

Wednesday
September 8th, 2028
21:00 hours (PST)

Bridge and Elizabeth Delgado stood in Commander Tate's office, staring down at the promenade below.

"For a while I thought we were never going to see this place again," Z sighed, taking a moment to take in her surroundings.

"I knew we'd get here," he answered, folding his arms.

"I wish I shared your optimism."

"I wish someone would explain to me what happened out there," Commander Tate brought up, walking into the office and closing the door. "We... we held services for you. We thought you were gone."

"Was it nice?" Bridge asked.

"It was hard. No one likes burying a friend. Now tell me what happened out there,"

"We were following an ion trail of what we thought was the Phantom Rangers ship. We got caught in what we thought was a plasma storm, but it was some sort of subspace portal. Suddenly we were on the other side of the Theta quadrant. Our engines were fried, and Gary tore through the ship's hull," he explained.

"Was he attacking you?"

"No. He was running from someone. They were trying to capture him. We opened a channel but they opened fire on us. We crashed on the planet, and we knew that we were so far from Terran space that it would be weeks before anyone from SPD picked up our distress call, if ever. The temperature on the planet was so cold we knew we wouldn't survive weeks, so we diverted all available power from every other system to boost the beacon. Max had been injured in the landing, but was alive. Z and I just waited to be rescued, and it gave us time to get to know Gary. Finally, our reserve power was gone, and we agreed to be trapped in containment cards to wait it out. We knew it would be like a type of suspended animation, and Max agreed to hold on to our cards. He must have died waiting to be rescued, or at the very least froze to death on the planet," Bridge explained.

"I have notified his family. They're in route now and will be here by morning," Commander Tate explained.

"I see you've made a lot of changes while we were gone," Z mentioned.

"A few. We're preparing for war with... with Gary," he pointed out.

"The Vorhsoth wouldn't hurt a fly. They were, as far as we can tell, created in a lab of some kind," she said.

"By who?"

"Whom," Bridge corrected.

"Fine. By whom?"

"We don't know, but whoever they were, they went through a lot of trouble to leave us for dead out there," Z said.

"So the Vorhsoth are just a tool. We need to figure out who created them, why, and stop them before those ships get here," he said.

"How far out are they?"

"At least five months out. That doesn't give us much time," Commander Tate said.

"You may have even less. We picked up thoron energy out there. What we thought was a plasma storm was really a makeshift dimensional fold," Z said.

"A man made wormhole?"

"It came from out of nowhere, and when we passed through it we were hundreds of light years away. If the race who created the Vorhsoth are also responsible for those wormholes, they could be on our doorstep in a matter of moments," she said.

Commander Tate sighed. "We'll deal with it when the time comes. Right now, there are family and friends who are waiting to reconnect with you. Go be with your loved ones," Commander Tate said.

“So what do we do with him?” Asia asked as she and Serenity watching Gary race back and forth around the infirmary. On occasion he would stop, sniff something, bat at it slightly, but then seemed frightened by it and hurried away.

“I... I don't know. This isn't as simple as me saying I was wrong. I've been fighting a war for years, and I've seen these things in action. I know what they can do. But Gary,” she paused as he walked over to her on all fours, sniffing her leg, then rubbing up against her. “He's almost sweet. This is not the same Vorhsoth I fought in the war,” she explained.

“I think Ella wants to keep it,” she said.

“Imagine that, a domesticated Vorhsoth. I still can't wrap my head around it. It's too much,” Serenity admitted.

“Seems now we have a bigger mystery on our hands. Whoever created these things did it with the intention of wiping out an entire species. They are out there, somewhere, and they're still coming,” she said.

“And we'll be ready for them,” she insisted.

The doors to the infirmary slid open as The Phantom Ranger walked in, making his way over to them. “Good evening ladies. Interesting night we're having,” he said with a duality to his voice.

Asia noted that it was going to take some getting use to. It sounded like Nik, but then, at the same time, it didn't. There were two voices overlapping one another, and it was a bit disconcerting for her.

“You can say that again,” she sighed.

“Oh its about to get a lot more interesting,” he raised his arm slightly, pressing a button on his forearm. “Power down!” he called out.

