

A Novella

Stargate Universe: Awakening

An original novel inspired by the TV series

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Prologue

DESTINY.

Created by the Ancients and launched over a million years ago. Its mission is to discover the intelligence that spawned our universe. Crewed by a collection of misfits who never intended to take on this mission in the first place; but surviving insurmountable odds, they have become a family. The last challenge faced by the crew of Destiny before leaving the galaxy more than a billion light years from home, was to sleep for three years and hope the power held out for the ship to travel the expanse. A vast sea of black between the galaxies. Upon arrival at the new galaxy, to replenish the power reserves and awaken the sleeping crew.

Eli Wallace, clearly the most intelligent of the group, remained awake to repair the last stasis chamber for himself so the others could sleep, conserving the power needed to make the transition between galaxies. If he was not able to repair his chamber in ten days, he decided he would seal himself into the airlock, cycle the ship to minimum power levels and open the space door. Minimal power use, quick end, he knew he would do his part in saving the ship, the crew, his friends and his family. Thereby guaranteeing sufficient reserve power for the ship to make it to its destination and save the crew.

J-56.5

Destiny is dark. The air is stagnant and heavy. Air is not cycling at the moment and the silence is deafening. No one, however, is awake to hear it.

On the bridge there is a tone, two actually; one high pitched that indicates a gate is in range and one a low pitch letting the bridge crew know the ship has located a star and is about to refuel. The ship heads for the star and submerges beneath the molten surface of this sun, replenishing its fuel reserve, solar energy, literally.

As the ship pulls off the star and slows to a casual speed, there is movement off to one corner of the bridge as a panel opens, revealing several stasis pods which are not in use and one which is currently in use by Mr. Eli Wallace. Ely is standing in the pod, quite motionless and frozen, with the look of complete satisfaction on his face. Lips together but a smile none the less and his eyes are closed as if meditating or reveling in the fact he accomplished something no one thought was possible. This is a look he has worn for several years in that pod. That is about to change.

The air recyclers begin to move fresh air through the ship and a minute or two later the pod changes from blue to natural light. After a few seconds Eli begins to move, breathing first, and wakes up fully in less than a minute.

Standing still in the pod he instinctively puts his hands out to the side to use the walls to balance himself and get his bearings. When his head clears a little, he heads down the few steps to the bridge and sits in the center seat, the Captain's Chair. Flipping a switch, the bridge opens, raising up to reveal a set of windows and he sees a star in front of him. The right kind of star actually. Nothing on the sensors as far as he could tell but all the same, he sits silent and motionless in the command chair staring at the star through the viewport.

Ely takes a few minutes to review the systems log and the chronometer to see just how long they were in stasis. The logs reveal a lot of information, but his brain is not awake enough to fully process it. He looked at the stasis display. No errors, no issues. Four pods were highlighted in orange, but he could not remember who was in those specific stasis units. "Orange?" he said out loud and headed down there and find out what was happening.

Before he walked off the bridge he glanced at each station. "Huh. We have never been able to store that much power before." Eli says out loud. "Oh wait, I left the repair robots on automatic and they have been busy. It looks like everyone survived. Let's see... shields, fully operational. Weapons, 100%.

Wow! They rebuilt the gun emplacement that the drones destroyed last week. Nice. Life support is good and wait. Somehow, they repaired the hydroponics dome. How did they do that?"

He stepped to another console to scan as far as the sensors could see. Nothing. Glancing at the clock, "56 hours till the next scheduled jump, three gates in range."

He stared out the viewscreen a few minutes at the stars and recognized nothing. Shaking his head, he smiled. "Thank god I like to read the tech manuals!"

He laughed at the idea the drones destroyed the guns last week, that was actually years ago now. He thought of waking the rest of the crew but decided to let them sleep another hour. He was under orders.

Before he went to sleep, he reported in and spoke to General O'Neill for several hours. Letting him know what transpired in the last 8 days. The last thing he was told, ordered actually, was when he woke up, he needed to report in before he woke the crew, after getting a ship's status. Therefore, he needed to report back to Earth that they made it.

General O'Neill considered having him connected while in stasis, but after mentioning that, they decided it was not a good thing to experiment with since they had no clue what the result would be of connecting, or disconnecting, to someone in stasis.

Standing, he almost fell over. "OK, note to self, after exiting stasis, do not stand up too fast."

Eli headed towards the communication room wondering if, when, he connected the stone if someone would be waiting. He was not all that hungry at the moment, he finished off all remaining food before he turned into a popsicle. The last thing he did was make certain there was no fresh food left out in the open. Not because of bugs, but it could mold and make the place nasty.

Sitting at the seat in the communications room he turned on the device and picked up a stone. Rolling it in his hands a moment he thought about what he was about to do and placed the stone on the panel.

He found himself sitting in a room at the pentagon, or so he thought. Looking in the mirror he realized he was a young black man in BDU dress, two stripes. He looked at the other person in the room. "I am Eli Wallace, from Destiny."

The woman, a full colonel, said; "Follow me."

She led Eli to a conference room where General O'Neill was already sitting. "General O'Neill. So nice to see you." As he sat across from the general, Telford walked in. "Colonel Telford, glad to see you too.... oh wait. General Telford. Congratulation sir. Well deserved." He saw the star on his uniform where the eagle once occupied.

"Thank you, Mr. Wallace." Telford looked at O'Neill who just raised his eyebrows, Telford continued. "Status report."

Eli proceeded to give a report of the status of the ship. It took less than 20 minutes since he recapped what he had done before he fell asleep also. Finishing up his report, "Currently, I am the only one awake as per the general's orders before I entered stasis. I was giving the ship a couple hours to stabilize the systems and get life support running a bit before it was really needed. Power is up to 57%, a record, and all pods are fully operational."

Eli heard the door open behind him and a woman stopped next to him. He looked up at her, "MOM!"

"Eli!" Eli stood and they hugged.

"What are you doing here?"

"I work here now. Since I'm a nurse, they found a place for me in medical. Not only that, but they cured me."

"WHAT! How? AWESOME!"

"Mr. Wallace, you can have that conversation later. Go back and wake up the gang," O'Neill said gang with flare, "Ask Camille Wray, MSgt. Greer, Dr. Rush and Colonel Young to pop in for a chat."

"Yes sir." He glanced up at the clock over the door, 3pm. "Would 7pm be a good time?" He knew it would take a bit for the others to get their bearings and they would need to get the info for their reports. Too bad data cannot be transferred through the stones. Something to look into at a later date.

"Peachy. That will give them a chance to get a thorough status and a complete briefing ready." He paused. "Let the crew know they are talking to their counterparts; Camille Wray is reporting to the IOA; Colonel Young will be reporting to us." Motioning to himself and General Telford. "MSgt. Greer will report weapons status to Homeworld Security, some Marine General I think, and Dr. Rush will be report to a room filled with people like you."

"People like me, sir?" Eli asked.

O'Neill shook his head, "Smart people Eli. Smart people." He looked at Eli intensely, "Mrs. Wallace, will you please escort your son back to the communications room?"

"Yes General, with pleasure."

As they left the room to return to where he started a bit ago, "So, how did they cure you? Where are we exactly?"

"Eli, what I had was terminal. I was about to die and on my death bed I was given the opportunity to help someone else. Do you know what a Tok'Ra is?"

"A snake that inhabits a human host and shares the body. A mingling of personalities, and they become dependent on each other. They're the good guys and the Goa'uld are the bad guys."

"That is a good explanation. When I was literally on my last few breaths, they offered me a chance to be cured, but the cost would be to host a symbiont. I took it, and an hour later I was whole, healed, and complete. I share my body with a Tok'Ra named Taunaw. She and I have been together nearly a year, and I completely understand everything about your situation."

"Really Mom?"

"Yes Eli. Taunaw is quite the scientist and is very impressed with you."

Eli stopped and grinned at her, "So, does that mean you can make your eyes glow?"

His mother looked around to make sure no one saw them and smiled at him, she dipped her head slightly. A moment later she looked up at him, and her eyes glowed.

"COOL!!"

"Eli, I am Taunaw. Your mother cares for you more than anyone or anything."

"Now that was something they never mentioned, the voice change." He paused a few seconds and gave his mother a hug. "So, you're a scientist?"

"What was that hug for?"

"For saving my mother."

"Odd. Most humans, when they learn we are blended, are disgusted and cannot be normal around us. You seem to understand."

"AH! Normal. You mean like having your body a billion and a half light years from where you are, on a spaceship traveling at insane velocities, fending off

the oddest aliens imaginable who are trying their damndest to erase you from existence.”

His mother’s face smiled at him and she said in her best Goa’uld voice, “Oh, very close.”

They walked slowly the rest of the way to the room and he got a tour of the facility. “Ely, we are at Area 51. Sub-basement 8. This is headquarters to Homeworld Security now. The SGC is still there and fully operational. I thought it was quite ingenious of them to repurpose this place, it really is not all that large, maybe equal to a couple floors of the SGC I would guess but we make do.” She paused, “So tell me about how to made it? I spoke to General O’Neill after Taunaw saved me. Let me tell you, the knowledge and understanding I instantly had hurt. He said if you reported in in three years you were alive, if not then you did what you had to do to ensure the others survived. Between us, he was afraid your repairs would not hold and you would need to have left the ship.” She understood.

Ely hugged his mother, “My repairs we fine Mom.” They stood there a few moments and did not speak.

A bit later they entered the communications room. “Eli, Taunaw and I will make the trip back to see you when the others travel here. Please send Camille Wray, Colonel Young, Dr. Rush, and Master Sergeant Greer. We will have individuals ready to receive their consciousness in 3 hours.” It was his mother’s voice again.

“That is so cool.” He glanced at the clock in the room, above the door, and remembered it was 4:15pm. And with that, the connection was terminated.

He was sitting in the communications room again. He looked at the small wind up clock on the table, it was a little off, and reset it to 4:17, they like to be a couple minutes faster than Earth so as not to be late for meetings. Then he noticed that the airman he changed with left him a note.

To whom it may concern. This is so cool. I managed to look around a bit and found the big room and the park. That is very interesting. It looks a little overgrown, but the fruit and vegetables are very good. Thank you for the opportunity to experience this. Airman Markel

“PARK? What park?”

He stood and went to the hydroponics bay. It had to be the place he was talking about. He opened the door and was amazed. It was a botanical nightmare. But beautiful.

Eli walked around the room amazed there was enough light, sun light, to grow the plants. He found the kiwi-like fruit Greer liked so much and next to it he saw a new species. He ate a few things and they were all very tasty.

“Now it’s time to wake the crew.”

J-53

Returning to the bridge he wanted to be sure the systems could handle the load of everyone. He also wanted to see who the orange people pods were. Looking at the jump chronometer, 53 hours remaining till the jump.

Eli made note of the location of the pods and went to them first. Stopping at the first he saw it was Dr. Park. The second was T.J. and the third was Dr. Volker.

As he moved to the fourth pod, he saw it was Varro. "I wonder what the orange means. Until I know why they are orange, maybe I won't wake them up." Yes, he spoke out loud to himself, and no he did not really care.

He stopped a few moments to stare at Chloe. He admired her and was happy for her to have found Matt in this craziness.

He went to the section where Young and Rush were sleeping. Pressing the button, Colonel Young returned to the living.

As reality returned to Young, he realized Eli was standing in front of him. "Either one of two things, it's a couple weeks later and you can't, uh, do what you need to do, or we made it."

"We made it... surprise!" Eli said with jazz hands. "And by we, I mean ALL of us made it."

"How long have you been awake?" He looked at the pod Eli should have been in; it was torn apart and dark.

"Oh that, didn't use it." Eli said. "I found a few more and cannibalized this one to get the others working."

"Others?" Young said, now fully awake.

