

Saturday  
September 2nd, 2028  
14:37 hours (PST)

The seven of them sat around the cave almost in silence, unsure of what to say, not that there was much to say at the moment. The rain outside the cave had begun to come down even harder, and Garr had taken the liberty of starting a small fire from them to gather around to stay warm.

Serenity sighed inwardly, convinced that her mission had been put in jeopardy by telling her team the truth. And as much as she had said, there was still more for them to process, and she didn't know if they would be able to handle it.

"Your mother?" Asia finally said, turning to Serenity. "If you're my daughter, there is no way you're from six months in the future. And who the heck is the father?"

Realizing she had no choice but to answer, Serenity gave up the struggle, but worried how the truth would be taken. "The war begins in about 6 months now, and in three years time the Earth is all but defeated, but there are pockets of resistance that survived the attacks. They formed small splinter cells, hiding in caves and what was left of the Aqua Base in Marnier Bay for as long as we could. Dr. Manx came up with a plan to use what we knew about temporal wormholes to try to send an officer back in time to prevent the disaster. The first few experiments were... less than successful, and as far as I know that I'm the only one who actually made it to this time. By the time the technology was perfected, it was 2049, over 20 years into your future," she explained.

"But who's the father?" Ella asked.

"The Phantom Ranger," she admitted. "Well, one of them."

"I always thought the Phantom Ranger was a myth," Pascal brought up.

She shook her head. "No, he's real. Right now KJ is on a mission to retrieve him from a very dangerous region of space," she paused. "The Phantom Ranger makes it back, along with the surviving members of the B-Squad, but KJ doesn't," she sighed.

Nathaniel stood up. "Then why didn't you stop him from going? You could have saved him!" he snapped.

"Believe me, Nate, it wasn't my doing. In fact, when you came to Commander Tate's office to ask for this little field trip I was drilling Sky the same way you're doing me now. KJ could have

helped turn the tide in the war, he may have made the difference. All of you may have. I'm here to give you the fighting chance to try."

"So when this is done, then what? Do you just go back to your own time?" Pascal asked.

"No," she sighed.

"If you change the timeline, you... this version of you will never have existed. You're going to cease to exist, aren't you?" Nathaniel asked.

"I always knew this was a one way trip," she admitted.

Nathaniel wrapped his arms around her, and the two of them stood up, embracing one another. He let out a sigh, then slowly backed away, but putting his hands on either of her shoulders and looking her in the eye. "We're going to figure this out. We're going to have you, you hear me?" he asked.

"I hear you, but I knew what this was when I came here," she rested her hands on both of his. "This is why I can't even entertain the idea of this... of us. You'll get attached and then I'll be gone. I don't want that for you."

Garr stood up. "Garr head of security. Garr will secure. Serenity be safe," he insisted.

Serenity cracked a smile. "You're sweet, but these are the laws of temporal mechanics. I knew the rules when I came here, but thank you."

"Rules can be bent, or even broken when need be. We'll figure this out," Pascal said.

Serenity turned to Asia, who was still sitting by the fire in silence.

"Mom?" she called out, hoping to get her attention.

Asia's arm was visibly limp, and her left eye, where a pupil once was, was simply all black. "This is too much. I can't do this with you," she paused. "I just can't."

"I understand."

At that moment, there was another flash of lightning outside the cave, this time striking the cave and collapsing the surrounding rocks, sealing them inside the cave with a giant boulder.

"Oh great. What else can go wrong?" Pascal asked.

“Don’t ask that, don’t ever ask that. You’re just asking for something to happen,” Ella pointed out cheerfully, hoping it would ease the tension.

“Why are you always so happy?”

“What else can I be? Will being sad and grumpy help? If it will I’ll do it, but it won’t, so I chose to be happy,” she told them.

Pascal smiled. “Point taken.”

“I agreed to this mission because I was convinced it would be a good team building exercise for us. I thought that going out into deep space on a mission would give us a chance to get closer and learn to work as a group, but I’ve ruined it. I’ve failed,” Serenity sighed.

“If that were true, you wouldn’t be here anymore. You would have blinked out of existence or fade away or cease to exist. The fact that you’re still here means there’s a chance to change things, to turn them around,” Nathaniel assured her.

