



Issue #8

The Herald

a Unioverse™ Backstory

AFTER NARROWLY ESCAPING a pack of sentient cat creatures, Malcolm had emerged from his transpod only to be confronted by the massive alien warrior. It had been waiting for him to return, and now it approached, its glowing yellow swords at the ready. Malcolm watched warily but stood his ground.

The alien stopped a few feet away and began to speak. Once again, the presence translated, so swiftly that it drowned out the alien's voice in his mind.

Who are you?

“My name is Malcolm Orion. I have come here from –”

The alien shook its head. For some reason, it was unable to connect with or hear the presence, so it couldn't understand Malcolm. Still, it kept asking questions.

Where are the rest of my people, the Ja'din?

The alien's voice was a mixture of anger and confusion.

“This place was empty when I –”

Why did I see you in the jumpspace?

Malcolm didn't know how to respond. His silence appeared to agitate the alien, who pointed the tip of his longer sword at Malcolm. To show that he wasn't a threat, Malcolm very slowly pulled out his broken gun and placed it on the ground.

What have you done to me –

The alien suddenly dropped its swords and grabbed its head with its hands. Falling to its knees, it tried to breathe through debilitating pain. Had something gone wrong with its jump, and now its brain was somehow suffering?

Where are you, Obrel? Civarkwa? Qilhan? The jaws have no fangs. The beast has no claws.

Were these the names of other aliens it had expected to find here? But this station had been abandoned ages ago! How long had the alien been trapped in the transpod?

Unsure what the unstable and angry warrior might do next, Malcolm quickly left the building. He didn't know where he was going other than away from the alien, but he'd figure that out once he was in the clear. If his military training had taught him anything, it was that you had to be alive for a long-range plan to matter.



In his effort to get as far away as possible from the alien, Malcolm ended up in an entirely new region of the Hub.

It was almost incomprehensibly different from the other two he had seen so far, however: instead of towering buildings, he was looking out over a vast lake whose surface was interlaced with a network of docks, bridges, and rounded structures atop organic columns that plunged beneath the rippled surface.

Malcolm strongly suspected that the Hub did not have an atmosphere when he arrived and for a long time before that; otherwise, the ancient stone and wood structures in the other two regions would have long since decayed into dust.

And yet, if the station had been exposed to the vacuum of space, this lake would have boiled away. Was the water recently refilled? And what of the soil beneath his feet, and the tall, exotic trees dotting the shore?

Was this all like the Servitors placing the blue crystals throughout the Hub, part of a great awakening?

As much as Malcolm would have liked to indulge his scientific curiosity, exploring and examining this aquatic region, he had more pressing concerns.

Now that he had put some distance between himself and the alien, he had time to formulate a plan: What should he do? Where should he go?

He couldn't stay on the Hub if the alien would just keep tracking him down. That meant he had to jump. To do that, though, he needed to get back to the Lighthouse and use the Astrograph.

It was possible that Mars was open to him now that he had followed the presence's guidance and used the system. If not, though, he would unlock a new planet – there was no way he was returning to the world with the cats! – and make his way to a transpod.

If the alien could follow him through the jumpspace, there was nothing Malcolm could do about it. He thought that was unlikely, though, since the system operated on a jumper's intention, and there would be no way for the alien to know what Malcolm wanted or where he was going.

Ultimately, everything revolved around the alien: Malcolm had to take that variable out of the equation if he could. He didn't want to jump again, since he almost lost his life the first time, and staying on the Hub seemed safer. But seeing the alien up close had affirmed what he already feared: if that thing wanted to kill him, Malcolm wouldn't stand a chance.



What he needed, then, was time where he knew the alien couldn't or wouldn't follow him. Could he trap it somehow? He looked around and took note of the thick, cable-like vines that were all over the station as well as the tall trees by the shore.

Yes, Malcolm thought, *maybe I can.*



As Malcolm watched from underneath one of the docks, the alien approached the shore, studying the ground. *He's tracking me,* thought Malcolm. *It sees me as prey.*

That idea filled him with dread.

And yet this was exactly what Malcolm wanted. He had left an obvious trail down to the water's edge. The idea was to keep the alien focused on Malcolm and not on its surroundings.

When it happened, it happened quickly.

The alien took one step too many towards the lake, triggering the snare trap Malcolm had set. A loop of vine wrapped around both of the alien's legs and yanked him into the air where a branch of the tallest tree had jerked back and pulled the vine taut.

