

Tuesday
August 22nd, 2028
05:32 hours (PST)

Serenity pushed her way through the debris that held the doors to the command center closed, climbing over the rumble and trying to avoid wirings hanging in her way. Rather than push them away so they would come back, she simply did her best to steer clear of them.

"Hello? Is anyone in here?" she called out.

She was concerned that no one, if they were there, would be able to hear her through the blaring alarm that echoed through the station, and the sound of explosions outside the base. She'd gone room by room searching for someone, anyone, but so far there had been no luck.

"I'm here," someone responded.

Trying to follow where the voice came from, Serenity navigated through what was left of the command center, eventually coming to Commander Schuyler, who appeared to be pinned down by a metal beam that had collapsed. The beam itself had fallen onto his legs, trapping him there.

"Don't worry, sir, I'll get you out of here," she told him.

She tried to move the metal beam, but it was too much for her. She tried again, but still no luck. From there, she searched around the room for anything she could use to pry him out. After finding a long, metal pipe, she planted it under the metal beam on an angle, then used the pipe to lift the beam long enough for Schuyler to slide out from under it. Once he was clear, she dropped the pipe, hurried over to him and attempted to help him up, but quickly discovered he couldn't walk.

"Stand down, cadet. It's no use. We both know I'm not getting out of here," he said.

"Nonsense, sir. I've got you."

"Even if you did, then what? Lieutenant we have lost this war. The B Squad rangers have been defeated, most of C and D Squads are dead, our command center is in ruins and all of our stations in orbit have been overrun. Face it, we lost this one," he told her.

"I can rally the other cadets, we can still..."

"I've given the order to evacuate. No one else is here. There was no need for anyone else to die here today,"

“So what do we do? Just give up? Turn ourselves in?”

“Actually, I have a plan,” he pulled himself up, making his way over to one of the only control panels that still worked. Just then, a torpedo crashed into the side of the command center, knocking both of them back down.

They glanced over to see the torpedo has crashed into the command center, but hadn't exploded... yet.

“I don't know how long we have until that thing goes off, we have to get you out of here,” Serenity insisted.

“No,” he struggled back to his feet, wiping debris away from the control panel and inputting a series of code. “We saved this from the time Sam traveled here from the future, it's a...”

“... a temporal wormhole,” she said, reading over his shoulder.

“I'm going to send you back to before the invasion, before the war, before...” his sentence trailed off slightly as he was overcome with emotion. “... before we lost Syd. You're going to have to go back and prevent this from happening,” he told her.

“How?”

“The Phantom Ranger is the key to all of this. Save him and none of this will ever happen, or at the very least it will happen differently and you can use your foreknowledge to ensure we survive,” Schuyler explained, inputting a series of codes into the panel.

Within seconds, the panel began to hum, and soon, a portal began to form a few feet away from them.

“So I'm just suppose to go to the past and say ‘Hey Sky, I'm from the future and here to stop a war. Do as I say?’ We both know you would never go for that without some serious convincing,” she mentioned.

Schuyler reached under his shirt, pulling out a set of dog tags, passing them to her. “When Wesley Collins and Bio-Lab officially merged with SPD, my father was given Wes' morpher and was the first SPD ranger. Still not sure how or why, but they managed to misspell his name on his dog tags. Rather than get rid of them, he gave it to me. I've kept these with me every moment of my life since he passed away. Show me this and I will listen to anything you have to say,” he explained.

They weren't much to look at, Serenity thought to herself. That was regular, standard issue dog tags with his father's name, rank and serial number embossed into them, only his father's name read "Brendon Tate" instead of "Brandon Tate".

"Understood, sir."

"I have no warn you, this is a one way trip. We don't have the energy to bring you back, but if you succeed in your mission, there won't be a here to come back to," he glanced over at the torpedo still wedged into the wall of the command center. "That thing is going to go off any second, you have to go."

"I will do you proud, sir," Serenity said, putting the dog tags on and tucking them under her uniform.

"Good luck, and may the power protect you," Schuyler said, watching as she stepped through the portal, disappearing into a stream of light and smoke.

Serenity sat up in a cold sweat, her sheets clinging to her. She immediately realized she was on the floor next to her bed, and both of her room mates were already gone. She quickly sat on the side of the bed, freeing herself from the sheets and wiping sweat away from her eyes.

"Computer. What is the time?" she called out.

"The time is 05:56," it announced.

"Damn, I'm gonna be late," Serenity said in a panic.