“I guess you’re right.”

“You’ve been keeping all of this from us because you thought that us knowing the truth would be too much, but you keeping it to yourself was weighing heavy on you and prevented us from getting closer. Don’t you think we needed all the information so we knew what was at stake? Now that we know, we can work together to deal with it,” he said. “Now, we need to figure out a way out of this cave and back to the ship,” he turned to Pascal. “Can you just strongman your way out of here?”

“No. The gravity is here is about the same as it is on Xybria, I don’t have any enhanced strength here,” he told him.

“Well, we can blast our way out of here,” he said, reaching for the phaser pistol on his hip and aiming at the cave entrance.

Lt. Jordan, who until this point had been silent, stood up, placing her hand on his phaser and forcing him to lower it.

“Do that and we might bring the whole cave down on us,” she pointed out.

“Garr, can you move it?”

“Garr leg hurt. Garr no move it,” he said.

“So we’re just trapped in here? It’s going to end in here? In a cave on some unknown planet on the other side of the galaxy?” Nathaniel asked.

“No, it doesn’t end here,” she assured him.

“You seem pretty confident about that.”

She nodded. “I am,” she paused. “Because I am from the future,” Micah confessed.

“What?” the group exclaimed in unison.

“Serenity was telling you the truth. In 2049 the world is in ruins and officers were sent back to prevent it. I was the first, but the calculations were off and I needed up further back than I was suppose to. I’ve been waiting patiently at SPD for this exact moment,” she said.

“What are you saying? You *knew* we were going to end up here?”

She nodded. “Serenity’s arrival here is in the history logs, as well as the records of this mission. When the Omega Ship passed through that gravimetric distortion, the ship was instantly destroyed when the distortion came into contact with the transwarp drive. That’s why I arranged to have the drive be taken offline,” she said.

“*You* did this?”

“Yes, to save you all. Now, the Earth has a fighting chance.”

“That doesn’t make any sense. In my time, which you claim is your time, Nathaniel is alive, well and in his 40s. If he died here, there is no way he could die here,” Serenity pointed out.

“That’s proof that the timeline is shifting, things are changing. The D-Squad will play a crucial part in this war, and now they will have the chance,” Micah told them.

“I don’t believe you.”

“I knew you wouldn’t, which is why I arranged for us to end up here, on this planet. Once you blurted out everything you didn’t want this team to know, you’d know that Sodium Thiopental in the atmosphere would compel all of us to tell the truth,” she said.

“She has a point,” Asia said, finally breaking her silence.

“You said there were time travel experiments. How many more are there?” Nathaniel asked.

“Only one more as far as I know, but I have no idea where or *when* they are.”

“So what we all need to do now is move forward, together. I didn’t want you to know too much about the future, afraid of what might happen, but now I see I was wrong. You all know everything I know, and the only way to do this is together. No more secrets,” she made a fist, extending it in front of her. “D-Squad.”

Nathaniel nodded, smiling slightly. “D-Squad,” he said, extending his fist out as well.

Garr was next, bringing in his oversized fist. “D-Squad,” he snarled in his gravelly voice.

Ella made her way over to the group, making a fist and adding it to the collection. “Cookies!” the entire looked at her. “Okay, fine... D-Squad.”

Pascal made his way over to them as well, adding his fist. “D-Squad!” he said proudly.

The group looked over at Asia, who until this moment hadn’t moved. She reluctantly stood up, making her way over to the others. “D-Squad,” she said, adding her fist to the group.

“D-Squad!” they all said in unison.

“Hold on, guys. I think we can all agree that we have a new member of D-Squad. Micah, get over here,” Serenity said, turning to Micah, only to discover she was gone.

They all looked around.

“Micah?” Ella called out.

It was Nathaniel who sighed. “She was right,” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“She came here to ensure we came together as a team. She waited three years for *this* moment, to make sure we would be able to give Earth a fighting chance. And now... she’s gone,” he sighed.

“What do you mean gone?”

“She ceased to exist. The job she came to do was done, the timeline changed. She served her purpose. She’s just... gone,” he told them.

“Here or now, Micah is an honorary member of D-Squad in my book. Let's not let her sacrifice be for nothing. We *will* survive this. We *will* get out of here, and we *will* stop this invasion,” Serenity said.