As the alien rose from the ground, Malcolm felt a rising swell of relief, only to have it snatched away a fraction of a second later as the warrior jackknifed his body into the air, pulled one of his swords out of its back sheath, and sliced himself free.

The alien then rotated his body in mid-air and landed on the ground in a crouch, looking around in case of a follow-up attack.

Under the dock, Malcolm shook his head. He was disappointed but not surprised that the alien had escaped: he had assumed that the warrior would be able to extricate himself.

The problem was that it had been too easy, too fast. He needed time to get to the Lighthouse, and his attempt to buy himself some of it had failed.

What the alien did next just deepened Malcolm's sense of foreboding: it studied the snare trap, nodding as if appreciating Malcolm's skill. If Malcolm was reading this right, the alien now understood it had a capable adversary and wouldn't fall for something like this a second time.



The alien had been following Malcolm for hours through the maze of bridges that connected the clusters of structures that covered wide swaths of the lake. Was the alien waiting for him to get tired? Was it trying to gauge if he was friend or foe? All Malcolm knew for sure is that it kept its distance but was never too far away.

It was clear that Malcolm wasn't going to lose the alien and get back to the Lighthouse this way. If he couldn't elude the warrior on land, then he had only one option: go beneath the waves.

He thought he'd have an advantage down there, if the alien followed him; as a Navy SEAL, Malcolm was an exceptional swimmer and had been trained to deal with subaquatic threats. Still, Malcolm was momentarily hesitant – what might be living in these waters? – but he didn't see another way. So he dove in.

It was a totally different world under the surface. Below him was a sprawling city designed for a fully aquatic species. All of the buildings up above were connected to this urban settlement with tall spires which, upon closer inspection, were water-filled tubes.

Were the structures above the waves observation towers? Places to interact with the other species on the Hub? No way to know. Interestingly, all of the buildings, above and below the waterline, were organic, shaped from what looked like coral and thick towers of a kelp-like algae.

The devastation that Malcolm had seen elsewhere on the station was here, too; if anything, this area had taken the worst of it, with more than half of the underwater metropolis little more than rubble and ruin.

That struck Malcolm as barbaric: while the other species had free reign of the Hub, the residents of this city were isolated here in the depths. They had no way to escape the dangers from above. But then, for all he knew, the war had started here, and these beings were the instigators. Yet another reminder that he was surrounded by innumerable mysteries here on the Hub, endless questions without definitive answers.

As he swam down into the depths, Malcolm was grateful for three things: that jumping into an earlier version of himself replaced his shattered helmet, which made this dive possible; that his envirosuit was designed to handle extremes of temperature, pressure, and atmosphere; and that the lake was as devoid of life as the rest of the Hub.

The water was exceptionally clear. But the deeper he went, the darker it got, and the last thing he wanted was to encounter a predator emerging out of the gloom.



As he got closer to the buildings below, though, he could make out the blue light of the alien crystals adding an otherworldly glow to the abandoned city; Servitors must have been down here in the depths adding the crystals while the station was waking up!

Even more remarkable to Malcolm was how some of the crystals were being used: energy, released as heat, created currents that circulated around and through all of the buildings. Clearly, the beings that lived here had learned to manipulate water temperature and used that knowledge to design a complex system of fast and slow-moving flows. There were even turbulence generators which effectively turned water into walls and doors.

Malcolm found himself guessing what sort of species lived here based on the shape of the buildings and the design of the interiors. He thought they must have been slightly smaller than humans: entrances and hallways felt cramped to Malcolm. Soon, though, he had his answer.

In one of the largely intact buildings, Malcolm discovered mummified remains preserved in a resin-like substance. The creatures were sleek yet broad, eight-finned, with a smooth, toothless jaw and bulbous eyes – peaceful looking. But then, Malcolm understood that looks can be deceiving –

– Malcolm's thoughts were cut off by sudden movement in the dark waters nearby.

He aimed his headlamp and saw the alien swimming right towards him! Only the warrior was slightly different now. It had webbed fingers, and its chest had expanded, presumably to hold more air. Malcolm couldn't believe it: had it adapted to the conditions? Or had it possessed these augmentations all along? Who knew what alien biology could do?