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Serenity hurried onto the training field where the other cadets were already standing at attention. Spread out across the entire field were other cadets with other drill instructors, each of them doing something different.

She stood up as straight as she could, leaning over to Ella. "Hey," she whispered.

"You're late," Ella mentioned.

"I know. I had a... rough night," she sighed.

Just then, their drill instructor walked over to them with his hands behind his back. Serenity noted he was he was a Pantherain. Instead of hair, he had a long mane like a lion, but his

appeared to be braided into dreadlocks that hung long past his shoulders and clear to the middle of his back. His uniform indicated he was a 4th year cadet, only one step away from becoming a full fledge officer.

He walked up and down the line, staring at each of them with a stoic look on his face, but stopped at Serenity. "Cadet, what time does training begin?" he asked.

"0600 hours, sir," she responded.

"And what time did you get here?"

"I apologize for being late, sir. I was..." she was cut short.

"In battle, do you think the enemy will be interested in your excuses, or your results? It doesn't matter if you were 2 minutes late or 20 minutes, not showing up on time can mean the difference between life and death. Not just yours, but that of every member of your team. Am I clear?" he snapped.

"Yes, sir."

"And since a team is only as strong as its weakest link, all of you have failed. Drop and give me 50," he ordered.

"Who, sir?" Serenity asked.

"All of you," he replied.

Each of them dropped down into the push up position and began to count off push ups as he continued to talk.

"I am cadet KJ Ford. I have been assigned to whip you maggots into shape. If any of you have delusions of one day being a power ranger, let me crush your dreams now. 1 in every thousand cadets ever get to be rangers. Every other cadet here has the same dream you have, and each of them are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve that. Judging by what I see, none of you will make it a week here, much less become a ranger," he snapped at them.

Finally, they completed their push ups, each of them stood back to their feet and back at attention.

"I trust that from now on, everyone will be here on time?"

"Yes sir," they said as a group.

“Good. You sorry sack of maggots are the now the D Squad, but I don’t expect all of you to survive this process. Just remember, there are people on the E and F Squads who are looking at your spot and will stop at nothing to get it. Our first exercise will be a team building activity. The six of you will travel to Station 614 just outside of the Corysis Sector, retrieve Admiral Myers and bring him back to Earth,” he ordered.

“Yes, sir.” they all responded.

“Do a lap around the station, then meet me in hanger six by 0630 hours. Dismissed,” he said, then turned to walk away.

The five of them turned, then began to jog.

“So he wants us to jog around the *entire* station? This place is like 6 football fields long. There is no way we can do it and get to the hanger by 0630,” Serenity pointed out.

Behind her was Garr, who was keeping a steady pace. “You make Garr have to run. Garr no like you. This your fault,” he snarled at her.

“That isn’t fair to say. We were going to have to go on this training exercise anyway. Sure maybe officer kitty was a little hard on us, but that’s his job,” Ella pointed out.

It was her brother who chimed in next. “Officer kitty?”

“He looks like a kitty to me.”

“Well I’ve got a feeling a bite is worse than his bark,” Serenity added.

“Isn’t that dogs?”

“What?”

“His bark is worse than his bite. Thats for dogs,” Pascal brought up, continuing to jog at a pace to keep up with the others.

“Maybe, but either way the guy means business.”

“We can handle it, we’re D Squad!” Nathaniel said proudly.

Serenity cracked a smile.

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The five of them arrived at the hanger already completely exhausted from the jog around the station, covered with sweat and struggling to stay on their feet. Cadet Ford stood on the loading ramp for the shuttle, almost impressed that they made it.

“And with 3 minutes left to spare. Not bad, maggots. Everyone on board and buckle up. We hit atmo in 5 minutes,” he ordered.

“Yes, sir,” they all said in unison.

The five of them boarded the shuttle, taking a seat at the first empty spot they came to. The shuttle itself wasn't that sophisticated, just enough room for 6 or 7 people, no crew quarters, no lounge. It was designed for transport. Nothing more, nothing less.

Cadet Ford stepped in, taking the seat in the middle of the shuttle that faced the main view screen and the ops position. “Who has shuttle experience? Clocked some field time?” he asked.

“I do, sir,” Serenity said, raising her hand.

“I don't mean on the Sim-U-Deck. I mean actually flight time, cadet,” he added.

“Yes, sir. I took advanced flight prior to joining the academy, sir. You will find me a capable pilot,” she told him.

