks up from the corner of the room her and Ronon had chosen to brood in, "Please tell me this doesn't mean what I think it means?"

"What does what mean?" Teyla asks.

"The Ancients didn't design these shields to run continuously at max power," you elaborate, taking off your glasses and massaging at the bridge of your nose. "When you shut down the alarm, you shut off a failsafe, alright. A really important one."

You're trying not to have flashbacks right now, and you're not the only one. Daraya looks sufficiently unnerved, and her hands start twitching for something to grasp. Tyzias moves over to her in a heartbeat.
"Oh Shit," Mckay hisses, and goes to check a computer.

"Okay, shields are for emergencies only," Ronon says. "What's the big deal?"

The room shakes and trembles as if in response to that.

Tyzias pulls Daraya into a protective hug, and Keiko growls at the ceiling.

"Let me guess," John starts- "That's the big deal?"

"Oh no," Mckay whimpers almost too quietly to hear.

"What is it?" Norina starts. "Please, tell me what's going wrong?"

"The reason the Ancients chose to power this facility on Geo Thermal Energy is because we're placed in the caldera of a dormant Super Volcano," Tyzias speaks up, having not stopped hugging Daraya one bit. "Or, rather, Formerly dormant, because all the energy being drawn from the Magma chamber-"

"Has made it extremely active," Mckay finishes, a hollow, scared look on his face. "We have a problem. A huge, huge problem."

Immediately, John goes for his Radio. "Mikari, you and the Chancellor are going to want to come back to the Control Room. We have a problem."

There's a pause, "What kind of problem?"

The room- no- the entire facility quakes in response.

"THAT kind of Problem," John concludes.

It takes only a few minutes, during which time everyone double checks every piece of math they can double check, and another FIVE minor quakes before Mikari and Chancellor Lycus return.

"What's the situation?" Mikari asks.

"Too long, don't read," you summarize. "We're about to relive the most volcanic parts of the mission that nearly burned Polypa to death."

"Sorry, what?" Chancellor Lycus asks as everyone in the know goes a bit pale at that. "Did I miss something?"

"Colonel Sheppard, I thought miss Goezee was fine and well?" Teyla starts.

"She is," John says. "Now. After she got extensive healing from a volcano deciding to spit molten rock on her and the Stargate."

"Are you saying we're dealing with a volcano that's about to erupt?!?" Mikari asks, swallowing her fear and taking back a commanding role.

"No," Mckay corrects. "You're thinking of Mount Saint Helens or the Caldera near D'ni. Too small. Think Yellowstone National park- with a caldera over fifty miles wide and a massive sea of molten rock beneath the surface."

"Or M3R-4R4," Tyzias says. "Back in Alternia."
"Oh shit," Mikari breathes out. "You mean the moon we crossed off as a potential Settlement site because the place was shaking with earthquakes too frequently?"

"And then subsequently exploded about an hour after we left and we never could dial back again," Tyzias nods. "Exactly that one."

"The Ancients built the facility here to tap into all that geothermal energy," you say. "But these volcanoes don't erupt all that often."

"Exactly," Mckay says. "Thousands to hundreds of thousands of years can pass before an eruption event. So the Ancients figured, 'why not?' and tapped into it for their shields..."

"And it's smart," Keiko says. "Up until the safeties get disabled from being ran continuously for over four months."

"But it's been almost a year," Norina states to the Chancellor. "We've been running this for almost an entire year and by doing so, we've increased the pressure of the magma chamber."

"By our estimations," you swallow your own fear. "It's grown to almost forty miles now, and is increasing as we speak."

"Can we stop it?" The Chancellor asks.

"No," Norina shakes her head. "I've done the math myself. The alarms that were sounding that I disabled was our point of no return. After that point, the damage was done and it'd continue to happen regardless... even if we'd shut it down after that point... when the tremors started, it was too late. It'd just have taken longer."

You state immediately, "And before anyone suggests it? Blowing a hole in the ground is a bad idea. It'd just set this thing off early. The only option we have on the table now is Evacuating."