“For Micah,” Garr proclaimed.

“For Micah!” the group said in unison, agreeing with him.

“That's really sweet, but we're still kinda stuck in a cave,” Ella mentioned.

It was at that moment that the giant boulder that was sealing the entrance began to move. After a bit of a struggle, the boulder moved away completely, revealing the way out. They all turned to the entrance, where they saw two humanoids staring back at them. Both of them appeared to be a dog like species, but clearly two different types. The one on the left was blue and covered in scales, and the other resembled more of a pitbull.

“Are you okay?” one of them asked.

Serenity was immediately concerned about making first contact with a species that had no contact with other races, but there was nothing she could do about the situation. The damage had been done.

“Yes, we're fine. Thank you,” she said, speaking for the group.

The six of them made their way out the cave to discover that the rain had cleared up, but the odor was still present.

“Who are you? What are you?” the other asked.

“We are travelers from a distant place. We come in peace. We were only here to avoid the storm, but now that it has passed, we will be on our way,” she told them.

“You're from another planet?”

“Yes,” Ella said, kneeling down slightly to get a good look at him. “Are you just the cutest?”

“Thank you, but how did you get to Sirius?” he asked.

“We came here in...” she paused. “Wait, did you say this is Sirius?” Serenity asked.

“Yes.”

"I agree, this *is* serious!" Ella said.

"No, not serious. Sirius, this is the homeworld of..." she paused, getting a good look at the two beings who helped them escape. It amazed her that she didn't see it sooner. "Thank you for your help, guys," she said.

"Can we go with you?"

"I'm afraid not. But it would probably be best if you don't mention to anyone that you saw us here. Your people may not be ready to know that there are other beings in the universe," Nathaniel said.

"It's okay, me and Grumm know how to keep a secret, don't we?" he asked, turning to his friend.

"We sure do!" he answered.

"Thank you again for your help, gentlemen," Serenity removed the SPD insignia from her uniform, handing it to one of them. "Hold on to this for me, will you?" she asked.

"Okay," he agreed, running his fingers across it. "SPD."

"I'll be needing that back one day."

"I'll have it," he said.

Serenity turned to her group. "Come on guys, lets get going," she said.

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The Astro Omega Ship touched down in the shipyard at SPD headquarters, and when the engines went offline, the loading bay door lowered, allowing them to step off the ship, where Commander Tate and Admiral Cruger were waiting for them, along with a young girl.

"Lt. Commander, report," Commander Tate said.

Serenity stood at attention, saluting, then stood at ease. "We had a few complications, but we're all in one piece. The chief has managed to install not only the part he needed, but

you'll find that he made some serious upgrades. I think you'll be impressed, but if you'll excuse me, I think my team needs some R&R," she told him.

"Where is Lt. Jordan?" he asked.

"It will all be in my report, sir."

"Dismissed," he said proudly.

The entire team saluted their superior officers, then dispersed in their own directions, but Serenity remained behind.

"A moment of your time, Lt. Commander?" Admiral Cruger requested.

"Of course, sir," she said, standing at attention.

The admiral waited for everyone to walk away, leaving he and Serenity alone in the shipyard.

"I look forward to your report, Lt. Commander, but I think we can agree there are a few things that need to be omitted from that report," he brought up.

"Yes, sir."

"You did good work out there, Serenity. Well done," he said, handing her a small package wrapped in what looked like a handkerchief. She opened it slowly, revealing her SPD insignia. It was a little older, worn from age, but she immediately recognized it. "You said you would need it back one day," he told her.

"Thank you, sir," Serenity said, saluting him.

"I thought you would like to meet a friend of mine, so I brought her along," he said.

Serenity turned her attention to the young girl, kneeling down to her level. "Hello there," she said cheerfully. "What's your name?"

"Micah," the girl said shyly.

Serenity didn't even bother to try to hold back as a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Do you want to join SPD one day?" she asked.



“Yeah. I’m going to be the pink ranger because I like pink.”

Serenity handed the girl who insignia. “Just know when you’re ready, there is a place for you on the D-Squad,” Serenity assured her.

“Thank you, but why do you smell like tuna?”

Serenity smiled.