“I'll be the judge of that,” he glanced around. “Anyone else with shuttle experience?”

“I have flown as a co-pilot, sir,” Pascal brought up.

“Good, you and the girl here switch seats. What's your name, cadet?” he asked.

“Enrile, sir. Cadet Estella Enrile,” she said proudly.

“Okay, switch with her. Cadet Enrile, you stay on censors. I don't want anything sneaking up on us. You do have basic censor experience, don't you?” he asked.

“It's my first day, sir,” she pointed out.

“I do, sir. I took the advanced course. I can man the censors, with your permission, sir,” Nathaniel said.

Cadet Ford sighed. "Fine. Helm, set a course for the Corysis Sector and engage engines at transwarp factor 2," he ordered.

"Course laid in and engaged, sir. We will arrive in the Corysis Sector in approximately 17 minutes," Serenity told him.

"Very well. Contact me when we reach our destination," he said, standing up and exiting the bridge area.

They all waited until the doors hissed closed before they finally spoke up. "What the heck is this guy's problem? We're all new. How does he expect us to know any of this stuff?" Ella asked.

"Garr no new. Garr is year 4," he pointed out.

"Well not all of us have been here that long. This is suppose to be training us to become rangers, not constantly telling us how we're trash and can never be rangers. When I get back, I am respected a new drill instructor," Nathaniel told them.

"But then you wouldn't be D Squad," Asia brought up.

"If we all stick together, the only person who needs to leave is him. He is unfair and isn't providing us with any training at all. We'll get him out of here and we can all stick together," he said.

"I hate to break it to you, but there is no way the commander will take the word of a first year cadet over a 4th year. If you complain Ford is pushing you too hard, they'll just assign you someone tougher. They need to separate who can take it from who can't real quick. My suggestion? Don't rock the boat," Serenity suggested.

"A little hard work never hurt anyone. He's just trying to whip us into shape," Pascal said.

"A leader should lead by example, and this guy isn't inspiring me very much," Asia added.

"Lets just get through this mission and see how we feel. This should be a cake walk. We're just going to pick up an admiral and bring him back to SPD. How hard could that be?"

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Serenity reached for a button on the com panel. "We have arrived in the Corysis Sector, sir," she announced.

“Very good. Set us down about 4 kilometers from the base,” he responded.

“Aye, sir.”

“4 kilometers? That's like... 2 miles from the base,” Nathaniel brought up. “Does he expect us to walk?”

“As a matter of fact I do expect you to walk, cadet,” Cadet Ford said as he entered the bridge, sitting back down in his chair.

“Sir, are you familiar with Corysis?” he asked.

“I'm sure I know on the subject that you do, cadet.”

“The surface temperature of Corysis is 63.33 degrees celsius,” Nathaniel told him.

“You paid attention in class. Good for you, cadet, but it doesn't change my orders,” he said.

Nathaniel stood up. “Sir, that is roughly 145 degrees on Earth. Even if we could survive a journey like that, Garr is Anurian and cannot survive in such a harsh climate. His species is cold blooded,” he brought up.

Cadet Ford spun around his chair to face Nathaniel. “Do you think the enemy will give special consideration to you on the battlefield? Do you think the Troobian Empire cared if you didn't like hot weather? They attack, we respond. The rules do not change because they are inconvenient for you, cadet. This exercise is designed for team building. You want to be a team? These are your orders. I expect them to be carried out,” he stated. “Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sir. Perfectly clear, sir,” Nathaniel said with a purposely negative tone in his voice. While it was his job to follow orders, he could, at the very least, voice his dislike for the order.

Garr reached over, putting his hand on Nathaniel's shoulder. “Garr will be fine,” he told him.

Cadet Ford turned back around in his chair, facing the helm. “What is your name, cadet?”

“Serenity, sir,” she said.

“Serenity what? We don't use first names in SPD, cadet.”

“*Just* Serenity, sir. I have no surname.”

“You seem to be the only one here who isn’t completely incompetent. You take the lead on this one. Contact me when you have reached the base and greeted the admiral. I will bring the ship to you and we can head back,” Ford ordered.

Serenity stood up. “Sir, wouldn’t it be easier and more efficient to take the ship directly to the station?” she asked.

Ford sighed. “If any of you question my orders again, you may as well take off that uniform and turn in your badge. Your careers in SPD will be done. Now, you have your orders. Carry them out. Dismissed,” he said.

“Yes, sir,” the entire group answered.