There was a quick burst of light, and within seconds, both Nik Martin and the previous Phantom Ranger were both standing there. For a moment, they were both a little winded, so much so that Nik stumbled forward a bit, but Asia caught him.

“Thats going to take some getting use to,” Nik said.

“You're telling me,” his counterpart replied.

“So whenever you want to morph, both of you have to be there?” Serenity asked.

“Thats right, little lady.”

“And what is your name? We’ve been calling you *guest* or *former Phantom Ranger* since you got here. It would be nice to finally call you something official,” she pointed out.

He extended his hand to her. “My name is Harris. Patrick Harris,” he said in a cheerful tone.

Serenity obliged his hand, even noted that he had a firm handshake. *Not bad for a guy who's been in a coma*, she thought to herself.

“I’m Lt. Commander Serenity, and this is Lt. Asia James,” she introduced.

“Thank you, Lt. Commander, but when Nik and I... um, *merge*, we share one another’s thoughts. I know exactly who all of you are,” he said.

“Thats gotta be... difficult,” Asia mentioned.

“It could be worse. I could still be in a coma, or even died from passing on the energem like that. It's a tradeoff to be able to live, and I’m happy to help,” he said. Gary walked over to him, sniffing his leg, and rubbed up against him slightly, purring. “You guys have interesting pets,” Patrick mentioned.

“We’re still not sure what we plan to do with Gary here. He is responsible for saving Bridge and Z, and he obviously doesn’t have a mean bone in his body. I’m glad decisions like that aren’t up to me,” Serenity said.

Asia turned to Patrick. “So now that you’re here, what are your plans? I mean, you can’t just go back to wherever you were from, but how do you plan to make your way in life now that you sorta have to be here?” she asked.

“According to Madison, we have to merge at least once a week to sustain the powers. I’ll search for ways to break the bond between me and the energem, but in the meantime, I’m happy to stay around and help out,” he said.

“Will you join SPD?” Nik asked.

He shook his head. “I don’t think so. I’ve seen enough action. I’ve lived a couple lifetimes now, and I think I’m ready to settle down and try something new,” he paused. “Maybe farming, or something working with my hands.”

“So every account of the Phantom Ranger in the history books, dating all the way back to the Astro ranger’s first sighting, that was *you*?” she asked.

He nodded. “Guilty as charged, little lady.”

“So how old are you?”

“Honestly, I stopped counting. I have no idea at this point. I’ve been the Phantom Ranger for as long as I can remember, and honestly, I’m looking forward to a life away from the armor... if that's even going to be possible,” Patrick admitted.

“If there is a way, we’ll find it,” Asia said.

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“I never gave up on you dad. Never,” Ella sighed, wrapping herself around his arm as they sat in the promenade area. So late in the evening, there weren’t very many officers out, so they had the privacy to sit together and catch up. “Nate gave up, but not me.”

“Come on, El. That's not fair. I mean, how was I supposed to know that...” he was interrupted.

“You couldn’t have known. I don’t blame you, either of you. Thank you for being so strong while I was gone, and taking care of your mother. I know I put you in a hard position your entire lives, but look at you; you’re all grown up,” Bridge said with a smile.

“So what will you do now?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. There's still a lot I could do. I can still lead B-Squad, even though it's really just me and Z now. Maybe they’ll give me new rangers,” he paused. “Maybe Sky will let you join B-Squad and we can go off on family adventures together,” he paused again. “Oooh, maybe your mom will come out of retirement and we can all go on adventures together. We don’t have a white morpher, but i’m sure Kat can whip something up,” he blurted out.

“That sounds epic!” Ella squealed, but quickly calmed down. “But we are the D-Squad. I couldn’t leave them. We’re family,” she pointed out.

Bridge leaned into her as she put her head on his shoulder. “I understand that. After we defeated the Troobians, Commander... I mean, Admiral Cruger tried to promote us to A-Squad, but we weren’t interested in being A-Squad. We were B-Squad, the same way you guys are D-Squad,” he mentioned.

“Now that you’re back, will you and mom get back together?” Nathaniel asked.

The question clearly struck a chord with Bridge, as he was unsure how to answer that. Luckily, he didn’t have to as they were interrupted.

“Oh my gosh,” a voice sighed.