Still, the alien did not look comfortable in the water. Its movements were slow and cumbersome, and it appeared to be expending a lot of energy to maneuver. It had the element of surprise, though, and was almost on top of Malcolm!

Calling on his SEAL underwater combat training, he used the alien's momentum against it, rising up and over its torso before it had a chance to pivot.

He then saw an opportunity that, while risky, was too good to pass up: he swam close to the alien, grabbed its swords out of their back sheaths and dropped them into the depths. A cloud of air bubbles burst out of the alien as it watched the swords disappear, then it turned to confront Malcolm – but at this point, its chest was no longer expanded, which meant its lungs, or whatever it used to contain air, were nearly empty.

With one last glare at Malcolm, it thrashed at the water and disappeared out of an aperture overhead.



Malcolm scanned the shore from underneath a dock. He was at least a mile away from where he had battled the alien, and the warrior was nowhere in sight. So Malcolm cautiously emerged from the lake.

At this point, he knew that the alien was never going to give up, so he had no choice: Malcolm needed to neutralize the threat. It was the only way to make sure he could get to the Lighthouse, unlock a new destination in the Astrograph, and jump away from the Hub.

A short distance from the shore, however, a new mystery presented itself: the tall, exotic trees that ringed the lake had been replaced here by a grove of cherry trees in full bloom hugging a small pond.

With pink blossoms falling from the branches and floating through the air, Malcolm looked around, stunned. Not just because this area looked very much like Earth, but because it was from Earth.

Specifically, this oasis was a combination of two disparate places from his own life: those cherry trees grew outside the home he shared with Rayla and the kids, and the pond was where he had spent the summers of his youth — he was certain of it. These places must have been extracted from his consciousness!

That must have been why he saw those memories while he was in the jumpspace. But why do this? Was his longing for home becoming manifest here on the Hub? Or was the presence trying to reassure him that it knew him, understood him, and that it would provide what he needed to survive?

It was yet another mystery he did not have time to solve. The alien would undoubtedly locate him again, so he needed to set another trap. A better one. If he couldn't incapacitate the alien, he'd have to kill it.

Malcolm combined the skills he had learned in Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Training with everything the Hub had given him, then hid behind the largest cherry tree.

There, he got an unexpected reminder of why he needed this plan to work, one that took his breath away. On the trunk of the tree were the letters R, D, N, and M with a large O underneath – just where Malcolm and his family had carved them a handful of summers ago. As Malcolm traced the letters with his fingers – how could Rayla, Duni and Niran feel so close yet be so far away? – he was astounded with this act of creation.



How had the presence recreated his memories with such fidelity? It defied explanation. Malcolm couldn't help but be struck by the contrast, however; the presence had taken incredible care to make him feel comfortable on the Hub, and yet it was doing nothing to help keep him safe from the alien –

What was that noise? Instantly focused, Malcolm peered around the tree. The alien was approaching, following the trail that Malcolm had left. It paused, noticing something on the ground, then took note of a bent tree branch nearby. The alien then intentionally triggered the trip wire at his feet.

A branch, with a crude stake tied to the end of it, whipped forward, but the alien stepped to the side and grabbed the branch in mid-air. It studied the stake and smiled: to Malcolm, it looked like a sneer of superiority. It wouldn't have that smile for long. Malcolm yanked at a vine in his hand.

The first branch had been a diversion. The second one snapped down from above and impaled the alien in the thick muscle of his neck. It stood still for a moment – had Malcolm mortally wounded it? – but then grabbed the stake and pulled it out, howling in pain. It looked around angrily, searching for Malcolm, then stalked off, leaving a trail of green blood in its wake.

Taking a calculated risk, Malcolm followed the alien to see how badly it was wounded. If it lost enough blood, it would have to pass out or at least rest so it could heal, right? As soon as he knew that it wouldn't pursue him, he'd return to the Lighthouse.

Malcolm watched the alien as it approached one of the large rectangular devices he saw near the transpods.

There, the alien pulled a syringe cleverly concealed in its chest plate and placed it on the device, where a blue light – the same as from the crystals – scanned it. When the glow faded, the alien pulled out two syringes!

The alien grabbed one of the syringes and tucked it back into his armor, then injected his neck with the other. The damaged tissue healed rapidly, though the alien's growl through gritted teeth made it clear that this was a painful process.

Malcolm didn't know which to be more impressed by: the miraculous medicine or the machine. The latter was clearly a close relative to the transpods, replicating material objects rather than bodies.

