

Flynn's Journal

Well, they hand these things out like candy, but I never bothered keeping one. Everyone insists that paper journals are the way to go here, that nothing electronic can be counted on, and that having records like this will be crucial, years from now. So, fine. You are reading the journal of Flynn, which makes you a nosy bastard, doesn't it?

I have been in Architrave Space for 5 (or so) months. It's probably significant that I can no longer tell you exactly. I guess I've reached the point where I'm more focused on the future than the past. The old-timers say a lot of people get that way. Now, of course, the Survey tracks when people arrive so that info is never lost, but they weren't that organized 5 (or so) months ago.

I love it here. It's not like I stopped counting because I got jaded. More like I stopped being afraid that I would wake up and discover I was back on Earth. Every day now I either have a plan for what I will do, or I don't, but none of it involves the sense of urgency that a person gets on vacation, when they know they have X days left before they have to return to their day job and mundane life. Now I know that if I don't get to it today, it will still be there tomorrow. And yet it also hasn't made me lazy: I don't have to *force* myself to do something constructive—it calls to me. "Find me!" "Explore me!" And it would be rude not to, right?

Ok, that was lame. But true. It was fun following the lead of the more experienced hands for a few months, being shown places that they knew were jaw-dropping, being led to machines that would give me abilities that still make me grin. But it's a different satisfaction I get now: the places I go aren't "tourist traps," so to speak. Maybe I'm not the first one there, but my exploration *matters*. I'm finding things no one else found yet, seeing things where others didn't

look yet. There's so *much*, it branches out so quickly, that I'll never go back and try some of the Doors I missed — there are too many other Doors ahead.

That's really what has me writing this, I suppose. I took a journal and started trying to document my trips, so I could retrace them when I wanted to show off my discoveries, or if I needed to find a place again for any reason of my own. As I said, the old-timers have a constant supply of them, and they're always encouraging us to use them (apparently *they* do, pretty regularly). Ok, I'll come clean: Krause laid a guilt trip on me for not keeping records for posterity, so I decided I would.

David Krause is a trip. He's really heavy into "getting organized," thinks we'd be leaps and bounds more effective at exploring Architrave Space if we cut it up into chunks and surveyed assigned Architraves, reporting back into some kind of centralized records. No doubt he's right, but wow does that sound boring. But at least he doesn't preach it all the time; he's helped me and a lot of others to reach the important machines so we can explore much faster and safer. And he can really do some impressive things I can't even come close to duplicating; I've seen him activate huge relics with nothing but the power of his mind, and presumably his augmentations. For what it's worth, I have agreed to let him add my exploration notes to his central records. Why keep it secret? The old-timers get us to the coolest places, why not give something back?

J-day + 4

I'm back. Not much good at journaling, clearly. If it's any comfort to you, I kept pretty good notes on my travels. The last place I went is 6 Doors deep. The fourth Architrave was

really well hidden, and not easy to get to; the Archons were fond of their puzzles. One wonders if they even thought of them as puzzles at all, or if they just naturally saw things that way. Anyway, obviously I wasn't the first person to figure out how to get past that, but it was hard enough I thought maybe the *next* Door I tried might lead to new ground.

Not so, but it was interesting in its own right. I ended up in a rocky, steep-walled canyon. The walls were something like limestone, tan and layered. The vegetation was sparse, purple, and rubbery. The sky was more lavender than blue, and the air smelled strange. I put on my breather just to be safe, though my Chakra didn't say it was dangerous. I walked for a while; the Architrave was two-way and usually ruins or machines are not close to the Architraves.

Looking up, I could see that the walls were undercut, like a rapid-formed canyon. They would be very hard to climb, at least where I was. So I walked on for a while. I would either find more Doors, or something else interesting, or I'd backtrack one Door and try another. It's the something else interesting that showed up, though; maybe a quarter of a mile along. On top of the wall to my right, was a clearly artificial structure with some tubing that disappeared into the rock. Forty feet up, so there was little point staring for details, but my all thoughts of backtracking were gone.