The three of them turned around as Alyssa Enrile was standing there with tears in her eyes, almost as if she was unable to move. She was trying to catch her breath, but somehow seeing Bridge there left her completely motionless.

“Come on, sis. Let’s get them a minute,” he said.

Ella leaned up, kissing him on the cheek, then hurried away with her brother. Bridge stood up, slowly making his way towards Alyssa, who still hadn’t moved.

“Hello Lyssa,” he said calmly.

“Finally, she flung her arms around him, hugging him as tightly as she could. She backed away, putting her hands on either side of his face just to make sure it was him, then hugged him again. “I didn’t think I was ever going to see you again,” she cried.

“Come on. I may not come when you call, but I’m always on time,” he paused. “I think that’s a Ja-Rule song,” he mentioned.

“When Sky called and told me, I got here as fast as I could. Even now, I can’t believe it. You’re here. You’re really here,” she cried.

“Yep. And I’m not going anywhere.”

“You better not,” Alyssa said, hugging him again.

“How have you been? I see you did a great job with the kids,” he brought up.

“I tried, but you played a big part in that,” she looked around. “You see where they ended up, following in their father’s footsteps,” she pointed out.

“That sounds more like you than me, Lyssa.”

She chuckled. “Yeah. Maybe.”

“Thaniel asked me a question and I don’t know how to answer it. Maybe you can,” he paused. “He wants to know if we’re getting back together,” Bridge said.

She paused, taking a step back. “Our relationship has always been complicated. For you it’s only been weeks, but for me, it was over half my life. Time travel is tricky like that, I suppose,”

she placed one hand on his cheek, and he leaned into it. "I love you Bridge, I do, but I... I'm just not..." he quickly cut her short.

"It's alright. I understand."

"Really?" she asked.

"Of course. I made your life much too complicated, and now you lead a simpler life. The last thing you need is me coming around and throwing a monkey wrench into your plans," he paused. "Who does that? Throws monkey wrenches?" he replied.

"Same old Bridge," Alyssa cried.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Same old me."

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Z stood across from Jack just outside of SPD, neither of them saying a word. It was sufficed to say that of all the members of SPD, Jack was closest to Z. They had grown up together on the streets of New Tech City. They were kindred spirits, two peas in a pod. They did everything together, and when the chance to be a part of something bigger came along, they took it.

Granted, as soon as the mission was over, Jack turned in his morpher and left SPD, but that didn't mean he didn't keep in touch with Z. Their lives were just going in different directions, and they each respected that.

"You still owe me twelve bucks," he joked, folded his arms.

"Oh please, how many times did I have to bail you out of jail when we were kids? You're really going to bother me about twelve dollars?" she asked.

"Times are tough," he mentioned.

The two of them stopped, wrapping their arms around one another. "It's good to see you, brother," Z sighed.

"I never gave up on you, Z. When Sky told me you were missing in action, I knew you were just fine. I figured, leave it to Z to make to make an entrance," he said.

She nodded. "I was fashionably late," she giggled.

“So what's next for you?” Jack asked.

“I’m not sure. Bridge and I are going to get a physical from the doc in the morning, and I guess we’ll just go right back to work. I mean, what else is there?” she asked.

“You could always come work with me down at the shelter. It doesn’t pay what SPD pays, but its a decent living,” he said.

“Jack, SPD doesn’t pay.”

“That's another reason I left. The hours were crazy and there were no benefits package. At least now I’m making my own way in the world. You can come with me. Ally and I would love to have you,” he mentioned.

“You’re still with her?”

He nodded. “Been married two years now. We’re thinking about kids, but we’re in no rush. We have our whole lives ahead of us,” he said.

“If this whole thing has taught me anything, its that there is no such thing as having your whole life ahead of you. Anything could happen at any time, so make the best of the time you have before its gone,” Z told him.

“I guess you’re right.”

“With that in mind, how much *do* you pay exactly?” she asked.

“It's a living. And Ally’s father owns an apartment complex. I can get you a place to stay. Wouldn’t be much, but it would be all yours,” Jack said, extending his hand to her.

She looked down at his hand, then back up at him. “How could I say no, brother?” she replied with a tear in her eye. They shook hands, but then he pulled her closer to him, embracing.

“You still owe me twelve bucks,” he reminded her.