It turned out that the alien wasn't done: it activated the machine, and a few moments later, it had a new pair of swords. He then placed one final object, one that Malcolm couldn't see, on the device. What could it be? Another weapon? More medicine? As the scanning process continued, the alien confused Malcolm by walking away.

Malcolm had a choice: follow the alien or investigate what was in the machine. Something told him that the alien knew he was watching and had left whatever it was for him to find. So once the alien was out of sight, Malcolm approached the machine. What he found there stunned him.

It was his broken gun – along with a replicated, repaired one.

Why would the alien give Malcolm a weapon? Did it abide by some sort of warrior's code and wanted a fair fight, maybe inside one of those spherical battle arenas Malcolm had seen in the region of the Hub that reminded him of feudal Japan?

Malcolm had a lot of faith in his hand-to-hand combat skills, but the alien looked like it was singularly designed for damage and death. He doubted his gun would even the playing field.

Still, what choice did he have? He couldn't outrun the alien. And, if it survived a direct hit to the neck without flinching, he probably couldn't kill it. So all he could do was confront it.



Malcolm followed the trail of green blood to an open area completely surrounded by the tall buildings with jagged roofs. The alien stood in the middle of the square, waiting, hands empty, the hilts of its swords visible over its broad shoulders.

Malcolm approached slowly, keeping his hand on his new gun.

The alien reached behind him and pulled out a spear...

... Malcolm crouched down and aimed his gun...

... but then the alien pointed at the gouge in his neck and yelled at Malcolm. The presence translated.

This was not necessary.

The alien then pointed at Malcolm's gun.

Neither is that.

The alien put its spear on the ground, and the two swords soon followed. It then gestured for Malcolm to do the same.



Everything hung on this moment: should he shoot the alien now that it was defenseless? Or see where this went? Was this all a precursor to blood and betrayal? Malcolm might have had the edge in the water, but here on land, he didn't stand a chance. He wasn't even sure that bullets could kill this thing!

Malcolm put down his gun. As he did so, it struck him that this was his third leap of faith since this mission began: he had jumped from Mars, gone to a dangerous alien world, and was now placing his only weapon on the ground with a deadly threat only twenty feet away.

This third act, while perhaps not as momentous as the first two, felt like it held the most risk because everything hinged on hope.

Immediately, the alien began walking towards him. It was even more intimidating up close: if Malcolm had any illusions of defeating this warrior, they were instantly obliterated. Still, he got into a fighting stance and braced himself. The alien quickly closed the distance between them...

... and put his hands on the sides of Malcolm's head. For a moment, Malcolm struggled, and then realized that the alien wanted him to copy what it was doing. The moment his fingers touched the alien's skull, Malcolm could feel its mind reaching out to his and forming a psychic bond. His first instinct was to fight it, but when the alien didn't force the issue and waited instead, Malcolm relaxed.

I am Reyu of the Ja'din.

Malcolm Orion... human. From Mars. Earth, really.

The alien – Reyu – was silent for a moment. Malcolm was struck by how different this mental bridge felt compared to his connection to the presence. It was more biological, more personal.

The way you move and think. You are a soldier of your people.

I am. Malcolm gestured at the wound in Reyu's neck. *Sorry about that.*

A warrior does not apologize.

A warrior also doesn't follow without purpose. What do you want? Why pursue me?

I was waiting for you to cease running. So that we might talk.

Okay, so let's talk.



Walking through the Ja'din region of the Hub, with its towers, jagged roofs, and battle arenas, Malcolm discovered that Reyu did not have answers to many of his pressing questions. But what it knew, it was willing to share.

You said that you saw me in the jumpspace.

Yes. The first traveler in eons. To a Ja'din, this means you are important – or will become so.

How long were you trapped in the transpod?

Time is not the same there. Long enough for all the Ja'din to leave or die. Many lifetimes.

How did you survive?

Ja'din endure. Heal. Our bodies and minds can withstand much.

As they passed by a wall covered in the defaced hieroglyphics, Malcolm pointed to a carved relief of the fierce warrior.

Is this you?

Yes. They called me the Reaper.

Through their mental bond, Malcolm could feel that this epithet frustrated Reyu. He was more than a killer. Or thought he was.

Were you jumping away from whatever happened here when you got trapped?

