

Ensign Nathaniel Carson found it off that one moment he was somewhere else, the next moment he was here. Wherever here is, he thought.

There was no transition from one place to another. Just in one moment he realized where he was, and had no knowledge of how it came to be.

Everything in either direction was solid white. There were no discernable entrances or exits, no means to have entered.

He snapped his fingers. "This is a simulation," he glanced around. "Based on four dimensional cube of some kind. A tesseract," he speculated.

In order to be inside a tesseract, he would have to have been sedated or...

"This is in my mind. I volunteered for this," he said. "But why would I? What could have constructed something so..." he paused. "Time Force," he said.

*He comprehends but does not understand. He is not ready.*

"Tapped into my cerebral cortex and found the voice of someone close to me, then you used basic syntax to make them say what you wanted them to, huh? Sorry, this isn't going to work on me," Nathaniel proclaimed.

*He knows, but knows nothing. He is arrogant. He is not ready.*

"These speak and spell games may work on some people, but not me. I know how things work," he pointed out.

*Oh do you now?*

"Yes. I do. Science can explain everything," he said.

*Then explain this...*

Suddenly there was a blue sky overhead. Smoke seemed to rise from underneath him, but he immediately realized it wasn't smoke. They were clouds.

In the distance there was a tall gate, but it seemed to be glowing.

"What is this?"

*Science can explain everything.*

He recognized the voice as his own, but was not impressed by what he'd seen.

"I get it. This is suppose to be heaven. You're trying to tell me that this is heaven and you want me to explain how I got here scientifically. Well, I can. This isn't heaven. Not by a long shot. Faith supercedes science," he said.

*Faith is an abstract concept. He claims to understand, but does not comprehend.*

"Oh I comprehend just fine. You want me to question my faith, maybe even get rid of it for science. I can't and I won't. The universe works on laws, and science cannot explain faith no more than faith explains science. Besides, I'm not so tied up in the how or why of existence. I only hope to make the best of existence while I'm here and leave the world a little better off than how I found it. So whatever test this is, we've established that I must have willingly took it, which means you're interested in me. So let's drop the act. Lets lose the smoke and mirrors and just ask me what you really want to know?"

*It claims to know.*

*It knows nothing. It is arrogant.*

Nathaniel sat with his legs crossed, though with all the clouds in place it was difficult to know what he was sitting on.

"I'm not arrogant. I was chosen because I know stuff. I'm good. So either you're going to pick me and you'll put me to good use, or you won't and I'll go back to my life. Chances are you'll erase my memories afterwards; can't have me running around knowing about all this, so I'm refusing to jump through your hoops. Either you want me as is, or you don't," he said plainly.

*It is adversarial. Combative. He is not ready.*

"The only thing I'm ready for is to go home. I'm not playing this game," Nathaniel said.

"As you wish."

Suddenly, everything faded away, and was replaced by nothing but white again. He glanced back as a man approached him.

"You're an exceptional young man, you know that?" he asked.

Nathaniel stood up to face him. "Are you in charge around here?"

"In a manner of speaking. I tend to ensure everything goes smoothly around here. Usually we don't have so many issues with this process, but it's something about your family that..." he paused. "This is Time Force," he said proudly.

"And you are?"

"My name is Alex."

"You're going to have to be more specific."

"I'm afraid that's all I have for you, ensign. I'm not here to hold you or anyone else against their will. You want a way out?" just then, a wooden door appeared. "Step through the door and you will find yourself in your quarters asleep. All this will feel like a dream, and you'll forget it in a matter of moments. Or..." another door appeared. It seemed to be the exact same door. "Or I can show you a world where science is applied in ways you have yet to imagine. I will share the secrets of the multiverse with you, and you'll be able to see her again," he mentioned.

"What makes you think I need you to see Serenity again? She's out there, and I will find her," he insisted.

"Oh she is indeed out there, but you, my young friend, but can't even conceive of where to start looking. But I can show you. I will show you..." he was cut short.

"I can show you the world," Nathaniel sang, almost mocking him.

"I will show you everything, if you trust me."

"Did you know I was recently exposed to an Xybrian mist? It cured the Vorhsoth, but it had side effects for me. I can remember everything I have ever been exposed to, everything. I'm willing to bet that it creeps Time Force out and you want to know how to get through that, or worse, weaponize it somehow. I'm not interested."

"Fine. Then go through the first door. Our business is concluded. Thank you for your time, ensign," he said.

Nathaniel stood up, walking over to the door. He even got so far as he turn the knob slightly.

"Promise me I'll find her."

"Can science promise you that? Or faith?" Alex asked.

"Faith. I have faith that I will see her again," he said.

“So much faith that you will take a leap of faith? Go through the second door and see what the universe has in store for you.”

“Promise me she’s there.”

Alex shook his head. “Knowledge isn’t faith. If you know, there is no need for belief. To see her again requires faith. Do you have it?” he asked.

“For her?”

“No. For yourself.”

Nathaniel stood in front of the second door, opening it. “That’s where you’re wrong. Without her there is no me,” he said, stepping through the door, disappearing into the light.

“Good for you, kid,” Alex said, cracking a smile.