"Let's get Rush, Greer, and Camille awake and I will explain."

"Why them?"

"Those are the people General O'Neill requested pop back home in a couple hours to give a report."

"You reported home already?"

"Now that's why I want to explain it only once." He walked over to the pods that contained Rush and pressed the button, then to Camille and opened hers also. Last one was Greer.

A few minutes later he explained the situation to them briefly but asked to go to the bridge to explain fully.

Arriving on the bridge Rush looked at the power levels. "57%! How did you manage that Eli?"

"Before I went to sleep, I did 2 things. The first thing I did was I reported to Earth I was entering stasis. General O'Neill ordered me to report in after I woke up and before anyone else was awakened to give him a preliminary situation report. So, he knows about the situation," He looked at Young and Rush and raised his eyebrows slightly. They understood. "Second, I put the robots in auto and had the ship direct the robots to repair systems in a specific order. Power systems first, then structure, weapons, life support." He looked at Greer and Young, "Shields and weapons are at 100%, maybe more."

"Nice..." Greer commented. He liked the weapons.

"Life support and pretty much any other system are in the green if not fully restored. Air filtration, thanks to the stuff you found on the black hole volcano planet is better than nominal." He said nodding to Rush.

"OK, what's the downside?" Young asked.

"There's always a downside." Greer added.

"Eli..." Camille said.

"OK, there are three gates in range, we have more than 50 hours till the next jump, the screens are clear, and Destiny told me the three gates are all habitable." He looked at each of them, "So, no downside I can see."

"There is one thing." Eli said, "In a couple hours and some change the four of you need to use the stones and give reports. 7pm actually and by the way I reset the clock in the stone room to match the clock in General O'Neill's office." They all glanced at their watches which all had different times since they were in stasis at different times also. "I am staying here, and my Mother will use Camille's body to inspect and check out the systems. Reset your watches to 4:51pm." He pointed to a clock on the bridge that was usually in the stone room.

"Wait..." Young started.

Camille continued, "Your mother is coming aboard to inspect."

"Oh, did I forget to mention that as my mother laid on her death bed, literally taking her last breath, a Tok'Ra saved her life."

"A Tok'Ra, did they use the hand device or something else?" Rush asked.

“Well, I’ll go with the something else here.” Eli said, pausing a moment. “She is host to a Tok’Ra named Taunaw. Pleasant person actually, for a snake, but I do like her. My mother is healed, and a nurse and scientist at Homeworld Command. Man, that sounds weird.”

Young looked at Rush and asked, “Tok’Ra, a Goa’uld but on our side?” Rush nodded.

“Eli, is there any idea as to how the dual personalities will work through the stones.”

“They tested on Earth and both people are in the new body, the person who takes them over can access both of their minds. Not your typical stone transfer so Camille, you are in for a new experience.”

“Well, been a quadriplegic, let’s go with the uh, blended, Tok’Ra thing.” She smiled at the group.

“You ok with this?” Young asked her.

“Actually, yes, and I have no idea why.”

“OK then. Let’s find some food and water and do our reports.” Young said.

“Yea, as for that. Come with me.”

Eli walked off the bridge and headed for the hydroponics bay. When they saw him about to open the door, all of them nearly jumped. The last thing they all remembered was the transparent cap was destroyed and the compartment vented to space. As the doors opened, they all just stood there. Staring into the forest.

“From what I can see, Destiny realized this room was filled with plants and rerouted some of the recycled air into this room, then to the scrubbers. Providing CO² for the plants and O² for the humans. As for the fruits and veggies, they are excellent. Some have merged into a new species. Most likely from the radiation from the O-type star but in a good way. Like my favorite, the Kiwi-Carrot.” He looked at Greer who raised an eyebrow. “Trust me.”

Greer took a bite and smiled broadly. He liked it.

They spent some time eating the food and drank some water. While the four of them ate, Eli reviewed the systems and processes of Destiny so they could give a good report.

At the assigned time they made their way to the communications room. The four of them sat at the table and about to place a stone on the table. Eli made a sound that made them all stop.

“One last thing. You will each be providing a report. Colonel, you are reporting to General Telford...”

“GENERAL?” Young and Greer said at the same time.

“Correct. And Greer you are reporting to some Marine General from Homeworld Command or someplace on the battle-ready status of the ship and the crew I am guessing. Camille, you are reporting to some civilian oversight committee at the IOA and Dr. Rush, you will be speaking to a bunch of egg heads who have questions on the ships systems.”

“Is that all?” Greer asked.

“Actually, no. My mother is swapping with Camille to evaluate the science of the ship and see if they can adapt anything for use at Homeworld Command. Dr. Rush, you are transferring with Dr. Daniel Jackson who is coming onboard to look around and read. I hear he speaks fluent ancient so this will be interesting. Colonel, you are transferring with Colonel Cam Mitchel who is oddly curious about the flight systems I hear and as my mother mentioned ‘very easy on the eyes’...” He smiled playfully at that comment. “Lastly, Ron, you will be in the body of Dr. McKay who is coming to assist my mother with the system analysis and other stuff.”

“Eli, how is your mother...” Rush started to ask, and Eli cut him off.

“Ah, my mother. Still freaky but freaky cool. When Taunaw speaks, there is this rumble to her voice. Kinda cool really so Camille you’ll have to check that out. I remembered hearing their eyes glowed, so I asked her. Yep, they glowed. Really cool. Camille, see if you can make your eyes glow, I am curious if you can see the light from your side.” She smiled at him and nodded. “My Mom seems to be happy with the situation, and well, she’s alive and apparently going to outlive all of us.”

They placed the stones on the table, and they all looked a bit odd for a minute.

“I’m Eli Wallace, welcome to Destiny. For the science types, please do not touch anything without asking. Colonel Mitchel, I have something special for you if you want to fly this ship into the corona of a star for 15 minutes or so in manual.” Mitchell perked up. “Dr. Jackson, I will set you up in the control room and turn you loose on the archives. Something you may be interested in, we have a partial download of the history of a 2000-year-old civilization, created from the descendants of the crew of Destiny after we were caught in a time travel thing.”

“I heard about this. Yes, yes, please show me.”

“Eli.”

“Yes Mom.”

“I believe we are all ready. We have 2 hours on this connection.”

“OK, then I have a riddle you and Taunaw can help solve.” He started walking out of the room and the others followed. “Tauna, you’re in there also, right?”

“Yes Eli, we’re both here. But this feels very different.”

“I’ll say, the voice does not change when you talk.” He grinned at her.

“Eli, this is Mom talking now. What are you thinking? I know that look.”

He came to a stop and looked into Camille’s eyes. “Curious.” He said. “Can you make your eyes glow when only your mind is transferred but the symbiont is not?”

“I’m not sure.” There was a pause. “Well, did they glow?”

“Nope. I guess that answers that question. It’s a physical thing.”

They reached his old office.

“Dr. Jackson, this is the control interface room.” He pressed a few buttons.

“This is forward, this is reverse, this one changes documents or videos or whatever you select with this dial.”

He let him loose on the controls, careful to set the access level so he could not break anything or blow up the ship. They headed to the bridge and Eli played tour guide on the walk.

“Colonel have a seat at the front right station. That’s where the pilot sits. I have an idea; we may be able to get the power levels to 100% by refueling again, if you want to fly the ship that is.”

“Uh, Eli.” Mitchell said. “Am I correct that to refuel this ship you fly into a star?”

“That’s correct. The ship did it a few hours ago and we got to 57%. I have a theory if the ship has time to assimilate the power and refueling is initiated again, the power will increase. Let’s test that theory.”

“By flying into a star?” Mitchel said, not quite believing it himself.

“Yep.” Eli said.

“Cool.” Mitchell replied.

“Now, Dr. McKay...Mom. There are 4 pods highlighted in orange. I have no idea what **orange** means, and I am not sure if they can be safely brought out of stasis. That is what we need to figure out.”

Camille turned to Eli, "There are only 3 orange pods."

"What? A couple hours ago there were 4. Volker, T.J., Parks, and Varro." He looked at the display. "It seems Varro's pod is normal now."

"Well, let's look into it then." McKay said.

Half an hour past and the three of them reviewed log files and sub-systems. Mitchell acquainted himself with the controls during this time.

"Eli, I discovered a repair log embedded within the stasis units." It was Taunaw speaking.

"I know, we needed to do repairs before activating the pods."

"No, not those logs, I reviewed those already. These are the repair logs of the repairs made on the inhabitants within the pod."

"Wait..wait..wait.... What are you saying? The pods 'REPAIRED' the person in the pod?"

"I believe that is correct."

Eli and McKay looked at each other. McKay spoke. "Did the people in the pods you found as orange have any medical issues?"

"Well, T.J. knows she is going to contract ALS. Volker is using one of Greer's kidneys. That means Greer is a kidney short now and Varro, well, I have no idea about any medical issue."

"ALS? She knows...how?" His mother asked.

"The videos from our descendants. It begins about 5 years from now, or rather 5 years from when we found the video so two years from now, I guess. Unless stasis put the progression of the disease on hold as well then we're back to the 5-year mark." Realizing he was rambling, he paused. "She dies 3 years later."

"I remember hearing about those. The volcano planet, right?" Rodney asked.

"Yes, but I prefer to call it the black hole volcano planet. Sounds so much worse."

His mother let out a chuckle, "That' my Eli."

He looked at his mother and smiled.

Dr. Rodney McKay took over the conversation, "Well, Eli, my theory is that the pod, as you call it, scans the inhabitant and attempts to correct any medical issue it is able to correct. The orange color indicates a fix is in progress and

most likely means do not open till Christmas.” He looked around, “Or until the color returns to normal I suppose.”

“So, it’s been fixing them for three years?”

“No, actually,” McKay said. “I would estimate about 3 to 4 hours. Did something significant occur in the last 4 hours?” He asked.

Eli thought for a second, “I woke up, raised the bridge and saw the star.” Instant recognition came across his face, “We recharged. The ship knew there was insufficient power to correct anything with the power levels as they were, but when the recharge took place it did its job.”

“And by the looks of it the only one left orange is...uh...T.J. I assume.” McKay added.

“Is there any way to find out what was fixed?” Eli asked.

“Hang on.” McKay looked over the logs. He read ancient just about fluently, so it took only a minute.

“Let’s see. Corneal regeneration.... Kidney adaptation and enhancement, what is that? OH! Adapting the kidney to the new user and improving the efficiency I suppose. DNA resequencing. Last one, vascular damage in the shoulder and hip, and spine repair.” He paused, “Vascular regeneration and kidney enhancement. Actually, I think this is the guy who donated the kidney. There are 11 more people who had repairs completed, minor as they are but none the same, everyone in the pods except you have been repaired. You have anything that needs fixing?”

“Not that I know of, no.” He thought a minute. “Dr. Park had her eyes fried by a type O star during a really hairy refueling. Dr. Volker had a kidney transplant because his stopped working. Greer gave him the kidney. Varro was shot in the left shoulder, he also fell 30 feet and landed on his back and T.J. was not all that sure he was going to make it at one point or that his shoulder or leg would be 100% ever again. You already know about T.J.”

“Only one is still orange. That means that....uh....T.J. is still being fixed. The others are healed.”

Eli stood there with his mouth open. He knew he had things to do but he really wanted to open Parks pod and see her face when her eyes worked again.

“OK, no opening any pods until Greer is back. And the rest of them too.”

“Why Greer?” Taunaw asked.

“Parks and Greer are a thing. If she can really see, I want him standing in front of her when she wakes up. You know, impact and all.” Eli said, his eyes a little moister than normal.

“I need to get to Mitchel and see about this full recharge. You going to be OK for half an hour?” He got an odd look on his face. “Anyone talked to Dr. Jackson lately?” they shook their heads no.