The question angered Reyu. But that anger liberated some memories from the prison of his mind.

Ja'din do not retreat. No. I... was coming here. I was the Chalak'Nor – the sharpest fang. A general of our armies. I was to help my people save what the Creators made. But I never arrived.

So you don't know what happened here?

No. The memories are gone. Perhaps more will return.

Malcolm decided to shift his line of questioning.

Did you build the Hub?

No. We are not the Creators.

What were they like, the Creators?

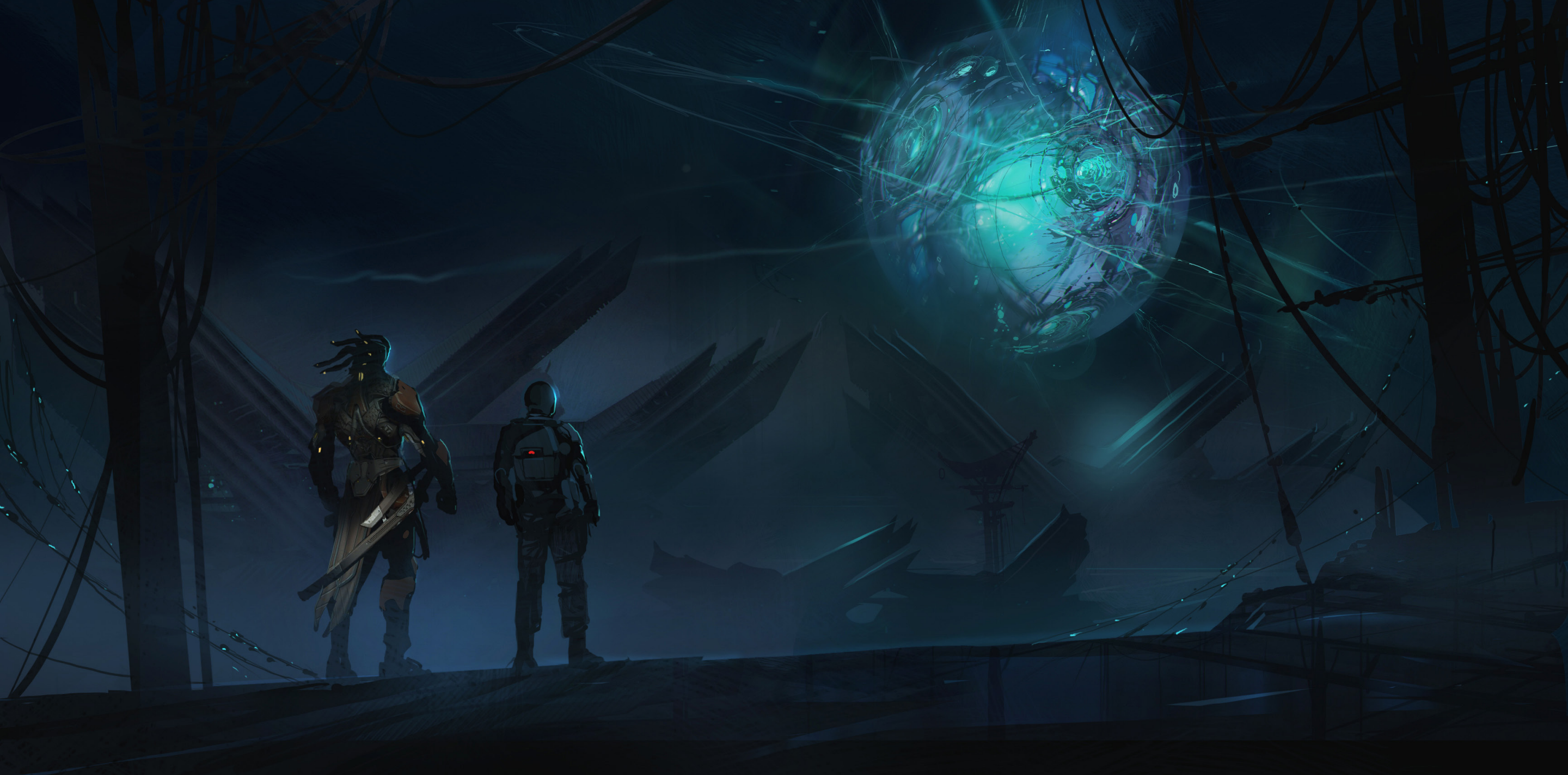
When we first came to the Eshlan –
– Eshlan?