"Where can we go on this planet then?" The Chancellor asks. "Where will be safe?"

"You're still not getting it," Mckay says. "You're still thinking too small. Look-" he gets out his tablet, starts a drawing mode, and draws a small cloud of smoke. "This is the blast that destroyed Mount Saint Helens back home. This was survivable for the planet despite how bad it was. This is what you're thinking is going to happen."

He then writes a "X 10,000" next to it and then draws an even larger explosion.

"When this thing ACTUALLY erupts, it's going to be OVER Ten Thousand times greater. The dust cloud alone is going to envelop the planet within weeks, blocking out enough sunlight to kill every living thing on this planet. This is an EXTINCTION LEVEL EVENT. If this were happening on Earth with Yellowstone and we'd caught it early enough, we'd be evacuating as many people as we POSSIBLY could from the entire planet through ships and through the Stargate. As it is, we can't save the planet. We can save your village. That's how little time we have left."

The Chancellor considers it, then says he'll be in his office to think things through.

Norina follows him a few moments later.

Mikari makes a decision, "I'm calling Atlantis and telling them to forward a message to the Daedalus and to have them re-route on their trip back from Earth to rendezvous here. We're going to need as much manpower to evacuate this planet as we can get."
With a firm nod, you go to dial the DHD for Atlantis.

"I'm going home to Atlantis," Daraya says suddenly, "Right now. I'll gladly carry that message."

"I'll go back too," Tyzias says with a nod.

"Ok," Keiko nods. "Go ahead. We'll stay here and do what we can."

And with that, Tyzias and Daraya head for the Gate.

"We asked them to help, and they came!"

"To FIX our Shield Generator, not incite evacuation of our planet!"

"Our shield generator IS THE PROBLEM! We brought this on ourselves!"

"I just find it curious that they advise us to leave this planet shortly after finding we have an Ancient Warship."

"That has nothing to do with this! If I'd realized on my own what was happening, I would be calling for an evacuation myself!"

Everything shakes—violently, and for much longer than before.

Outside, all across the lived in land within the caldera of the volcano, massive plumes of smoke begin bursting into the air as the ground around them starts to collapse into the dark abyss below...

Dimly, a faint orange glow begins to light up through those rifts mere seconds later.

Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and as you step out of the Gate to Atlantis, you see the wormhole flicker briefly.

You swallow your damned fears and march to the control room to relay Mikari's message to the Daedalus.

A few minutes later, the Gate dials in again, requesting medical assistance.

Doctors Beckett and Fraiser head back through immediately, and so too does Jade Jackson, for reasons you can't fathom to understand except for that love can sometimes blind you. You and Tyzias hover anxiously in the Control Room as you wait through the next several minutes.

The Gate Dials in, and then The Chancellor leads the first batch of refugees through the Gate. There's a brief pause that stretches on for an eternity, then Mikari comes through with the second batch of refugees.

As the second batch is nearing the end, suddenly, people stop coming through. A moment later—your radio buzzes.

"ATLANTIS, THIS MALLEK! RAISE THE SHIELD NOW! REPEAT RAISE THE SHIELD!"
And thus you're forced to watch as history repeats itself, Tyzias slams on the shield for the Stargate, and a flash of molten red splashes against the shield--

Time slows.

The temperature in the room rises sharply, and you hear Polypa's screaming, and your and Mallek's desperate cries echoing in your ears, and for a moment you're not looking down at the Atlantis Stargate but you're kneeling next to the All Your Base's Stargate as lava pours through the eventhorizon.

And then it stops, and time resumes.

The wormhole disconnects and the shield remains, but this time there's no lava pressing against it waiting to be evaporated. The Connection didn't last nearly long enough as it did back then, or the shield was designed differently or- whatever. It doesn't matter.

"Wh- What happened!?” Someone shouts. You don't care who.

Your name is Daraya Jonjet, and as you fall to your knees, whimpering as the memories continue to come rushing back to you...

You already know the answer to that question.

Your name is Keiko Ayano, and you stare at the massive puddle of molten rock where the Stargate used to stand.