Eli tapped a toggle on the console, “Dr. Jackson, please report to the observation deck. We are about to fly into a star and that will get you the best seat in the house.” He deactivated the intercom.

J-50

“As for you two, I will take you to the observation deck and head to Colonel Mitchel. Enjoy the show.”

“We know the way there Eli.” His mother said. “I was here before, remember?”

“Oh, right. Then the show begins in five minutes.” He left the room and headed for the bridge.

Eli entered the bridge and stood next to Colonel Mitchel.

“Colonel Mitchel. You ready to fly into a star?”

“That is a great big yes, and the name is Cam. A lot easier to say.”

“OK, let me brief you on the controls.”

“No need, Jeremy did a pretty thorough job of that. I’m ready when you are.”

“Jeremy?”

“Yes, Jeremy Franklin. He seems to know a lot about flying the ship, and showed me the simulation so, I’m good to go.”

“Cam....Dr. Franklin died when the chair sucked him in a while ago.”

“Well, I learned in this job that dead does not always mean dead. Anyway, we’re ready.”

“Uh....” Eli was looking at the ceiling, “Dr. Franklin. Are you there?”

He appeared next to Cam. “I can only appear to one person at a time, but yes Eli, I am here. He is ready and your idea to get the ship to full power is a good one and will unlock a few systems that have not operated in quite a while.”

“OK, Cam. Dr. Franklin said you are trained so, let’s go.” Eli looked like he saw a ghost.

Cam turned the ship towards the star. “Everyone in the observation deck and ready?” Eli said after toggling the intercom.

“Yes Eli, we are all here and excited.” Taunaw said.

“Well Taunaw, make sure to let my Mom have some Camille time during this.”

“No worries Eli. Her and I can see and do everything together.”

“Mom always wanted a sister.” He said out loud and it was heard of the intercom. “OK, here we go.”

Eli looked at the power levels, “We are at 51% so a bunch of power has been used in the last few hours. Then again, just about every system is turned on at the moment.”

“Mr. Chekov, take her into the star.”

“Aye Aye Kepten.” Cam replied in his best Russian accent. Eli was impressed he knew the reference.

The ship descended into the star, Eli opened the receptors, and 15 minutes later the receptors closed on their own, “OK, take us out.”

“Now that was cool!” Cam said in a quite loud voice.

“Huh... What’s that?” Eli asked when a sound, a chime, was heard near where his stasis bay was located. He walked over to the area and looked.

He pressed the intercom, “You three need to see this. Please come to the bridge.”

A few minutes later they all walked in and joined Eli, as did Cam.

“When the power levels topped off a 100%, this console activated. It is or seems to be a scanner of some sort that’s attached to each gate. We may not need to send a keno anymore; the gate can tell us about the planet its sitting on remotely.”

Punching a few buttons, McKay spoke. There are three gates in range. Two of them are Earth like...”

“Class M.” Cam said, cutting McKay off. Eli smiled and nodded at him.

“...the other is Waterworld.”

Cam and Eli looked at each other, “Kevin Kosner!” they said at the same time then high fived.

“OK you two. The Class M worlds, one is a dessert.”

Eli and Cam silently said Vulcan.

The other seems to be a national park or something. OH, and there are people and wildlife on it.”

Eli looked at the clock, 49 hours. I wonder when the briefings will be completed, he thought to himself. It’s been 2 hours.

“Eli, what’s happening.” Colonel Young was back.

“Colonel Young?”

“That’s right. Now, what’s happening.”

Eli recounted the last few hours to them, which took a little time. They all listened attentively.

“So, Lisa can see again?” Greer asked.

“I think so. To be sure, I did not want to open her pod until you were here. I thought seeing you would be the best thing, well, better than seeing me anyway.”

Greer grabbed Eli and gave him a bear hug. Eli groaned.

“OH, by the way Greer, your empty spot” pointing to where the kidney was removed “has been fixed. Not with a new kidney but the little tubes and pipes were rerouted, so you should never have an issue with only one kidney since according to the log, that one you have left was enhanced.”

Greer looked at him and grinned, “Enhanced?”

“No clue, it was in the log.”

After waking Scott, Chloe, T.J., Varro, Brody and Volker at the same time, Eli explained their situation. T.J. felt no different, Varro said the pain in his shoulder and back were gone, and Volker said the twinges he had, and got used to, are gone.

“According to the logs, the DNA of Greer’s kidney was modified to match your DNA, so no drugs are needed to maintain the uh, relationship. So, for you, business as usual, I guess. Both of you.”

They all stood in front of Lisa Park’s pod, Greer nearly touching the door with his nose.

“Eli, do the honors.” Young said.

Eli looked at Greer who nodded. “Either it worked, or it didn’t. Let’s find out.” Greer said.

Eli pressed the button and took a step back. The pod opened and Lisa reanimated. Her eyes were still closed but she put her arms out and touched the walls to stabilize herself.

“Lisa, you ok.” Greer asked her.

Instinctually, she opened her eyes to see the speaker and fell to her knees. “Ronald, I can see you.” She sobbed. “How?”

Greer knelt in front of her and held her gently.

“Let’s give them a moment.” T.J. said and they all walked away.

The rest of the group walked away leaving the two alone in the solace they were both completely healed.

“So, who’s hungry?” Eli said. Several hands went up, “OK then, follow me.” He turned back to Park and Greer. “We’ll be in the garden when you’re ready to join us.”

Greer waved, he heard Eli, it’s just he wanted a few minutes of alone time.

The door to the garden was already open and they all entered. “Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the garden. I thought about calling it the park, but we already have one of those.” A second later, Varro shook his head and smacked Eli on the shoulder lightly. Everyone else groaned slightly.

They started eating the veggies and a few minutes later Park and Greer arrived. She paused at the door remembering this room from, as far as she was concerned, a few days ago. Plus a few years in stasis.

“You know, I like this room.” She said quietly to Greer as they walked through the opening from the corridor. “It’s just the idea of looking into a star that bothers me.”

“Yea, me too.” He said to her and they advanced and joined the others. Everyone hugged her. They started eating the fruits and vegetables and some were so unique they could not tell if they liked them or not. But they ate them anyway.

Volker walked over to Greer. “I hear tell you and I are more or less whole again. I still think of you as my brother.”

Greer stood and grabbed Volker in a bear hug, lifting his feet off the floor. “Damn right.” And Greer kissed him on the neck. Putting him down Volker was smiling from ear to ear. “Just one problem I can see.”

Volker looked distraught.

“Every single one of the people on this ship is a brother or a sister to each and every person on this ship.” He looked at Young and T.J. “Some are like our parents and some,” he looked at Rush, “Are the weird uncle. But I need to tell you all now, I love you all.”

Greer got pelted with fruit and everyone groaned. They all ate their fill and went to wake up everyone else. They led them to the garden and let them all eat.

Eli stood, “You know, we could rename this garden. I mean, since she did so much to save it, how about the Lisa Park.”

Greer yelled, “Maybe Park Park.”

Young added, “How about the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Destiny?”

Lisa semi-jokingly yelled, “I want to name it the Destiny Garden.”

Everyone looked at her and Eli said, “I like that!”

Everyone nodded and agreed.

J-47.5

Now that everyone was awake and had a chance to eat and drink, the entire crew went to the gate room for a meeting. An update, a state of the union, or rather the state of the ship.

Ely began the meeting, "Since we lacked one pod I volunteered to stay out of stasis and fix it before I joined you. However, my original pod was not repairable, and I decided it was time to RTFM!" There was some laughter in the audience, so he did not need to explain that acronym, after all, most of the crew were geek types. They told the rest what it meant. Giggles could be heard for the next few minutes.

"Well, I got the bridge pod fixed and realized I still had a few days of power left before I needed to turn into a popsicle, so I programed the ship to direct the repair robots to fix everything they could fix." Someone else spoke.

"Uh, a few days left..." They asked. It was Dr. Volker that asked the question.

"Just an expression really." He felt nervous and tried not to show it. Young saw it and took over the conversation which diverted everyone's gaze to the other side of the room.

"OK, we need to assess the ship, everything. We need an inventory down to the bullet. A complete system check, and a people check. In case you are not aware, being in the pods is like a medical scanner and fixer or something. So, if you had a pain before, and it's gone, we need to know."

"OK, here are your assignments. Greer and Varro, weapons and weapons systems. Greer teach him how to shoot the shuttle and the ships weapons. He is your alter ego now. You OK with that Varro?" Varro and Greer hit elbows. They were good with it. Varro has become a regular member of the crew and he feels at home here, and the most at peace he has ever been in his life.

"T.J. is everything and anything medical. In the next 24-hours, everyone also needs to talk to her to tell her either your whatever is fixed, or nothing changed. Dr. Park, you may have a little something you can tell her yourself if I ain't mistaken." He smiled at her and she saw it and smiled back. "Pvt Becker; food, water, the garden and the environmental stores." He paused a moment.

Scott continued, "Colonel, can I field promote Pvt Becker to Sergeant? After all, he is doing the work of a Sergeant."

“No Lieutenant, you cannot promote Becker,” He took a breath, “but I can. Congratulations, Sergeant Becker!” Everyone applauded. When the sound died down, “I will pass that on to General O’Neill when I see him next. It may not matter to you at the moment, but your pay just increased...” Everyone laughed.

Young turned it back over to Ely hoping the diversion worked, “Ely, anything new since you read the book?”

“Uh, actually yes. We already know that each gate sends back its environmental data, but I managed to locate the database of that data. Once we arrive, strike that, in this galaxy there are a lot of M-type planets...How many of you are Star Trek fans?”

All but a few raised their hands, “Good. There are a lot of M-type planets...”

Volker yelled, “Earth Type.”

“...a few D-type and K-type...” Ely looked at Volker and ushered to him with an open hand.

“D is a hot dessert rock and K is like Mars.”

“...Pretty close actually. But, the truly fascinating one is in a couple weeks, we should drop out and check out the Y-type planet.”

The room yelled “DEMON CLASS” and Young looked at Eli as if not having a clue what he was talking about.

“The Y-type planet, from Star Trek: Voyager, is where they stopped off to pick up a few ‘supplies’. Liquified metals and such. According to the environmental sensor, within a couple hundred feet of the gate there are a lot of precious metals we can use for repairs. Sure, the temperature at the gate is a balmy 400 degrees, but it’s a dry heat.” Young cracked a smile, not expecting that comment; but it faded fast.

“Dr. Park, in that environment, how long will the suits last?” Young asked.

“Best guess... Maybe 6 or 7 hours. We can extend that a bit by returning more frequently and cleaning the suits. Inside the suit, you’d be comfortable.”

“OH, before I forget, Dr. Park. I found two more suits in the stasis room on the bridge. Looks like in factory condition too.” Ely said.

Eli waited till the room quieted, “Now, for the really interesting things. There are two. One, there is a storage bay at the front of the ship that contains a lot of spare parts, shuttle parts mostly. And two,” Ely gave a very dramatic pause and locked eyes with Greer and Varro. “..... 8 attack drones. We just need to

repair them and put them into service.” He paused. “But before we can do that we need to repair and pressurize the corridors and rooms between here and there.”

Varro and Greer looked like they were about to go for Ice Cream!

“Drones?” Young asked.

“Yes, Colonel. They operate from a VR console we can set up anywhere. Two pilots, each operating 4 drones. They really fly 2 drones each and the ‘wingman’ drone tracks and does what its partner does. So, it looks like Greer and Varro get to play with some toys.”

Young thought for a minute. “Greer select two more trainees. You and Varro will be primary, and the others will be backup. If you two are on the shuttles, they can fly support in the drones.” He chuckled. “Never thought I would be giving that order.” Everyone laughed a bit.

It has been a while since they all ate and drank well. Everyone felt really good at the moment, safe, secure, confident. They needed to get this finished quickly, they had appointments with their Earth-bound counterparts tomorrow.