This station. It means oasis.

Ah. A good description.

When we arrived, the Creators were gone.

Gone. Malcolm wondered, not for the first time, just how many mysteries about this place, and the ones who had built it, would remain forever unanswered.



What will you do now?

Jump to my homeworld. I do not remember her name. But the star map will know.

I call it the Astrograph. It said my world was locked. Now that I have jumped, I hope it is open again.

And if it is not?

My people need a new planet, so I'll search for one.

So we are both looking for a home.

We are.

They turned a corner, and Malcolm spotted the parabola-shaped building off in the distance.

Hopefully, that place will point the way.

Do you have a name for it, too?

The Lighthouse. Shall we go there together?

Yes. Let the Creators show us the way home.



They were almost to the Lighthouse when Malcolm felt something in the air shift. It was like being in a lightning storm, with swirling electrons making his hair stand on end and every nerve in his skin flare with anticipation. Reyu was clearly feeling the same.

What's going on?

Reyu just pointed. Above them, the moon – which had been glowing with increasing intensity since Malcolm's arrival on the Hub two days before – was now pulsing with blue light.

Rings rose out of the surface and started spinning, discharging waves of energy into space, each one accompanied by a deafening peal of thunder.

What is it doing?

Watch.

The rings stopped spinning and dropped back into the sphere. Apertures began to open all over the moon — hundreds of them, thousands — and long, cylindrical shapes flew out.

Progenitor Ships. THIS is where they come from. And somehow, one of them crashed on Mars thousands of years ago and set my entire journey in motion.

As Reyu stared at the emerging armada with what appeared to be religious awe, Malcolm excitedly explained how he thought everything was connected.

The moon creates Progenitor Ships, Progenitors send Discovery Landers down to planets, Landers establish transpods to use, and transpods allow jumping to the Hub.

And just as the Progenitor Ships gestate the Landers, that machine up there – how do you build something the size of a moon?! – gestates thousands of Progenitor Ships!

Your explanation lacks reverence.

What did the Jādin believe? Do you remember?

Reyu pointed up at the sphere, which was darker now, its glow fading.

That is the Cradle of Creation. For time beyond memory, it has birthed the Mothers who bear the Children who collect the gems to form the necklace worn by the Infinite.

Malcolm was taken aback by the poetry of the metaphors.

That's beautiful.

Reyu grunted.

Malcolm watched the Progenitors head out in every direction, and then looked back at the Cradle of Creation.

Something that powerful couldn't just be for manufacturing spaceships: Malcolm was even more convinced now that it must also be at the heart of the intergalactic transportation system. Given what he knew about quantum physics – which he felt had to be involved in the transmission of a consciousness – that thing was a massive Hadron collider of some kind, and meson particles must be involved somehow.

Given the ancient age of the tech and those who created it, he would change the “e” in Meson to an “a,” and call the moon the Masson. He then decided to add “Zero” because that inconceivable, miraculous sphere was ground zero of all Creator Tech.

Masson Zero. That sounded right.