The ground had exploded from beneath it, crumbling away and the Gate fell forwards onto its front, and had quickly been submerged by the rest of the lava swallowing it up.

"It's gone," you whisper, watching as that small ring of disturbed lava smooths out, erasing the existence of that Stargate entirely.

Mallek squeezes your hand tightly, and you squeeze back.

"Okay then," you start. "Time for Plan C."

"What's plan C and what happened to plab B?" Mallek asks.

"C is We get that Ancient Ship flying again and evacuate as many people as we can through it before this whole place explodes," you answer with grim determination, because you're SURE AS HELL not going to go out like this. "And B is we wait for the Daedalus, but I'm not holding my breath."

Your name is Tyzias Entykk, and you're trying to keep your cool for Daraya's sake while Mikari is busy trying to reassure the people who'd come through while a connection is tried to be re-established many times.

You tell them it's a waste of time, the gate on the other end refuses to lock because it's damaged, or worse, destroyed.

The Chancellor takes offense with that, stating there's nothing wrong with the Stargate for the fifth
time since this started.

Of all the arrogant...

"Would you shut up and listen to me for a single moment?" You snap. "Look. We've seen this happen before in various forms. There was clearly some kind of eruption while we were evacuating, and it hit the Stargate. Back home, the same damned thing happened like what we just saw, except the Gate only got indirectly hit and magma was sent hurtling through the wormhole for a LOT longer than that! We were lucky the Gate wasn't directly ON the Volcano itself then! Now? Your Gate was sitting on top of it! If the ground broke underneath it and it fell into lava, or there was an eruption and it got sent flying into the stratosphere, there's no telling how intact the Gate actually is!"

Everyone goes silent at that.

"Now," You start, "does ANYONE know where the Daedalus is right now??"

"What if the volcano erupts before we can get the ship working?" Your name is Jade Jackson, and you're doing your best to keep an eye on the ERUPTION STATUS of the ground beneath you via your SPACE POWERS.

You're kind of useless beyond serving as a barometer for pressure. Your powers are already warning you that if you tried squeezing or shrinking or whatever, it'll be a PREMATURE BOOM.

"If we can fix it it'll be a miracle," Mckay says as John opens the hangar door and leads you into what looks like the Ancient version of the 304 hangar bays. There, sitting before you all, is the front nose of the AURORA CLASS CRUISER, name unknown.

Ronon whistles. "A few more like this and we can give the Wraith a real fight."

"Yes, well don't get your hopes up," Mckay says. "Look at that scarring along the back rear. She took a heavy beating. We'll be lucky to get shields online, let alone engines."

"Shields?" You ask. "Shields I can work with."

"What are you thinking?" John asks.

"I'm thinking we turn this thing into one of my marbles, and let the planet do the rest of the work for us," you say, the thoughts clicking into alignment.

"...Blast the roof and ride the shockwave into orbit?" Mckay asks. "If the shields could hold out that long we might have an option but if they don't..." He snaps his fingers at the same time Mallek does. They both stop and stare at eachother, then-

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" Mallek asks.

"We open a Hyperspace window, let the explosion hurl us through it, and then get out of dodge-hopefully landing up in stable orbit over the planet and we wait for the Daedalus to come pick us up."

"In that case, let's get as many people onto the ship as we can," Keiko says. "And let's pray the Daedalus shows up before then incase we don't have enough room."
About an hour of furious work later, Mckay proudly reports that the Life Support is back online.

"Good," you are now JOHN SHEPPARD, once again planning for yet another seriously stupid idea involving an exploding planet and trajectories into high orbit. "Anything else to report?"

"Yeah, uh, I found the ship's name," Mckay smiles. "It was named after an Ancient General, Hippaforalkus."

Stupid name.

"We are not calling it that," you say.

"Well, what about-" Mckay starts.

"We're not calling it Enterprise either!" you shoot it down.

"What about 'Iron Lass'?" Jade suggests.

Your heart skips a beat, but you say, "Look, we can name it later." You go for your radio. "Teyla, Ronon, how's the evacuation going?"