Ely’s mother was due to return and Camile definitely wanted to be her again, she said it was the coolest thing she ever experienced. She remembered a lot of what it was like to inhabit his mother and retained a lot of the memories of both her and Taunaw when she swapped back to herself. She mentioned a few embarrassing events in Eli’s childhood, but in private to Eli only.

On the downside, Ely was scheduled to swap with Dr. McKay, so he would not get to see his Mom this trip. Since she worked there now, and was healed, and will live for another 150 years; he really figured they had a lot of time together so what’s one day.

“One last thing. I spoke to General O’Neill and General Telford. Everyone seems to agree to a rank increase for the military on the ship. Not a lot but these would be the normal increases over the past five years anyway.” He paused and looked at a paper he carried, “It really does not mean much here, since nothing in the chain of command changes. General Telford suggested this one himself. Master Sergeant Ronald Greer, you are hereby promoted to Master Gunnery Sergeant. That means you are TOP, still. It also means you gotta play well with others.” Everyone chuckled.

“2LT Vanessa James, you are now a Major. 1st LT’s Scott and Johansen, you are both promoted to, this can’t be right, Lieutenant Colonel?” The rest of you, whose name I did not call out, are increased by two ranks. I spoke to the

generals and suggested that every other anniversary of the day this all started, you increase to the next rank with E-8 and O-5 being the max. As I said, your bank account is getting fat back home. If we do get to go home one day, we will all be rich. Especially if Ely can find us a diamond or a gold planet we can stop at for a few hours.” The room got noisy. Once it quieted again, “I spoke to the Generals and since everyone is increasing in rank equally, it is more of a monetary thing than a rank thing. Everyone stays where they are, just get better pay back home for doing it.” He looked at the civilian members of the crew. “As for the nonmilitary members of the crew, you are being increased 5% per year and the pay is piling up back home!” Chuckles around the room. “Now, let’s all get to the inventories, then get some rest.” He grinned.

“What about you Colonel. Are you promoted?” Someone said.

“General O’Neill is talking to ‘people’ about that; it seems to be promoted to general it literally takes an act of congress.” He smiled at Ron, “GUNNY! Take over here. Man, I like saying that!!”

Greer smiled at that comment, “Yes sir Colonel. I like hearing it! People, you know where you’re supposed to be, let’s get there.”

Every military person in the room replied in unison, “Yes Gunny!”

He looked at them all, “Kinda brings a tear to your eye, don’t it!” He smiled, then in a very Gunny voice, he said, “Let’s go people.”

The people in the room went about their business.

J-41

Ely and his mother walked the corridors of the ship and talked about nothing, everything. Things that happened in the last three years, while he and the rest of the crew slept.

Terrorist activities, Tok’Ra intel, Taunaw had questions about the ship, hoping to use the technology in their part of the universe, advances in technology thanks to the Stargate program, the demise of the facet of the Lucian Alliance that tried to take over Destiny. Varro was there for that, and he did not seem all that upset at the fact most of the people he knew were killed in a single attack.

The new leader of the Lucian Alliance, a former bounty hunter and mercenary, is more sympathetic to Earth and has collaborated on several occasions. Cam knows him personally since he nearly killed him, and the rest of SG-1, and the rest of the people at his high school reunion for that matter. Saying they are friends is stretching it, more of a mutual respect than friendship.

Although Kasa is still a commodity, it is not the drug of choice any longer. The Lucian Alliance has grown into just that, an alliance of worlds to promote trade and to share technologies. Still, in the process, those in command do profit a great deal.

“Ely, Taunaw has a few questions about the operation of the ship.”

“Sure Mom, shoot.”

“Ely, the question I have is not truly about the ship, but about how you were able to deduce the proper formula in your game to get noticed by Stargate Command. The math involved in the calculation is beyond your education, beyond the abilities of most humans.”

Ely thought for a minute as they arrived at the mess hall, or rather the room they designated as the mess hall. Ely walked over and grabbed a couple glasses, half-filled them with water and returned to the table where his Mom and Taunaw, in Camille’s body, was sitting.

“I have thought about that an awful lot in the last couple years. The truth is, I have no idea. The math is easy for me, always has been. I can see formula’s in my head and do the calculations faster than most people can write them down in the first place.” He took some water. “In reality, I saw there was an inconsistency in the formula already derived from the calculations. It was wrong. All I did was fix it. So, in a way, I guess you can say I see math, and I

can experience the formula's firsthand. If they are wrong, I know. I can feel they are wrong."

"Taunaw understands. She is also like that." It was his mom talking. Since the symbiont is not in this body, the glowing eyes and the changed voice remained on Earth.

"So, Taunaw is Math Girl!" Ely joked.

"She is the Tok'Ra version of you. Therefore, yes. I guess she is Math Girl." Mom paused for a moment. "By the way, she is not sure if she likes the Math Girl designation or not."

Ely started laughing, nearly spitting water all over the room and on Camille's body, and Mom and Taunaw.

"Ely, report to the bridge." Came from the radio he carried. A second later, "Bring your Mom."

They both started laughing as did Scott who was filling a canteen.

"Ely, Mrs. Wallace, sorry. That just sounds funny, like he is being called to the principal's office or something." All three of them laughed and shook their heads.

Ely walked out followed by LtCol Scott behind his Mom. All of them arrived at the bridge together.

As they entered, Colonel Young pointed to a display on a forward console.

"What the hell?" Ely said.

Taunaw replied, "This cannot be right Colonel Young."

"What?" Scott was looking at the display, a series of numbers and lines.

Young said, "It appears we have a tail!"

Ely grinned, "Colonel Young, could be a great time to test out the remote drones."

"Are they operational?" Young replied.

"Yes and no. Engines and transceiver are working fine. Weapons are spotty."

Young grabbed a radio, "Greer and Varro to the remote room."

A second later, "On our way."

Young asked, "Where is the remote room?"

Ely replied. "Taunaw and I thought it would be best in an interior room. So, it's actually the empty quarters between Varro's quarters and Greer's quarters."

"Good thinking."

"LAUNCHING!" Greer's voice was heard over the radio.

"LAUNCHING." It was Varro.

"OK, big circle. Let's come up on the tail from port and starboard aft." Greer said.

"Understood." Varro replied.

The drones pulled away from Destiny and went straight out and slowed slightly. Once they fell back far enough, they approached the following ship very cautiously.

"I have visual" Varro said, and the image appeared on the screen.

Ely exclaimed under his breath, "It looks like a mini version of Destiny."

"That it does." Young said. "Varro put your drones in station keeping, Greer, move a couple in closer and see what happens. Deactivate weapons on one of them, but not the other."

The two small craft approached the ship and the ship with active weapons was painted as a target. Greer killed the weapons systems and the target lock was gone.

"Interesting." He said.

He flew the drones up to the main window and looked inside. No life could be seen.

"Varro take starboard and Greer take port. Give us as full an external picture as possible."

It took a minute or so to fully view the sides of the ship. They did a top and bottom on the way back to the bow.

Eli grabbed the images and ran them through the visual system, it created a pretty good 3D image of the ship. He added the sensor reading.

"What are these numbers?" Young asked.

Rush volunteered, "Temperatures, radiation, atmosphere. A variety of things. Internal temp of this ship is chilly, but not freezing. The Air is breathable, but not recommended for long term. No radiation, no life signs, automated."

While Rush was explaining to Young and anyone else in ear shot, Eli had the scans on his console in greatly magnified visual.

“Varro, on your side about midway down. There’s a red flashing light.”

“I found it.” Varro said.

“Will your drone fit in that airlock?” a moment later he replied.

“Nope.” He said after getting closer. It was about 4 feet wide and 7 feet tall. The drone is a hair more than 6 feet wide.

“Which one of you have the drone with the payload?” Eli asked.

Greer and Varro looked at their systems. “I do.” Greer said.

“Great. Bring that drone to the airlock, get as close as you can and drop it.” Eli was smiling.

Young looked at him intently, “Payload?”

Eli stopped and looked at Young. “I noticed that two of the drones had a cargo area, as in clamps to hold something. I put a keno in each one in the event we needed to use a keno. What do you know, we do!”

Young and Rush smiled, and Young said, “OK, wonderful. But from now on let us know before you do something amazing.”

Greer chimed in, “Sir, you really want him talking to you that much?”

Eli grinned.

“OK, drone in place, Eli, you ready to take the keno?”

“Hold on, I need to run the keno signal through drone communications.....OK, drop the keno.” Taunaw pointed to an inconsistency, “Thanks!” Ely said to her.

The keno moved away from the drone and into the open airlock. When it entered, nothing happened.

Eli looked around, “There’s the button” he said. The keno tapped it and the outer door closed. The keno registered air pressure increasing, and he tapped the inside door toggle. “Good air here.”

Once he entered the ship, it looked like any corridor on Destiny. He headed in the direction he figured the bridge would be located. Room upon room on both sides, no signs of life anywhere. He opened a few doors, crew quarters, storage, cargo, and finally the door to the bridge.

It was opened. He flew the keno inside, and the master monitor had an image of Destiny. The text around it was in ancient.

“The words translate roughly to: Destiny. Survival ship. Following the seed path. And the flashing section says awaiting confirmation code.”

Eli’s eyes opened wide. “UH guys, you need to see this. The weapons are lighting up. We need to find the confirmation code fast or this thing is going to open fire and make us kill it. I wanna go over there and see what it is first.”

Rush reviewed the computer and found the ship. “I found about 50 confirmation codes, which one do we transmit?”

“The ship is the Faith. Anything about a ship named Faith?”

“Wait, yes. A lot actually.” He reviewed the data. Tapped a few buttons and sent the code.”

On the screen the weapons console powered down. And then maneuvered to alongside Destiny.

“That’s odd.” Said Eli. “It must be our new puppy. Heel ship.....heel!”

The rest of them just looked at him, when he finished his commentary, Young continued, He grabbed his radio. “Lt. Sco....I mean Lt. Colonel Scott. Gather a boarding party. The second ship is coming along side and appears it is about to dock with us.”

J-37

“Yes sir.” Scott replied. The new rank still made him smile. “Two teams. Major, you are leading team two. Pick four and head to the docking port.”

Scott and Vanessa selected their teams and they all headed to the armory, then to the docking port.

It took about five minutes for the ships to match speed and dock, but once they did it was as though they were one ship.

“Whoa.” Rush said. “We are receiving a great amount of data. It seems to be dumping it memory into ours.”

“Can we afford the extra, how full are we?” Young asked.

Rush looked at Eli, “Your best guess Eli?”

Eli thought a second, “3, maybe 4 percent.”

“Left available?” Young said.

“Oh no, the storage module has only about 4 percent in it, as in 96% empty so we can most likely take on its entire core.”

Young looked at Eli, “Explain something to me. How much memory does this thing have?”

Eli grinned, “Hard to say.”

“You’re not sure?”

“No, I have no idea what to call it.” He paused a moment, shifted on his feet a bit and looked directly at Young. “OK, on Earth we have a Kilobyte, one thousand bytes. A thousand kilobytes is a MegaByte. A thousand megabytes is a GigaByte and so on to TeraBytes, PetaBytes, ExaBytes, ZettaBytes. Can’t remember the next one....”

Greer commented before Rush could answer, “YottaByte.”

They all looked at him, “That’s right.” Rush said.

“I heard that in school,” Greer said, “Always thought it was a funny name. A Yodabyte. That little dude can do everything!” He grinned at Eli.

“Do everything I can!” Eli said mimicking his best Yoda voice. They all looked at him, Greer smiled. “OK, moving on. The Mega is a thousand kilo, a

thousand mega is a giga, a thousand giga is a terra; that makes 1 yottabyte freakin huge. The memory on this ship is a number so big it would take hours to write the number. LOTS of zeros.”