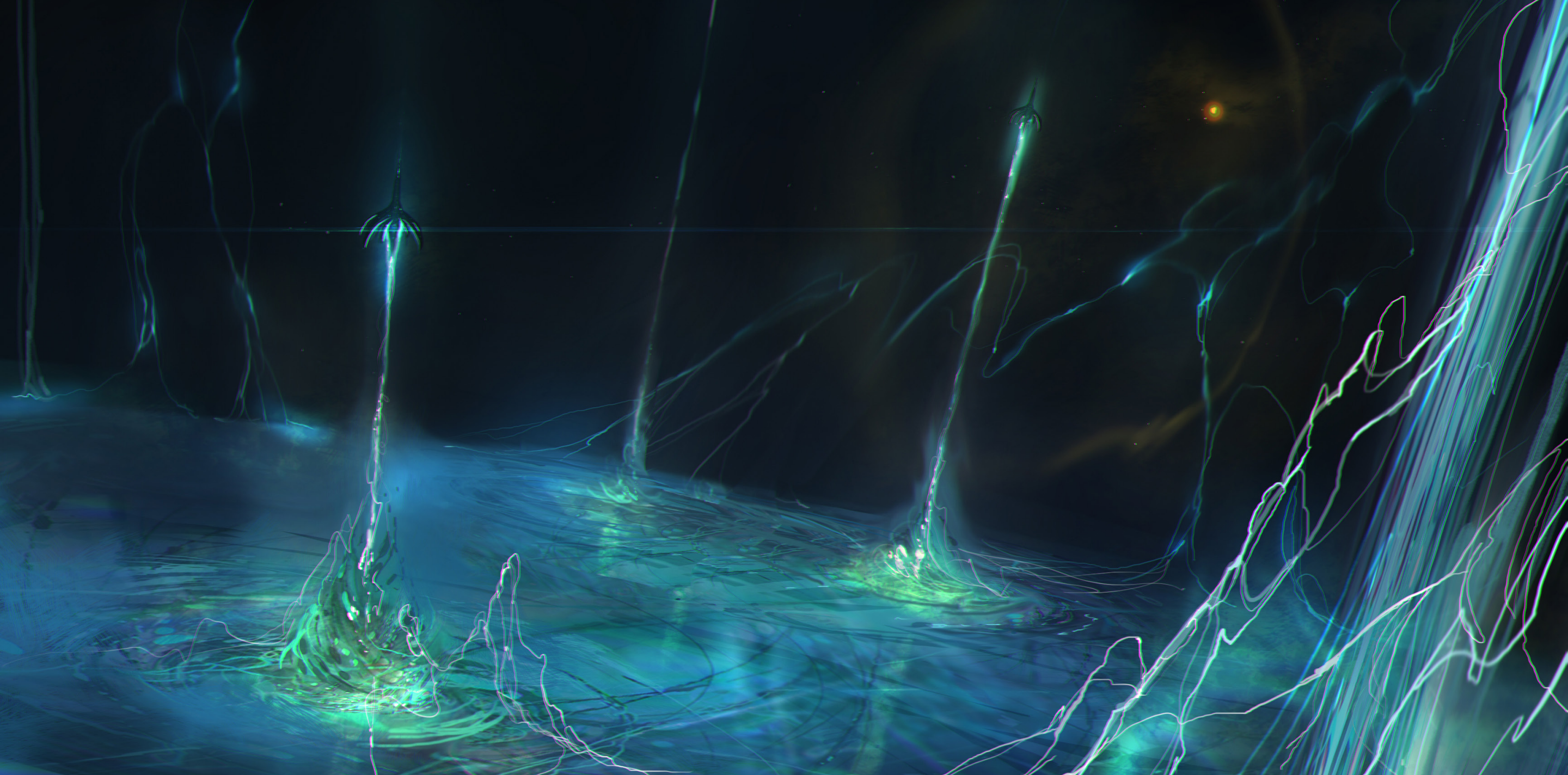
Not for the first time, Malcolm realized that he would need to begin a journal to keep track of his observations and the names he was giving to everything.

He gestured to Reyu to find out what he thought of the name “Masson Zero,” but Reyu looked around warily.

What's wrong?

I sense –

What followed was a blur of action. A handful of the massive green cat creatures that Malcolm had encountered dropped down at them from the roof of a building...



... Reyu pulled out his spear and pushed Malcolm to the ground...
... the cats surrounded Reyu, working as a pack, yipping and chirping – talking, Malcolm remembered; these were intelligent, self-aware beings – and launched a coordinated attack...
... one got a hold of Reyu's leg and tried to pull the Ja'din down...
... Malcolm pulled out his gun and –

BOOM!

All of the cats turned to look at Malcolm and his gun, which was aimed upwards.

A warning shot.

Reyu nodded. Using the distraction, the warrior – in a brutally graceful series of efficient attacks – hit all five cats, the spear discharging electrical bursts on contact.

All of the cats fell to the ground unconscious.

A second wave of them appeared at the edge of the roof and looked ready to pounce, but a series of well-aimed blasts from Reyu's spear had the cats running off, calling out as they retreated.

To Malcolm, it sounded like they were promising to return.

How did they figure out how to jump? I suspected they were sentient, but not so evolved that they could use a transpod.

You underestimate your adversary.

They're not my adversary. They're probably scared and confused. Just like I was when I got here.

That is why they are still alive.

And if they come back?

Swords.

Suddenly, the presence appeared in Malcolm's mind and let Malcolm know that Reyu had made the right decision.