There's a pause, some mild static, and then-

"Good," Teyla reports. "We have about half of the settlement inside the ship already and it seems there is room for the rest, though it will be a tight fit."

"Well, let's hope we don't have to," you say, and then right then and there answering your prayers, your radio crackles and sparks with a transmission:

"-olonel Shep---d, this is---Daedalus."

You reply, "Go ahead."

There's nothing but static, and Keiko calls out- "Just a moment!"

A moment later. Then...

"Try it now."

You radio again. "Daedalus, this is AR-1, we're here and okay," you say. "Where are you?"

Caldwell's voice comes through clear as day. "We just arrived in orbit above Taranis. Where are you? We've scanned the base and found no life signs."

"It's either Shielded or the volcanic activity is messing with it," you say.

"Well, I hear you could use some assistance either way?" Caldwell asks.

"Yeah, the Stargate got swallowed by lava and we're in volcano that's going to erupt--" Jade wriggles her hand a couple of times. "Somewhat soon? So. Uh. Can you find the rest of the settlement's people and beam them onboard if you have room for them?" You ask.

"We'll take as many as the Daedalus can hold. What about the rest of you?" Caldwell asks.
"We'll fit everyone you can't take with us," you say. "We've already got half of the settlement onboard."

"Onboard what?" Caldwell asks. "I think I missed a transmission somewhere."

"We've found a sister ship to the Aurora," you inform him. "Called the-" Mckay and Jade both look at you expectantly. "-ARGO." Jade smiles brightly and Mckay groans. You smile in turn, and say, "Mckay, Mallick, and Keiko are working to get the Hyperdrive and Shield Generators online."

"Why not sublight?" Caldwell asks.

You motion to Jade, and she explains. "I'm pretty sure the explosion will catch us at sublight speeds. Our best bet is a slingshot attempt straight into orbit with a controlled hyperspace jump powered by either the volcano itself erupting beneath us into our shields, or me grabbing the entire thing and hurling it with my powers."

Caldwell pauses for a moment. "Sounds like a plan then. We'll get to work getting everyone situated."

Your name is Janet Fraiser, and you finish securing the batch of the most wounded villagers from the Settlement. Then, you tab your radio, "Daedalus, this is Doctor Fraiser. Medical Evac group two is ready for transport."

There's a burst of light, and then you and everyone in your group is transported directly into the Daedalus's infirmary. Immediately the crew sets to work getting everyone up onto beds and stretchers.

You look around, and then spot Doctor Beckett tending to his group that had been transported a minute earlier.

About a full quarter of the village had been severely injured and needed attention from the blasts so far. And that many was just barely under the limit that Daedalus could take onboard. Fortunate, given that they could barely be moved as it was.

Kanaya is going to have her hands full when you get back to Atlantis.

You radio down, "Colonel Sheppard, this is Doctor Fraiser. We've got the villagers in need of medical evac on the Daedalus. What is the status of your evacuation progress?"

A pause, then, "We're about half way through loading the last third of the villagers. Some of them are being stubborn and insisting that a nearby RIVER that's ALSO IN THE CALDERA is going to be somehow 'safe' from the volcano exploding. Teyla and Ronon are trying to convince the stragglers, but if you've got room for them, transport might be the best bet."

"I'll let Colonel Caldwell know," you say, and head that way. "In the mean time. Keep safe. Fraiser Out."

"Will do," he says, and then "Sheppard out."

Your name is Radek Zelenka, and you quickly knock on Mikari Aiikho's office door, interrupting a conversation between her and this Lycus man.
"[Miss Aiikho,]" you start. "[I'm sorry to interrupt but it's important.]"

"[Thank you, I'll be right there,]" Then, to Lycus, "[I'll be right back.]"

She follows you to the long range scanner, displaying a single dot moving your way.

"[A Wraith Hiveship,]" she swears.

"[Yes, a single one, potentially heading towards Atlantis,]" you confirm.

"[How far out?]"

"[If it is heading our way, one month and a week, minimum,]" you answer.

"[Just the one?]

"[So far, yes.]

"[So Far,' huh?]" She shakes her head. "[Keep me informed.]