“So a lot then.” Varro said. Greer looked at him and grinned. Varro grinned back. Greer nodded. At first, he really hated this guy, now he thinks of him as one of his men. Greer knew Varro was equal to an officer in his previous ranks, and Greer has been giving him responsibility. Who knows, if he could swing it, he would get him a uniform and a real rank, but everyone on the ship knew that Varro had a clue and was there to help and protect the members of the crew.

“Download complete. It’s going to take a while to see what was transmitted. The ship is requesting departure clearance?” Rush said.

Young said, “Ask it for an updated flight plan, its mission, or anything else we can get from it. I really want to walk around there for a couple hours.”

“A shopping trip?” Eli said.

“Sure, why not.” He looked from Eli to Rush. “What are the chances you can delay its flight plan?”

Rush tapped a few controls. “Done. The program is on hold.”

“That was easy.” Eli said, “Too easy.”

Rush looked at Eli, “No, the ship was preprogrammed to accept all commands from this ship.”

Eli grinned, Young looked at him, “What Eli. Say it.”

“It heeled, came along side and docked, it spoke, downloaded the data. Now, we got it to stay. I say we call it Rover! Our new puppy.”

“We’re at the airlock” Scott said over the radio.

“Proceed with caution.” Young said.

They opened the airlock and Vanessa pointed to a guard, “Wait here.” As they passed through to the ship, Scott gave the same order to one of his team. That left two teams of four.

“This is Scott. The air smells fine. A bit cool but not cold. As we walk into a new section the lights come on for us.”

They opened a few doors and in the third room, Vanessa walked over to the doorway and looked in.

“Colonel, we found a bank of active stasis pods.” She said over the radio.

Young said tentatively, "Are they occupied?"

"Sorta." She said.

"Major, is that a real answer." Scott said over the radio. He was down another hall and moving away.

"Sir, Sirs, whatever. I say sorta because they are occupied and active, but not with people. They contain food. Food, fruit, and other things. The stuff looks fresh as the day they picked it."

"Any meat?" Greer asked, grabbing his radio.

One of her team was at the other end of the room, he gave her the thumbs up sign. "It looks there just may be some.

"I just realized, Destiny said one of the gates had animal life. As in meat walking around the gate. The people there are very primitive, so maybe we can trade with them."

"Trade?"

"First we need to assess the new sections and if the stasis chambers are a pantry, that would be a good thing." He grabbed his radio, "Sergeant Becker, your culinary expertise is needed."

After a moment, "Sir?"

"We found some food. Need for you to give it the once over and bring TJ with you to make certain it is ok for human consumption. By the way, we found some meat. So, maybe we can have a barbeque."

"YES SIR!!" Becker took off at a run.

"On my way also." TJ said over the radio.

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"Well, everything here is safe for humans. As for flavor, no idea." TJ said.

They returned to the gate room and left the inventory to Becker's crew.

"Sir, I think I heard a few gates were close. One is a forest. I may be able to scare up some herbs and maybe some salt. If the area is secure enough, I may just be able to cook the meat over an open fire. We can use these pod things like a fridge. Heating things up as we need them."

Young turned to Eli, "Eli, any idea as to dangerous creatures near the gate?"

Eli tapped a few of the buttons on his portable console. "Nothing I can see." He looked to the left where no one was standing. "Oh, I see it, thanks."

“Eli?” Young said.

“Sorry sir. Quinn is here telling me how to do things I already know how to do.” He looked at her, “Ok, there is that.” He laughed.

“Quinn, please leave this boy alone for a minute. We need to finish.” He knew Eli can see and hear her, and that she was an entity or program in the ship’s computer.

“Really?” He tapped a few places on his tablet. “Now that’s just plain cool.”

“Would you like to share with the class, Eli.”

“Quinn was telling me the gate has a sorta sonar or radar thing. It can detect life up to 100 miles. I opened that file and there are small creatures, racoon size, near the gate but nothing larger. There may be bipeds 50 or so miles away, but they appear to be on foot. I can send a recon probe to the area and we can get a visual. Should take a few minutes, maybe half an hour.”

“Do it!”

He walked to the gate control and opened the gate in question. Pulled a keno out of nowhere and tossed it at the wormhole. A minute later they had an image of the area around the gate.

He called the direction out of the gate north as a reference. Something they all had been doing for a while anyway.

“Z plus one kilometer.” The keno went straight up and did a slow 360 and returned to north. North was the direction of the bipeds.

“Direction and location set. Keno in auto.”

“OK then.

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40 minutes later.

“Colonel Young, we’re there.”

The keno was stopped a kilometer above the surface. They could see the bipeds crossing an open field. “They appear human, sorta.” Eli said. “Sure, 8-foot tall humans covered in hair.”

They were walking across the field with great strides. “I think they’re carrying spears?” Scott said.

Eli zoomed in and yep, spears. As he did, he saw their faces and yes, they were human mostly. “Ah! That’s why.” He tapped his tablet again. The others were

looking at him, but he did not notice. “Lighter gravity, that’s why they are taller.”

Rush spoke, “It will take them more than 6 hours to walk there at that pace. I say we head to the gate, and the planet and do what we need to do.”

“I agree.” Young said. “Scott, get a team and go.” He tapped his radio. “Becker, get everything you need together for the bar-b-que. You have 5 hours from right now to finish what you need to finish.” He turned to Eli, “I want you on this one also Eli. Scanning the area for hostiles, or unknowns, is your role here. Scott, arm him please.” He turned to Greer who just entered with Varo. “Which of you want to go on this trip. They both raised their hand. “OK then, you both go.”

A few minutes later the gate opened, Scott and the security team left. Becker and the keno sled left and finally Eli, Varo and Greer.

Every hour the team checked in and Eli gave a report on the bipeds and yes, they were heading to the gate. About the fourth hour Becker finished cooking everything and the others finished picking up herbs and other plants, vegetables, fruits. Eli had an idea to leave the keno up in a tree but trained on the gate and anyone who comes into view. Young agreed and he set it up.

He sent a second keno and put it in a different location so they could have two angles.

A couple hours later the bipeds arrived, from the vid they just watched. They looked at the firepit and became agitated but proceeded to open the gate and depart. Eli went back to the planet an hour or so later, just before the jump, and picked up the kenos.

They already watched the video from them when they opened the gate before he returned, it’s just he hated leaving kenos behind. They knew they were alone. Before he left, he sent the keno up and scanned the area. He saw a large number of four legged creatures at a dead run for the gate, 10 minutes out. He recalled the keno, opened the gate, and returned to Destiny.

J-29

“Uh, I think I know why those guys wanted to get out of there. There is a pack of dog bear coyote things on their way to the gate. I think the bipeds were being chased.”

“Too bad, would have liked to meet them.” Rush said.

“I got their phone number. We can always dial them and see if we can connect. The gate should be in range even though it’s not on the list of available gates.”

Rush spoke, “Hold on.” He looked at the gate address. “This is on our way. If we go an few hours we can pause near there and visit them or at least get an idea about their home world. This is the first real living civilization we have come across.”

Young thought for a minute, “OK. Let’s go make new friends.”

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After a few hours of FTL the ship dropped out and they were hovering near a planet. With the naked eye, it was the size of a penny, so they felt pretty safe at the moment.

The ship identified the gate on the planet and reported on the area around the gate. It was thriving. “The gravity here is a quite a bit less than the last planet.” Rush said

“How do we want to do this?” Young asked

“They obviously know about the gate system, and other worlds, and even maybe other people. So, I say we use the gate rather than a shuttle.” Rush spoke up first.

“Sir,” Scott said, “I think we would be better off in the shuttle.” He thought a second. “Eli, can a keno go from orbit to the surface? When recalled come back into orbit?”

Eli thought a moment. “Under most circumstances, orbit to surface is not an issue, but returning to orbit is the problem. Gravity sucks, literally; it sucks and holds on but on this planet the gravity is light enough that I think the keno can make it.”

Scott looked at Young, “I propose a keno or two be ejected from low orbit and sent to the surface to look around. After a time, they return to the ship. Then we can make a better decision as to how to proceed.”

“Made you a light bird and you got smarter. I like that!” Greer said.

Young gave Greer a look and when he noticed he straightened his gig line a bit and stood straighter. Scott smiled at the situation.

“Do it and take their alter egos with you.” He thumbed at Greer.

“Me too?” Varro replied.

“Sure, you two already act like twins, you may as well start working like them. You two in the drone room just in case. For now, you can run recon around the planet and the shuttle. I hope that is all you’re are needed for.”

As they entered the shuttle, Scott spoke, “Makko weapons, Baker communications.”

“I put 4 kenos’ in the airlock before I closed the inner door. You can crack the outer door and slip them out one at a time if needed.” Eli said and the outer door closed him out of the shuttle.

“Good. Seats!” The shuttle circumnavigated the planet, 20 minutes later they were back on the side of the planet with Destiny. “Eli?”

“Crack the door.” Slight pause. “Keno one away, keno two away. It’s going to take them 30 minutes to get near the surface. I instructed them to stay a kilometer above the surface. But already we are getting some impressive vid.”

He put it on the main viewer and on Destiny. They saw large cities, roads, some type of rail system only with four rails. A few factories making smoke, but all in all a peaceful planet.

“Any military locations, maybe big honking space guns?” Varro asked over the radio.

Eli gave a report, “Not that I can see. Minimal energy readings, no atomic or nuclear power systems. No radioactive desserts, clear air – no radiation. One keno went into a very large lake and the water from the lake is drinkable as is, no nasties in the water. Highest peaks have snow, and that is pure water. Sensors estimate 800,000 people and a lot of smaller animals on the surface.”

Young asked over the radio “If you had to guess, where are they in their evolution?”

“Ball park, maybe 1900, 1920 at the outside.” Eli said.

“Agreed.” Rush added.

“Leave a keno up high to oversee and send one into a major city. Fly it high enough to be out of spear or arrow range, and not run into anything. Make it as silent and inconspicuous as possible.” Young said.

“Understood.” Eli acknowledged and put one drone at a kilometer above the city and trained it on the other, which he sent into the city at a couple hundred feet off the surface.

“Colonel, this is strange. I’m starting to get an energy reading.”

“What kind of energy. Weapons?”

“No, well maybe.” Eli tapped a few keys that put the keno into autonomous mode with a 250-foot limit; its increased speed and recorded the flight through the city with the greatest resolution possible; it turned around and returned on a similar but different path. The keno took a dive and a bolt of energy whizzed past it.

“They just took a pot shot at the keno.” Eli said over the radio.

“OK, do we classify them as hostile and move on?” Young asked.

“Let me try something. Worst thing is we lose a keno.”

“OK, proceed.” Young replied apprehensively.

Eli left the high keno to observe and stopped the lower keno. They had energy weapon technology so not primitive. He found a group of them huddled near a building in the center of the town, he assumed it was city hall or their equivalent; he was right. The keno slowly lowered in front of the group and made no fast movement, since he saw a few of the weapons trained on it.

He was hovering about 25 feet in front of them and at about 7 feet off the ground. He tapped his console, “I am Eli, we mean you no harm.”

One of them spoke and the keno translated. “I am Proctor Ruse. Who are you?”

Young asked, “Is the keno translating?”

“Yes, found it while looking through the manual.” Eli replied.

Eli repeated his statement and this time the keno translated since it knew the language to translate.

“Why are you here?”

“Well, we want to meet you.” He paused, “We are explorers who are passing through this galaxy.”

“Are you capable of standing with us?” Ruse asked.

“We are, I believe you are inviting us to come and visit your community. We can do this in one of two ways; we can land a ship and meet you or we can travel by means of the stargate. Which do you prefer?”

“We do not understand what the ship is so please use the portal.”