The cats from Ceiba — Malcolm now had a name for the planet he had jumped to! — were welcome here and would be left alone by the Servitors and Navitors so that they could figure out the Hub on their own.

Malcolm tucked his gun away and turned to Reyu.

To the Lighthouse?

Yes.

Reyu didn't show much emotion. But Malcolm sensed that the alien was excited. But concerned, too. That troubled Malcolm. What could possibly worry a warrior of his stature?



The Astrograph was not as Reyu remembered it. The holographic database used to be overflowing with visual information, he explained, but now it was empty, as if the system had been reset. Not just Reyu's memories had been lost.

Testing a theory, Malcolm brought up the planet he had jumped to, and there it was, a new data stream connected to that world: first person images of the jungle, the cats, and the ancient Servitor, as if his memories were copied from his mind when he had jumped.

If that's what the system did – extract experiences from a jumping consciousness and add them to the Astrograph – then all of the information from Reyu's time had been wiped.

Your turn.

Malcolm retreated from the center of the room, ceding control of the Astrograph to Reyu. The alien took his place and began moving his arms through the air. It had the feel of a ritualized dance. Reyu noticed the surprise on Malcolm's face.

It is the Ja'din way.

But Malcolm could see that it wasn't working. The stars were at a standstill. The Astrograph wouldn't work for the Ja'din.

I don't understand. You've got curiosity, intent, and commitment. It doesn't make any sense.

Malcolm reached out to the presence. Surely, it would help Reyu seek out his home. But all he got back was a general sense of harsh judgment and distrust.

Reyu stepped back.

Open another.

Planet?

Yes.

The Astrograph responded to Malcolm's mental commands. Mars, Malcolm quickly discovered, was still locked. Reyu studied the holograph of the Red Planet.

That is your home?

No, this is.

Malcolm had the Astrograph pull up an image of Earth.

But we need a new one because she's dying.

You seek a new world, and I, an old one.

So let's seek together.



With the Astrograph's guidance, Malcolm located then zoomed in on a world that was mostly water, freckled with long chains of islands. Not the continents he hoped to find for the people of Earth and Mars, but the planet was still worth exploring. Focusing his intent, telling the system that this was where he wanted to go next, he unlocked it.

Watching Malcolm navigate, Reyu nodded, seemingly having made an important decision.

You speak directly to the Voice of the Creators.

The presence? Yes.

I saw you in the jumpspace.

Which you believe is important.

You can unlock planets.

Yes.

Reyu looked at Malcolm with a mixture of curious wonder and palpable sadness.

I remember little, but this I know: I was the first of the Ja'din to arrive on the Eshlan, before the other four species joined us.

My people believed that this place had been built for us. Then, I could unlock planets and communicate with the Creators. That connection has been severed.

Reyu went on, his words taking on a fervent, spiritual edge.

It was foretold by the Circle of Five, wise members of the species who lived here, that the end was approaching. They had felt evidence of it within the jumpspace, a darkness and a foreboding.

A war would come, the union would dissolve, and the Great Fracture would begin.

One of us would remain to rebuild, they said, but he would not rule the Second Cycle. That was for another.

Reyu dropped onto one knee.

I pledge my blood and body to the one who has started the Second Cycle. A title once mine, now yours: Malcolm Orion, you are The Fel'Akrin – The Herald.

When it was clear that Reyu's speech was at an end, Malcolm put his hand on the warrior's shoulder.

Please get up.

Reyu did.

What now?

We jump. I will protect you. We will encounter others, and not all will be peaceful.

You need to find your home.

And you need to find yours.

Fair enough.

This will be my redemption, Malcolm Orion.

I failed as the Herald.

The Voice of the Creator told me that all of what they built was meant for Convergence -- the bringing together of all life. Instead, my people may have brought about the Fracture.

I must atone.

Then help me find others. If they came together once, they can do so again. Let that be the goal of the Second Cycle: Reconvergence.



Malcolm and Reyu got into a pair of transpods. Would they jump alone, in parallel, heading to the same place at the same time? Or would their journeys be intertwined? Would the jumpspace be Reyu's roiling ocean, or Malcolm's calm, blue sea?

The only way to know would be to jump.

And so Malcolm and Reyu – the Heralds of the First and Second Cycles – jumped together. Two brave travelers. Both seeking homes, one old, one new, among the septillion stars.





Random Games presents

a
UNIOVERSE™

Backstory

Issue #8

The Herald

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