"Of course," you nod as she heads off. "To whatever gods exist out there? Please let this just be another spot check and not them coming after us for Michael. I beg of you..." You say to yourself, before returning to work.

More tremors, more shaking, more chaos.

Your name is Teyla Emmagan, and you can only stare out into the ash filled skies as a small group of refugees escapes for this mythical 'river' that will supposedly save them.

"Stubborn fools," one of the villagers remarks. "That man has always refused to listen to reason and now he's getting the rest of them killed."

"There's one of 'em in every family, sometimes," Ronon grunts- and then there's a tremor, and then screaming from outside.

You avert your gaze as a flash of crimson erupts nearby from the ground.

When it subsides, you don't see the small group of refugees who left the safety of the building.

"Idiots," you swear. "That's it. We're going for the ARGO."

And really, a small part of you wonders WHY John named the ship after Argo Lalonde, and curses the potential for confusion. Your mind attempts to differentiate them by means of keeping the very real person as Argo, and the ship as ARGO. Different contexts.

"Uh... small problem with that," Ronon says, as he stops the group from entering the escape tunnel. "...There's no more tunnel."

You peer into the space below and...

"Oh no," you lament. "It collapsed."

You radio, "Sheppard, Caldwell. We have a problem."
Your name is Stephen Caldwell, and you massage at the bridge of your nose as you consider the dilemma.

Then, it clicks to you.

"Teyla, how many villagers do you have in your group?" You ask. "Is it small enough of a number to fit inside a Puddle Jumper?"

"I believe it is, yes," Teyla says.

You get on the internal radio for the ship, "Doctor Beckett, I need you to report to the Left-bay 302 hangar and get into the Puddle Jumper stored there. We're going to beam it and you down to the surface of the planet, and then beam you back onboard with the refugees. The Jumper's own internal life support should be able to compensate for you all in the meantime while the Daedalus's can't."

"...And if it comes down to it I can fly the thing alongside," Beckett replies. "Got it, I'm on my way."

You radio down to the surface, "Teyla, you get that?"

"Yes, Colonel Caldwell. We'll take the Jumper when it arrives."

---

It's approaching close to about ten hours now since this morning.

Your name is Argo Lalonde, and you feel anxious as you hold Lizzy in your arms, and peer up at the night sky above you from the lounge chair you put out on the Balcony off of the control room.

Mikari exits through the door, decaptchaalogues her own chair, and sits next to you. "They're going to be okay, you know."

"I know," you say, even as Lizzy fusses in your arms. "I'm still scared that it's not going to work. Thier plan is so insane."

"But it's one they've done before," Mikari says, and you scoff.

"Yeah, inside an energy absorbing armor plated, multi-ZPM powered Ultrazord," you answer, peering up at the stars above again. "I'm just... I'm scared they're not going to get it working in time."

"They will," says a new voice as the doors open again.

Out steps CHANCELLOR LYCUS, and he asks if there are any spare seats left. Mikari decaptchaalogues another spare, and he joins you sitting there.

"...Do you know which of these stars is Taranis?" He asks.

"No, sorry," Mikari shakes her head.

"This city is incredible," Lycus says, peering up at the stars more than the ciyt. "And your people have been putting their lives in jeopardy to save my people, and I've responded to that kindness with doubt and suspicion. And for that I appologise."
"That's not necessary-" Mikari starts, but you interject.

"Apology accepted," you say. "My Husband and Wife are out there right now risking their lives."

...Huh. You don't think you've actually said that to anyone before. You'd talked about marriage at one point or another. But... Well, things have been busy and you haven't really had time to get around to it yet in any official capacity. Just some small private stuff, sure, but--

"I see." Lycus observes you for a moment, then smiles sadly. "Your child with them then?"

"Yes," you nod.

Lycus stares for a moment, then says, "I truly believed the Ancestors' shield would protect my people. And instead it has caused their near death."

"We'll save as many people as we can," Mikari says.

"I believe you will," he says. "And that's why I know... they will make this work in time." He nods to you, and then stands to leave. "Now, I've taken up much of your time. I'll leave you two be for the moment."