“Where is it located? This device will follow you there as our leaders travel to you.”

“We understand. Follow me.” They started walking towards a large, by their standards, building. Entering the structure in the front and walked straight through out the back, which turns out was a square building with a beautiful courtyard. At one end was the gate.

Scott spoke, “James, pick 2, sidearms only since it is a diplomatic mission and all. Colonel, aside from the 3 plasma rifles all we see here are spears. If things go sideways, the shuttle can be there in minutes. We are in orbit above the city, altitude 82 miles. Air is richer in oxygen than we are used to, but all in all, Earth like with 50% less gravity. One day is roughly 16 of our hours.”

“Understood and agreed.” Young chose to put his sidearm in his vest, keeping it hidden. James put a pistol on each leg, as did the other two who were acting as guards. Of course, they had to be Varro and Greer.

“Dial it.” Young said. He looked at Greer and Varro, “Major James!”

“Yes sir.” She replied.

“Please keep your dogs on a tight leash so as to not cause an interplanetary incident.”

“Yes sir.” She said, looking at Greer and Varro, “Boys, be nice.”

Greer and Varro snapped to attention and saluted James, “Yes ma’am.”

James looked at the Colonel, “Sir, at least they are house broken.” Greer and Varro high fived, something Greer taught Varro recently.

The gate opened and they entered. Greer and Varro first. As they made the other side they stepped to the right and left of the gate. A moment later James walked through, and a second later Young and Camille came through and the gate shut down.

The keno hovered near Young. Greer and Varro stood where they stood not on ceremony, but it gave them a 360-degree field of view for any dangers. James stood next to Camille and scanned the locals. She was just under 6 feet tall and came up to the waist of a few of these people. It made her nervous, but she hoped she hid it well.

Colonel Young took a step forward and extended his hands, palms up, in a sign of peace. The leader took a step toward him and did the same.

The keno moved next to Young and as he spoke, slowly, the keno translated.

“My name is Everett. I am from another world and we are peaceful explorers.”

The leader spoke, “I am Tok Ruse, Proctor of this colony. We are from a world many transitions away.” The translation is not perfect. “We settled this world not knowing someone had claim to it, we have been here for 15 rotations. It is very close to the conditions of our home world.”

Young looked around, “We have no claim to this world; we are here to visit with you and search for provisions for my colony. Food mostly. Water also. Where we live is quite arid, but we have no choice.”

“So, you would like to trade for food and water?”

Young was careful not to say yes. “Possibly, but we have very little to trade with.”

Camille noticed some of them carried the tablet device like Eli used, and the remote dialer was similar. She spoke, “Our best trade is when we assist a world with technology. We understand a great many technologies and can repair most of what we know and learn.”

“This is wonderful. I believe we can have a basis for trade.” He motioned to a door off to the left. “We are a peaceful people but can defend ourselves. Are those weapons?”

“Yes Proctor, they are. My name is Camille and we are a peaceful people also but prefer not to take chances in certain situations.” Camille replied, Young glanced at her and winked. Letting her know it was well said.

Another of the aliens spoke. “Proctor, I would be interested in experiencing these weapons, and can demonstrate ours if they wish?”

Young looked at James, who was quite passive, but Varro and Greer looked excited at the opportunity.

Young said, “I believe our security officers would be happy to show you our weapons.”

“Camille, Everett, please come with me. Your security team can remain with Leader Gorst, our Defense Leader for this colony. I believe they will enjoy themselves.” He made an odd sound, they hoped it was their version of laughter.



James spoke to the Colonel, "Permission to bring a couple rifles for the Leader to test?"

"Permission granted. Please try not to expend too many rounds, but let the Leader have some fun." The translator translated the entire conversation and the Leader was excited.

James dialed the gate, "Destiny, this is James. Please bring three different long guns and a few clips. We are hosting a demonstration of our weapons."

"Understood. Any requests?"

Greer spoke, "UMP, M4, and..."

"Varro joined in, "Bring my AP-9 also."

"Understood. Be there in 3 minutes."

Young spoke into the radio as they were walking away, "Let Eli and TJ carry them through the gate please."

"Yes sir." The gate shut down and a couple minutes later energized. Eli and TJ carried the weapons, and each had a backpack, presumably carrying the ammo.

Eli brought his radio to his mouth, "TJ and I are here Colonel."

"Good, pass the weapon and ammo to Greer, Varro and James and let them have some fun; you two catch up with us and see if we can assist them in making repairs and assisting with their medical need."

"Yes sir, be there shortly."

Eli handed his rifle and the AP-9 to Varro and removed the backpack and put it on the ground. He took a step and forgot about the low gravity. He launched himself into the air about 20 feet. The Leader looked at him and spoke to TJ.

"May I assume where you come from your gravity is somewhat higher?"

TJ smiled, almost laughing, and replied. "Yes sir, you are correct. I hope he lands well."

The Leader also smiled and gave a chirp, the humans assumed it was their version of a chuckle. A moment later Eli hit the ground, rolled a bit and came to a stop on his back, and just laid there a minute.

Greer walked over to him, "You broken Eli?"

"Physically, no, I'm not broken. Pride, ego, and a few other emotional aspects I was not aware of, yes. Just a tad."

The Leader spoke, "Eli, I am happy you are undamaged. Please walk slowly so as to not launch yourself. We have learned this lesson also, some of us painfully. We too come from a higher gravity planet."

"Thank you, I will heed those words." Eli stood and returned to the group. Varro and Greer dusted him off a bit. James walked over to the Leader.

"Sir, is there a place we can use for some target practice?"

"What is the basis for these weapons?" The Leader asked.

Eli spoke, "A minute explosion creates an enormous gas pressure to force a metal projectile down the barrel of the gun and can travel a long distance and still maintain enough inertia to injure someone in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"Well said Eli" Greer said.

"Thank you for the explanation, we can set up a force screen outside the compound. We have an area we use for such training that may be of use."

They walked, slowly, to the opposite door from where the other group already disappeared.

The Leader gestured to one of his subordinates and she stepped up to them. "Sir" She said.

"Direct our guests to the other group. I believe they are in the medical area."

"Yes Leader." She turned to Eli and TJ, "If you will follow me." She looked at Eli smiling, "Slowly please."

TJ laughed out loud. It was not mean, more of a joke. She was having fun at Eli's expense and he knew it. He rather liked it actually.

"Lead the way." Eli said to her and they walked off towards the closest building.

## **J-20**

As they entered the building, they heard gun fire. Very controlled and in small or single bursts. They knew it was nothing menacing, it was a diplomatic target shoot. Eli wanted to be there. He was not military, but he has always respected firearms, and recently he has enjoyed shooting when they had the opportunity and has gotten quite good at it.

“What is your name?” Eli asked their escort.

“Mearlynne” she responded.

“That is a beautiful name.” He said to her without thinking.

“I am bonded to another.” She said to him.

Even TJ was surprised at that comment. “Mearlynne, Eli was making an observation. In our culture, that name is not known. It really does sound very nice. Please do not take his comment any way other than a compliment.”

She stopped and looked TJ in the eyes. “He called you TJ. Is that a common name in your culture?”

“No.”

“Mearlynne is a common name to my people. It means servitude in our language. We, our people, do not have a name to identify us for life. Our names identify our place.”

Eli thought for a moment, “So Leader is his name because that is his position.”

“Yes, you understand.”

“But servitude, is that representative of service to your people?”

“Yes Eli, you truly do understand.”

“TJ serves our people in the military. Her given name is TJ, but her position name is soldier. She also carries a rank associated to mark her place as a soldier.”

“Within our positions we have status. The higher the status the less menial tasks we are assigned.”

TJ spoke, “I believe I understand. Everett is the equivalent to your Proctor; me and one other would be equal to your Leader.”

Mearlynne’s eyes opened very wide. “I was not aware. I apologize for my rudeness.”

“No, you are fine. I am enjoying our conversation and learning a great deal about you, your culture. It is satisfying my curiosity.”

“Then you are pleased at the fact I am speaking to you. But I am speaking to you as an equal, not with the respect of a Leader.”

“When we are alone having conversations, I prefer to not stand on circumstance. My choice is to allow those I serve, and those who serve with me and at lower positions, to speak their mind. I can always learn. If I ever stop learning and decide I know everything, that is when bad things happen to good people.”

Mearlynn stopped and stood in front of TJ. Although TJ came up to her throat, “TJ, do you prefer to be addressed by your position, or your given name?”

“I prefer to be addressed by TJ. In matters of military protocol, and yes there are those on my home planet who stand on protocol, then my position becomes my name.”

Mearlynn bowed slightly to TJ and looked at Eli who has been silent during all of this communication. “Eli, do you serve also?”

“In a way. I serve all my people, but my position is scientist. My role is to learn.”

“Learn what?” She asked.

“Everything I possibly can.”

“That is a big task. How will you complete it?” She was serious.

Eli thought a moment to make his answer as clear as possible. “In a situation the only way to overcome a problem is to learn about the problem and learn to create the solution. Once I can see the problem, I can develop a solution and my hope is that my solution will resolve the problem.”

“Wow Eli, I like that answer. That is what you do on a daily basis.” TJ said.

“Now I understand Eli. We have those who are like you.” She paused a moment. “We are here.”

Arriving at the group, Eli walked over to Young but stayed silent. TJ, on the other hand, was very interested in a hypo she had her eye on; it was being administered to a patient in the medical area.

After a few minutes, where the staff explained how this individual had fallen off a structure and shattered several of their bones. The patient let out a scream.

“That is normal.” The doctor said. “As the bones knit, there is pain. It lasts several minutes but once the pain is gone, the injury is healed.”

A minute later the person fell silent and seemed very happy.

They moved on to another area where they saw more of the same thing.

Eli spoke, “Pardon me, but there is a technology you are interested in learning about. If I can be directed there, I can begin reviewing the data and may have some insight when you arrive.”

The administrator looked at their escort, “Mearlynne, please guide this one to the control center. He has full clearances.”

“Yes administrator.” She walked away and Eli followed.

## **J-19**

They walked to the control center in relative silence and at one-point Eli started to speak but Mearlynne held her hand and formed what he saw was the letter Y in American Sign Language. He guessed it was their version of shushing a person to not speak.

They entered a very small room and she pressed a button. An elevator. She turned to him as the doors closed. "I apologize for quieting you Eli and I am glad you understood the gesture."

"We have something similar, we put a finger to our lips, like this." He showed her.

"Most interesting." She said. "I am not permitted to speak with the exception of answering questions until I attain Mearlynne-na. Which is the lead position. I would have been reprimanded if discovered."

"I'm glad we are becoming friends. I like you and your company. I am learning a lot from you and that makes me happy."

The lift was coming to a stop and she put a finger to her lips. Eli smiled and nodded to her. They exited the lift and turned to the right and a short walk down the hall. She entered a room and spoke to the person at the door in the room.

"Mearlynne-na, this is Eli. He is Roka-gin. He is here to learn and to teach. Leader has given Eli, Roka-gin for his people, full clearance."

Eli saw an interface like that of the ship, but it was in a state of disrepair.

Eli spoke, "Mearlynne-na, this is the primary connection interface to the systems. I will need to repair it to make it capable of accessing the systems." He turned to Mearlynne. "You have done a wonderful task in teaching me about you culture. My thanks. Please return to TJ and let her know all is well."

He pulled a Keno from his pocket and set it to follow her. "This device will follow you to TJ and then remain with her to provide translation as she would need."

"Yes Roka-gin. I shall follow." She winked at him. Must have seen Young do that. He liked it. She understands and thanked him for making her task completed with honor.

Reviewing the log files for more than an hour, he saw they have no clue what they are doing, and they have only been on this planet for a couple decades, so not their world as they let on earlier.