He heads back inside, and Lizzy fusses a bit more, you bounce her in your arms a little and give her a quick kiss to the forehead.

"It's gonna be okay," you say. "Your momma and pappa are gonna come back to us, Lizzy."

Mikari smiles, and then says, "Of course they are."

Despite the fact that you believe it, you're not going to close your eyes and rest until you hear that everyone is on their way home safe and sound.

---

"Teyla, Ronon-" you are Ronon Dex, and your radio buzzes with Sheppards voice. "Be advised, Mckay says the latest tremor started venting toxic gasses into the atmosphere."

"We understand, Colonel," Teyla says, glancing out the window as a Puddle Jumper makes its way towards you carefully. "We will have Doctor Beckett park as close to the door as possible to minimize exposure."

You honestly wonder how the hell today would have gone if Atlantis had already picked up and moved to another planet and hadn't been in position to recieve the distress call.

...Probably you'd be in a position that doesn't involve exposure to a poisonous gas.

The jumper lands outside, and Beckett radios to open the door at the same time he lowers the ramp. The smell of the outside air starts to make you cough, but everyone quickly hurries inside the Jumper, it gets sealed up tight, and then the air gets filtered out clean.

"That's everyone," Beckett radios. "We're taking off now to a safe distance- make sure to beam us onboard the moment you detect trouble."

...Well, atleast you weren't exposed for any longer than absolutely necessary.
Another eruption went off, and you groan as the hangar bay sensors buzz off. "OH COME ON!"

"What is it?"

Your name is Rodney Mckay, and you fix Colonel Sheppard with a tired gaze. "Worst case scenario just happened. Lava's covering the hangar bay doors."

"Well, I guess it's a good thing we weren't planning on going out that way, wasn't it?" Sheppard asks.

"Well, yes, I suppose so, but still. Worst case scenarios and all this just got a thousand times harder," you say.

"So hurry up with the evacuation loadout?" he asks.

"Yes, definitely, absolutely," you say, before getting back to work.

God, you hate crunch time. You'd be rushing to get this done in a hurry if you hadn't had such a head start before.

As it is, you'll be able to get the hyperdrive working properly and be able to leave orbit and not need towing. If you rushed? Well, you'd be lucky to reach the upper atmosphere and have any power left at all.

So. Yes.

Right. Back to work. No more worst case scenarios.

---

Your name is Jade Jackson, and your ears snap upwards as you feel the pressure building rapidly.

"Guys!!" You yell- and there's nothing else that needs to be said, because the world starts to shake around you.

"Let's get this show on the road people!" John yells.

"Not yet!" Mckay yells. "The Hyperdrive needs to reboot first! Give me five minutes!"

"We don't HAVE five minutes!" You say, sitting in the captain's chair. "Bring up shields now!"

Then, you take to the ship's internal radio, "Attention everyone, we're about to try to take off. It's going to be a really bumpy ride! Please strap in and keep as still as you can!"

The shields spring up around the ship- the ARGO- and you grasp onto the shields and everything inside and just- do your best to hold everything inside together as best as you can without squeezing.

You close your eyes, and focus feeling where all the lava and magma beneath you is swirling...

"Here we go!" you call out. "Eruption in Five...!"

[Lonliness]
"Four!" John kisses you on the cheek with a 'you've got this' kiss and straps himself into a chair.

[Fighting Back Again]

"Three!" You feel the ground breaking beneath the ship. Too soon. It's too soon.

[Seems To Be Like it Never Ends]

"Two!" You reinforce the shields with as much reinforced repulsion as your power can give, and then throw a burst of energy upwards at the ceiling so you don't--

[Give Us Hope Through The Love Of Peaceful Shine On Me...]

And then the volcano explodes beneath you, and you're airborne and NOT smashed flat against a metal hangar bay door like a bug on a windshield.

Just a single tiny glowing green dot swimming among a sea of red and orange.

You tilt your angle so your nose is upwards, and try your best to take all of that burning energy eating at the shields and turn it into directed momentum.

[The heavy rain falls without end, and I've forgotten how to smile,]

Everyone else yells as you do your best to keep the ship intact and Mckay works to get the hyperdrive online faster than possible. You forcibly detach your power's view of the planet itself to ignore the devastation the volcano is wreaking, to instead focus everything on the ship.

[As Pain and I pass each other by in this world.]

Your powers then pick up Daedalus in orbit, and you adjust your course as best as you can... There, that should do the trick even if Mckay can't get the hyperdrive online.

[Amidst the Disputes and all of the Chaos, Will my heart falter?]

You feel a build up of heat starting to eat through the rear shields more, and you force that heat into more momentum. You can't fail at this. You have to outlast this Volcano as best as you can--

[Like a flower floating in a raging wave,]

For a moment, a small part of you can't believe it, you're surfing an explosion of magma into the air like it's no big deal. But then there's the shields starting to crack under the strain and you know that if they give away--

[Lead The Way, and ride out the Storm!]

And then and then a Hyperspace window flares open infront of you as Mckay yells triumphantly, and the ARGO passes through it.

[With bare feet treading across this withered landscape,]

For the split second that feels like an eternity, you release you control over the shields and the ship-you did it. You BEAT A VOLCANO!
[Go Ahead, and take a step forward!]

-And then emerge from hyperspace in high orbit just a bit further out than the Daedalus.

[The Dream that should've been here,]

Hours later, back on Atlantis within the cafeteria, the survivors of the planet's destruction hug their loved ones and celebrate survival.

[And the forgotten hopes and wishes, are thrust into my rusted heart.]

Michael Kenmore stood off to the side of it all, watching with appraising eyes as everyone celebrated life in general.

[I stifle that shout deep within myself, and I run away from the pain, as if I can't believe in anything.]

As he spots John, Argo, and Jade all celebrating by way of cuddling together onto each other in a large single seat couch, he smiles faintly, and then turns to leave.

[I embraced distrust and hatred, rather than lamenting over the present,]

In his own private world on a Wraith Hiveship, peering through the front windshield into Hyperspace, Aiden Ford stood silently as he planned his next move.

[Like a bird singing in a fiercely blowing storm,]

On Diaspora, in a certain bar, Chixie Roixmr continues to sing the song we've been hearing this entire time, and Jake Harley stands off stage smiling as he watches her perform.

[Sing Away, and resound high in the sky!]

In the audience, Joey, Polypa, and Mierfa sit and cheer. Nearby at the actual bar, Xefros sit with Dammek and Callie and quietly watch as the performance of the day continues on.

[In the sinking sky, like a guiding light,]

Back on Earth, Davis Strider peers up out the window at the brilliant night sky, and the moon hanging over head, and then continues to load boxes up into the moving van with a shake of his head.

[Look Ahead, and gaze at the radiance!]

Meanwhile, in another earth in another dimension, Samantha Carter peers up at that very same sky, clouded over with dust and contaminants, from within the shelter of a small cleft within the desert next to a smoking volcano.

Inside the kitchen behind her, her team talk over their plans for the next morning- and how exactly they should go about stealthily breaking through the collapsed rock into the Great Shaft of D'ni in this world.

Meanwhile yet still, across that ruined continent, internal conflict leads to one of Venjix's Generals being kicked out of the base along with a sabotaged Attack Bot, vowing vengeance on his betayers as well as the Rangers who needed to be destroyed.
In the nearby Domed City of Corinth, the Rangers practiced, and their Doctor K fretted over the lack of recent activity, and what it might signify for future events in this world and others.

Back in our universe, in Pegasus, Gina Kae and Gordon Freeman reviewed the data Ford had sent them on Wraith hive ship movements, and tried to figure out how this one approaching Atlantis varied from the rest of its peers.

On Diaspora in their hive, Okurii and Marsti lay together in bed, letting the evening go by with nothing more than simply basking in the presence of the other.

On Earth in his own home, Jack O’neill sipped tiredly at a beer as he sat at his desk, staring at a pile of paperwork and decisions yet to be made.