One of the others in the room approached him as he was scanning the logs. “May I ask what you are doing? Is there some way I may assist you?”

“Assessing the situation and attempting to repair whatever I can.” He stopped a moment and with great intense of purpose, tapped a few controls. “There.”

The wall on his right began to hum. “Power generation. Interesting. Solar collectors, wind, what else.” He reviewed a lot more files. “Hello there.” He said.

“I see you are attempting to use the energy to increase your organic food products.” He changed consoles, “There it is.” He was purposely bouncing around the consoles to keep them off guard. He found something and did not want them to know that he found it.

“OK, I have routed 23% of the reserve power to the greenhouses, so you can begin to grow a lot more food for your citizens. Also, I reset the errors in the main systems so you may begin receiving status reports of your power generation and storage.”

Over the radio, “Eli.” It was Camille.

“Eli here.”

“How are things going in the Control Center.” She asked.

“So far so good. I tripled the available power to the greenhouses and learned all about humpty dumpty.” He was trying to be covert, and Young broke into the conversation.

“Eli, if I understand you right, you are needed to get parts from home?”

Eli felt relief, “Yes sir. I can be there and back in an hour.”

Young spoke, “Meet me at the gate, there is something I need to get at home anyway.”

“On my way.”

He cleared the screens he was reading and then cleared the logs so no one could see what he found. He had no idea how well they read ancient, but he did not want to find out.

“Roka-gin, you truly understand these systems?” Mearlynne-na asked.

“Yes I do.”

“I have Roka who can benefit from you. May I summon them to this place to be enlightened?”

“Yes, I will return in one hour.” Realizing he had no idea what their time measurements were like. He did know that a day on this planet is equal to 16 of his hours. “I believe one hour is equal to one-sixteenth of a rotation.”

“Roka-gin, you are wise. For us, that is referred to as 9 tolla’s.” He bowed slightly. “Do you know the path back?”

“I do. I will return in about 9 tolla’s.” He returned the bow and left.

It took him 10 minutes to get to the gate and when he did, he saw everyone else there waiting on him. He approached and walked up to the Leader.

“Leader, Mearlynne has served with honor and respect. I have adapted your systems to increase your food production by 23% and have informed Mearlynne-na I will return in 9 tolla, he will have Roka there to learn from me.”

“Eli, you have learned a great deal about us?” Leader said.

Mearlynne responded to the inquiry, “Leader, pardon my interruption, Eli is Roka-gin.”

“Ah, thank you Mearlynne.” He looked at her a moment. “Perhaps you are ready to be Mearlynne-na. We shall confer.”

“Proctor, Leader, in my education of your culture I learned Everett is Proctor in my land and TJ is Leader. James is Mearlynne-na. Yes, I am Roka-gin and I hope to serve your people as my task.”

The rest of the Destiny crew in attendance stood there and watched Eli. Very ambassadorial Eli.

Eli continued, “Proctor...” he bowed slightly to him. “Leader...” He bowed to him slightly. “I shall return in 9 tolla. Thank you for allowing me to serve.”

He turned to Mearlynne and tipped his head to her slightly. She winked at him. Young and Camille also saw her wink. Young almost busted out laughing. The gate was connected to the ship and they are left for home.

As they exited the other side, Varro and Greer laughed out loud. Camille and Young had the widest smile on their face and James had that ‘WHAT THE HELL?’ look, which made them all laugh harder.

“Eli, what was all that about?” Young asked.

“I learned a lot about these people and their culture. First off, they have no names, their name is their position and/or their rank. When they serve, it is



like being a soldier. Colonel, you are like our Proctor and TJ is like our Leader. This is the reason you and TJ received more respect the longer we were there. Mearlynne is their word for servant, which is synonymous for soldier. Major James is Mearlynne-na, meaning something to the effect of lead soldier. I am Roka, scientist, and as Roka-gin, head scientist I am given the respect of the Leader. I thought it would be easier to fall into their culture than to explain our culture. They believe that Eli, TJ and Everett are our positions and not our names. Now, they understand.”

Greer was standing next to him and asked. “What are me and Varro?”

“Mearlynne, soldier, servant to the people.” He replied.

“And she is Merlin Naw?” He said pointing to James.

“Actually, it is pronounced Mear Lynn Na. I have no idea if saying it wrong means something else or not.” He said, “And that is like a team leader.” He looked at Young. “Colonel Young, I recommend only this group have dealings with them, since we have established our position, they will be comfortable with us.”

“Agreed. James, on the next trip – in an hour – you are to stay with Eli. After all, we cannot have our Roka-gin unprotected.” He smiled at the order.

“Yes Proctor.” She replied, nearly laughing herself.

The others in the gate room just stood there and watched. None of them had a clue about what they were talking about.

“Varro, what are their weapons like?” Young asked since James and Greer were putting the gear together.

“Well Colonel, hard to describe. Those spears are self-propelled and self-guided, as are their arrows, or what we think of as arrows. The plasma rifle is devastating. It removed a meter of tree out of a tree that was 2 meters wide. I’m talking clean. If this hits a person, there would be nothing left.” He grinned slightly. “Personally, I think if they could part with a few of them, it would be a good thing for us to have access to in the event we need that kind of personal protection.”

“Understood. I will ask if it comes up.”

Greer jumped in. “By the way, they really like our guns a lot. Maybe trade them a couple rifles and pistols for a case of those plasma rifles?”

Eli spoke, “Not a good idea. I learned they are not the happy go lucky gang they appear to be. The original inhabitants of that world are all dead. The last one died about 15 years ago. They have been on this planet for 50 years or so.”

Camille was shocked, “Eli, are you saying they conquered this world and killed the inhabitants?”

“Yes I am. I downloaded their records; I plan to review them and learn what I can. That’s the reason they have no idea how to fix anything. Stuff is breaking down and they are clueless.” He looked at Camille, “I get the idea they want to visit our world. They have no idea we are on a ship, but they do have our address. The Leader watched as the address was entered. I think they are planning to invade us next. In an hour, I think I will return with a crystal that will get all of their systems running and look like a magician to them. From what I can see their Roka have been studying the systems for decades and still did not even know how to activate the consoles.” His face scrunched up, “Unless they do and they are holding a silent coup, trying to keep others safe from invasion.”

“That is a big assumption, and a dangerous thought.” He looked at all of them. “When you are there, be on your toes, keep your eyes open, keep your head up and all those other clichés please.” Young said. He was still holding one of their spears. He wanted to see how they were self-guided.

Eli said, “I need to get a few parts, and before you ask, they are not components we will be needed and yes we can afford to lose them. I also need to run a few things through the system, faster search than my tablet.”

Eli turned and left the room, “Major, you stick with him like glue. I have an odd feeling we are going to end up on their bad side.”

The gate began to spin. “Colonel, someone is trying to dial in.” Park said.

He did not notice she was there; they were all so focused on the situation on the planet no one saw the 5 people in the room when they arrived.

Greer and Varro loaded a fresh magazine into a few of the weapons, and James put a round into her chamber. The gate locked and the wormhole established.

“Colonel Young?” It was Scott.

“How are you dialing? Did you land?”

“No sir, they dialed out and it looks like they are planning a hostile takeover of the ship.”

“Funny thing is, they think we are on a planet not a ship and we get the impression that they are not the nice people they are portraying themselves to be.”

“What do you want us to do sir?”

“Have they seen you?”

“No sir, we are in geosync orbit above the city, we can see pretty much a quarter of the planet from here. We can receive from the other drone Eli left and they are beginning to assemble troops near the gate. Best guess, after Eli repairs their systems, they may be planning a little invasion of their own.”

“Colonel, I need to get the systems repaired so I can assess the entire situation of the planet. I need to return in about 20 minutes or so and I want Mearlynne to take me to the control center. I need some advice from her. I think we can trust her.” Eli said through the radio.

“Eli, are you absolutely certain you want to come back here?” Scott replied.

“Yes I am, I have never be so sure of anything. I needed to check a few things and my fears were right. The power reserves are there for a reason, there is a weapon near the gate. They want to learn to fire it so they can decimate their enemy. Not us, but rather the people who exiled them to this planet. They are not colonists, they are prisoners.” He paused.

“Prisoners?” Greer said.

“Yes Ron, prisoners. According to the text I was reading they have been there nearly 50 years and before they arrived this was a peaceful planet with maybe 200 or so colonists from a world they never heard of before. They killed them all and have been trying to learn how to use their technology ever since.” He took a deep breath and never unkeyed the mic. “The plasma rifles are the only thing they can actually shoot because the other race coded their weapons and technology to their DNA. They want me to remove the DNA code so they can unlock everything and frankly, I could have already done that, but something told me to wait. SO glad I did!”

Rush walked into the room and he was holding a radio, so he was up to speed on the situation. “Colonel, Eli has a good idea. He can fix their systems and from what we can see lock them out of the weapons system entirely.”

Eli replied, “Yes, and I plan to completely disable the systems.” You could hear him grin through the radio. “At least now we know why they have so few real weapons. Those spears are kinda impressive though. Self-guided.”

Rush walked over and Young offered it to him, after a minute or two, “Not so impressive really. IR. Laser pointer would screw it up.” He thought a minute. James, did you show them our laser tech on the rifles?”

“No sir, never came up. They just wanted to shoot.”

“Rush, can you reverse engineer this thing in 20 minutes and come up with a defense?”

Rush grinned, “I believe I can.” Into the radio he said, “Volker and Brody meet me in the lab. We have a little project and need to be done in 10 minutes. Dr. Park, I need you too.”

“On our way.” Came from the radio. By the background noise they were in the galley.

15 minutes later they returned to the gate room where Eli and James were ready to leave. He spoke to both James and Eli, “Attach this beacon to your backpack and have the glass facing away from you. Their spears are guided by invisible light, these beacons pulse the specific frequency of light at random durations and intensities. In our test it causes the spear to veer off course in a random direction. They will not notice it until they toss one at you. I don’t think they even know how they work.”

“They’re on our backs?” James said before Eli could say it.

“That’s right. I’m assuming you will be running away from them at the time they are throwing spears at you.”

“Good point.” Eli and James said at the same time.

“Dial it up.”

A few minutes later, “Colonel, I am assuming you are coming back through?”

“No Scott, Eli and James are coming through. Stay there and wait. Are you good for the moment?”

“We’re fine sir. Just floating.”

“What’s happening on the ground?”

“Well, they have amassed a large group, maybe 300 or so. All armed with spears. From the gate, you cannot see them. I see James and Eli now.”

“They have comms in their ear so no one can hear what we say to them. They are transmitting on channel 3 and receiving on channel 4 and their mics are hot. If you need to talk to them, use channel 4. If they need you, get there fast. Do whatever you have to do.”

“Colonel Scott, if you hear the word furball, consider that a distress signal.” She said.

“Understood Major. Eli, you got that?”

“I heard, furball. The high sign. Makes me think of Ewoks.” Eli said.

As they made their way to the control center, they were met by Mearlynne and a couple guards.

“Mearlynne, are you our escort?” Eli asked.

“My name, as you say it Eli, is now Mearlynne-na. I have been moved to the science protection team and will escort you to the control center and maintain your safety.”

Eli looked at James and his eyebrows went up. He saw right through the conversation. She was to make certain they did their job, fix the systems and get the weapons online.

“I said I would return.”

“Yes you did.” She stepped close to Eli, the side with the earpiece. She grabbed the keno and spoke into it. “Eli, if you repair the facility, they will launch an attack on my home world. You cannot allow them to do that. Many innocent lives will be lost.”

He turned to her, “I know. Trust me.” He paused a moment. “Do not go near the portal if they attempt to use the weapon.”

She smiled at him. “I trust you. Thank you.”

Arriving at the control center, “I need the consoles deactivated. I will repair the system and bring them all back online. You will have access to everything.” Eli said to the Roka-gin in the room.