In an unknown place, Damara idly brushed her hair with a stolen hair brush as she watched her future body growing at an accelerated rate within the tank in front of her. Nearby, Hal Strider sat at a table and stubbornly ate at his rather bland alien oatmeal dinner.

On Earth, in the SGC, Cameron Mitchel and the girl formerly known as Mordred and now as Rider trained against each other in the Gym- swinging wooden training swords at each other out of frustration for a lack of anything better to do. Jonas sits nearby watching and makes notes along the way.

[Memories of happiness and joy, as if regaining them.]

At their home, keeping an eye on their daughter and the other kids, Jude and Cassandra seemed happy, though concerned about the immediate events of the near future.

[Everyone searches for, and reaches out to the Light...]

Rose Egbert sat away from her peers, however, and peered up at the moon with a frown on her face. In another Galaxy, Rose Lalonde did the same. In both places, their respective Kanaya came up next to them and smiled.

[Aaaaaahhh...]

Rose's hand reached out and snatched Kanaya's twice over.

[To the endless days continuing on forever,]

On Chulak, Teal'c sat with his son and daughter-in-law as they discussed the better of their recent days events, but even despite that, Teal'c couldn't help but glance out the window at the bright morning sky and frown, as if waiting...

[I'll trust myself without holding back...]

And out in space, on an Al'kesh flying to who knows where, Vala Mal Doran sat in the pilots chair, feeling called to something she couldn't quite yet place.

[Like a flower floating in a raging wave,]

In one of his many hidden bases, Ba'al sat at a desk, swirling a glass of wine as he read over a report. Another Ba'al entered and began giving a report, gaining the first's attention with great interest.
In the Ascended plane, Gerak stood before the few remaining members of the Andromeda Ascendants, and they discussed their own plans.

Back on Atlantis, Mikari sat at her desk as she finished some late night paperwork, and looked up as Zelenka knocked on her office door.

"Go Ahead, and take a step forward!"

She signaled for him to enter the room, and he did.

"Zelenka, what's wrong?" She asks.

"The long range sensors just picked up another Hiveship intercepting the first, and destroying it," he reported. "Now IT is heading towards Atlantis. At a much faster rate than the first." Mikari doesn't even need to ask, Zelenka confirms her fears: "It will be here in just shy of three weeks."

END OF ACT 6 ACT 2.

Chapter End Notes

When I first wrote out that scene introducing Daraya and Mallek, and also the then unnamed Polypa, I'd been drawing some reference from this episode. I was never sure if I was ever going to get to this point, but I felt like it was worth the risk. And here it is, a bit of repressed trauma on Daraya's part from that day so long ago. When I talk about key episodes, this was another episode I've always held in my back pocket as one I've wanted to cover.

The ending theme to this Act is "Resuscitated Hope" - the first ending theme to the anime GOSICK, incase that link ever breaks. Translated Lyrics were combined from a couple different sources and tweaked to fit the scene a bit better. I've been rewatching that show lately, and so it's stuck in my memory, and felt a fitting piece to end this act with.

Things definitely didn't go as well as they did in canon. The plan worked flawlessly in the canon atlantis timeline. here, though... well. It was a good thing Jade went through to help, otherwise they'd be toast. Funny how that works out, eh?

Do I have any Epilogue thoughts this chapter? Nope. Not a one comes to mind.

This is one of the few times the end of one of these stories actually feels like it has some weight to it because I've always generally posted immediately right after. I'm not really sure what to even say here.

So... is that it? Is that all I have to say? Oh. Right. Yes. Here is the title for the next Act:

ACT 6 ACT 3: Canceling the Download
Coming... sometime in the next couple of weeks, I think. One last reminder to make sure you're subbed to the series listing if you aren't already.

That's it. That's the end of Act 6 Act 2. I'll be going on break now. Definitely need some time to myself to recharge the batteries. Hard to believe I've been writing and posting on a non stop schedule for so long. I'll still reply to any comments left, though.

I hope you all enjoyed this wild ride up to this point. I know it's been a blast to write... not always the most enjoyable ride, but it's been fun, over-all.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!