“How do you know this technology?” She asked.

Eli turned to her and looked up. She was tall, even by their standards. “Roka-gin, I have spent many years learning systems such as these from the Rush-ka. Our head scientist. He entrusted me with secrets about this technology. I will use that knowledge to serve you, allowing you to have full access to your systems once again.”

For the next 15 minutes he removed crystals and replaced them and removed them again. Finally, he removed a crystal from his shirt pocket and put it in a slot. A light flashed twice, and he removed it and put it back into his pocket. 5 minutes later he announced. “Resetting all systems.”

Everything went dark. The entire city went dark. 5 seconds later his console powered up and it spread and within a minute or two everything was back online. He tapped a few buttons to run a program.

From the radio on his chest, “Eli, are you finished. We need you at home. There is a massive power failure only you can fix.”

“Yes Rush-ka, I am finished. I am leaving now. We will return in 5 minutes.”

They all realized the person speaking was the head scientist for Eli’s world. He looked scared when he heard his voice.

Eli packed his pack and they started to walk out. About that time, they saw a few more guards. Eli acted like he didn’t see them and walked to the elevator and pressed the button. The door opened immediately. As they entered, he saw Mearlynne waiting for them.

“I am to escort you to the portal.” She said. No one responded. The doors closed. “They plan to take you hostage or kill you. You need to go home now.”

“When they power up the weapon, it will destroy itself. They will never hurt anyone else. The only thing they can use the power for is to generate more food.”

“Thank you, Eli. Now, to get the Roka-gin and the Mearlynne-na through the portal.” She looked at them. If they suspect you are leaving, they will kill you. The spears do not miss.”

“They will miss us. We have a technology that makes us unable to get speared.”

She laughed. “Do not take this wrong, but I want to see that; not you but the Leader. He claims he never misses and if he ever does miss his mark, he will promote everyone who sees it if they remain silent.”

Eli looked at her as the car stopped, “Congratulations on your next promotion.” He said, just as the doors opened. She had a look of amazement on her face, at least that is what he thought he saw.

They walked, not ran, but walked with a purpose to the gate. As they were within 20 yards, the Leader yelled. “Stop. You are under arms. If you proceed and attempt to depart through the portal, we will kill you.”

Eli turned, “We are going home.”

He turned to the gate as it opened. A moment later a spear went through the opened gate. Another one was aimed directly at them and it veered off in the other direction. The Leader missed twice. James and Eli ran through the gate.

## **J-17**

James and Ely exited the gate and saw a spear through the left thigh of Camille. TJ was already working on her, "Holy crap. That was clooooo" Ely's voice trailed off.

"There's nerve damage. I can stop the bleeding, but I have no idea if the leg will work." TJ said.

Ely had an idea. "TJ, get her stable and put her in stasis. If my theory holds, she will be fixed in about an hour."

"Are you serious?" Young asked.

"What have we got to lose. If it does not work then TJ can be ready when she comes out of stasis to do whatever she can, maybe even a surgeon ready to take over if someone changes bodies with her. And if it works, then, it works!"

Young thought for a moment and looked at Rush, who nodded, "DO IT!"

They loaded Camille onto the keno sled and made it to the chambers in a minute or two. Greer picked her up and stood her in the chamber. As Greer was backing out Ely activated the chamber.

"OK, keep an eye on the leg." He looked at his little interface, waiting for it to turn orange.

15 minutes later, "YES! The pod is orange. She is being fixed."

"How do we know when to pull her out of the chamber?" Young asked.

"When the orange color turns off, repairs are finished." Ely replied.

Half an hour later the orange disappeared. "OK, opening the chamber."

"Greer, stand ready to catch her just in case."

"Yes sir." Greer replied to the Colonel.

The chamber shut down and Camille woke up. She jumped as if someone hit her. Greer held her in a bear hug and a moment later it passed.

Camille spoke, "What the hell just happened?" She looked at her leg and it looked normal. Her pants were torn and bloody, but the skin was sealed.

"Well, Ely had the idea if you went into the pod the pod would fix you. It did."

TJ approached her, “Get to medical, I need to look at that leg and verify it put you back together right.

“Young looked at her, “GO!”

TJ and Camille left. “Thanks for thinking outside of the box Ely.” Camille said as she passed Ely.

A moment or two later, “Ely, can we use this all the time?” Young asked.

Ely did not answer, he was staring at his pad.

“Ely!”

“Sorry, I was just looking at the power reserves. We were at 97% before we put Camille into the chamber. We are at 85% right now. Although the process works flawlessly, the power to use it is enormous. So, to answer your question Colonel Young, TJ still has a job.”

Young looked at Ely a moment and walked away.

Everyone realized it was a last-ditch effort if someone was beyond the care available on the ship.

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“Destiny, this is Scott. They are ready to launch the attack on us. What should I do?”

Ely replied. “If they have not discovered the program I put into the system, then the moment they activate the weapon, the weapon will self-destruct. The gate will be operational but most of the people in a 100-yard radius will not be.”

“Stay where you are and observe.” Young told him.

“Yes sir.” Scott replied.

“Besides,” Ely continued, “I told Mearlynne-na to be certain she is nowhere near the gate if they activate the weapon. She said she understood and only those who want conquest will be there. There are a couple keno’s looking at the area now, but a human perspective would be interesting.”

Scott replied, “Understood Ely.”

A few minutes later the gate opened, after a minute debris came through the vortex and the gate shut down.

“Scott, report.” Young said into his radio, which was relayed to the shuttle.

“Sir, they opened the gate and readied their troops, several hundred of them. The two pillars in front of the gate started to glow, a few seconds later they exploded and were completely destroyed. The loss of life is...”

Scott said looking at all the dead and injured. Young and James were standing next to him. Ely picked up his radio, “Scott, how many people did I kill.”

After a few seconds, “None Ely. The leaders of that planet killed them. You protected your family.” Ely’s eyes were wet, and a single tear rolled down his cheek. He handed his radio to James and walked off down the corridor.

“Scott, stay where you are, we are opening the gate and sending a keno through to ask if they need any assistance.” Young turned to the gate operator, “Lisa, dial them up.”

The gate opened and they sent a keno which hovered at 7 feet, eye level more or less.

A woman walked up to the keno unafraid. “I am sub-leader, I am Ely’s friend. What do you need?”

“Ely heard the exchange and ran back to the gate room. “Sub-leader, this is Ely. I am happy you are well. Are you in need of any assistance?”

“No Ely. All of the violent ones are gone. We are rebuilding a new civilization in peace. Thank you for the chance to survive.”

“Congratulations on the promotion by the way. We are willing to assist you if we can.”

“No Ely. You must go your way, as shall we. We will not speak again but know your honesty, your pursuit of peace, and your technical abilities shall be known to our society.” She paused a moment. “Shall I open the portal on this side and send your device back to you?”

“Not necessary, it knows its way home. Goodbye my friend, it was both an honor and a pleasure to know you.”

“Goodbye Ely, you shall be known from this point forward as the Peace Bringer.”

Park toggled the keno to head to orbit and to Scott and the shuttle. A second later the gate shut down.

James said, “Peace Bringer, I like that.”

“Me too.” Ely replied. Smiling to himself.

J-6+48

The keno made it to the shuttle after an hour or so and Scott returned to Destiny. Once they docked, everyone exited the shuttle and returned to their normal duties.

“How long until we jump?” Young asked.

“6 hours.” Rush replied.

“Can we jump with that ship still attached?” Young asked.

“I think we can if we do a full recharge first. Better yet, let’s just delay the jump, survey the other ship, recharge fully, and release the other ship to follow us. Kinda like a lifeboat or a wingman, I believe is the right term.”

“Not a bad idea. Look into it, delay the launch by another 48 hours,” Grabbing his radio, “Colonel Scott, Major James, Dr. Park, Ely, grab who you need to survey the other ship completely. We are looking at the possibility of a sister ship if possible or at very least spare parts and as Ely would say, COOL STUFF. But do not take anything that would damage the other ship to the point it would not be able to return to its mission.”

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The last 30+ hours the crew rotated in and out of the Faith. There were no crew quarters and life support were bare minimum so the viability as a wingman fell short. They managed to remove a lot of spare parts, relays mostly, but not from the ship. They pulled them from ships storage along with another repair robot. Making three of them now. This one has the same capabilities but is half the size of the Destiny bots. They found a few weapons, rifles and pistols. No idea what they did or how they worked.

A few hours later they released the ship and told it to return to its mission. The entire food stores they found in stasis has been transferred to the stasis chambers on Destiny.

“Greer, take a small group and see what these things do.”

“Where to sir?”

“The forest planet of course. You have 2 hours. Take Ely with you for technical support.”

“Wow, reduced to tech support. I’ll take it!! FIELD TRIP!” Ely said.

Colonel Young and Sr. Rush went to the dining room, grabbed a glass and some water. When they were on the planet where the drones followed them, they brought back utensils. Unbreakable dishware, and silverware. They assigned a set to everyone and you were responsible to KP your own dishes after you ate. Made life for the cook crew a whole lot easier.

Sitting at a table far from everyone else, speaking in low tones, they discussed what transpired. Coming to a consensus half an hour later they determined this was the best way for it to play out. Young took the cups back and rinsed them out and put them to dry.

Ely walked slowly down a corridor with his head down as if he was looking for something on the floor. As he arrived at a set of doors, he knocked on the door. As the doors opened, TJ was wearing comfortable clothing. "Got a minute."

"Sure thing Ely, what's on your mind." She said.

"You hit the nail on the head." As the doors closed, "I have never killed anyone before."

## **J-6**

Sitting in the captain's chair Everett looked at each station. He understood most of what he was looking at, he had to, everyone had to know everything about all stations just in case.

"Eli, how far into the future can you see?" Colonel Young asked.

"Into the future, funny. Maybe a few weeks. I see an interesting stop a week from now. We should be in range of at least four gates, two of which have mammals. That's a new one." Eli said through the radio.

Rush injected, "With the added power and active systems maybe the gate watched as our team on the forest planet did a little hunting and realized this is a possible food source."

"Brody, what's our status?"

"Power levels at 79%, all systems report fully operational."

Rush injected, "With the added power capability and newly active systems maybe the gate watched as our team on the forest planet did a little hunting and realized this is a possible food source." Everyone agreed.

Young thought for a minute and looked at Rush as he spoke, "Dr Park, set our course for the star and let's top off the tank."

Rush shrugged his shoulders in a 6 of one, half dozen of another motion.

They directed the ship into the star and allowed the power levels to actually reach 100%.

"Remarkable." Rush said quietly, but loud enough for all to hear.

"We should be good for quite a while at those levels." Adam Brody said. "We are at 100.5%."

Chloe added, "Well with all the meat they brought back from the planet and the other stuff from the other ship and put in stasis we should be set for quite a while."

"Speaking of which, reset the Faith to continue its previous program." Young said. "Can we set an alarm on the power level, so we are alerted if it drops too low?"

Eli entered the bridge, "Already done Colonel. There are 3 alarms. 80%, 45% and 25%. They all sound different and if you hear them, you will understand."

“OK then, Dr. Park, set our course. Hyper drive when ready.”

Dr. Park replied, “Hyperdrive will be active in 2 minutes.”

Chloe walked onto the bridge, “Well with all the meat they brought back from the forest planet and the stuff we put in stasis from the other ship, we should be set for quite a while.”

Rush spoke, “Done. Faith back under its own control.”

The smaller ship slid to the right and veered to starboard at an insane angle. A moment later it entered hyperspace. Eli waved goodbye to it like it was his pet.

“Jump in 3.....2.....1!”

The ship lurched forward almost imperceptibly and entered the hyperspace corridor, following its preprogrammed path to the next location it deemed worth exploring.