Further along there were more of them, a few on the left, most on the right. I'd have thought they were solar collectors, if there had been much sun to speak of. As it is, I still don't know what they are, but they weren't the really interesting part, which I'm getting to. I kept hiking, going vaguely downhill, which put the walls higher and higher... they were fast going from "unclimbable" to "unthinkable," and I started looking more at the crannies of the canyon around me, than at the structures on top. There was bound to be some ladder, tunnel, pulley,

etc., eventually – it was just too impractical to have a location like this where the builders wouldn't plan a way to get back up if they fell. Or arrived through the Architrave I used.

Looking down, I pretty much missed it when I came around a corner and reached the main structure. At last, I had found a section of wall that might be climbable if I were crazy enough; in fact there was a ledge of sorts halfway up... and then, I saw the walls. There was a building of some sort at the top of the cliff face; a gigantic, sprawling building. It might have been a temple. It might have been a power station. Its base was easily 100 feet above me, and it seemed at least again that tall. I stared at it for a long while. It had ledges and ridges, plenty of detail that I couldn't tell if it was structural or decorative, or both. It was hard to make out detail, and unbelievably frustrating that I couldn't see any closer.

It didn't help that the light was fading; I didn't know what the local time was or how long the local day was, but it clearly wouldn't last much longer.

And then, I got a jolt. Someone moved, up on the side of the building. He stepped out of one of the crevices in the structure, walked a ways, then stepped into another. For a moment, I really thought I was seeing an alien native, maybe even an Archon. Then I realized, he was almost certainly just another human, here before me after all, though clearly one who was comfortable with climbing. I looked at the cliff face again, and I really hoped that there was an Architrave up top, because without a ladder or rope that was going to be quite a climb, either for me or for him.

I'm not sure why I didn't shout a greeting. I can't say for sure that he'd have heard me, but for some reason I felt uneasy. I don't know why. It wasn't really rational, thinking it was a non-human, and that I was the first person in a year or more here that ever saw one.

Subconsciously, it bothered me that he didn't show up on my Chakra, though that's not unheard-of either. I watched for a while, and then got another jolt; he flickered and was gone as if he'd used his Recaller, but immediately I noticed him flash in further up the wall — he was jumping around without an Architrave! I had heard of that, but never seen it.

Right about then, it got suddenly darker, and the sounds got strange. I guess the terrain in this place didn't cater much to sunsets. It was night in a hurry. My light wasn't much good. I wasn't equipped for camping, so I confirmed my memory as best I could, and hit my own Recaller. I'm definitely going back there tomorrow.

J-day + 5.

Tomorrow is a relative term, haha. Had a chat with Krause. We looked at some of his extremely complicated maps (Architraves just mess everything up); he knows where I was but hasn't been there. And he's not sure who I saw... it's no one reporting results to the Survey project, anyway. It always makes me feel bad when he talks about that, he makes it sound like one of the great tragedies. I've told him I'll keep as good of records as I can.

He also got me pointed toward a couple of machines that should help. Took me most of the day to get my range extended on my Chakra, should be up to 20 hops now so if he isn't getting up on that cliff face by a VERY long route, the guy should show on my list next time I see him. And the Chakra has a dramatically new light projector, which hopefully will make sunset less of a hurdle. It's cool, we're still figuring out everything it can do... which marks the first time I can honestly say I've been on the cutting edge of exploration.

I have to say, this is the longest day I've put in in a long time. I don't know why I didn't wait till morning to write this entry. I am going to crash now.

J-day +7, the morning of

I'm in a bad mood, so sorry if this is a really disgruntled entry. I've seen a number of things in the last day, and been rather annoyed by a man I still haven't met.

Where to start? I guess the obvious is location... I saw a lot of interesting spots on the way to the upgrades that Krause showed me. Places I really plan to investigate... that are frankly quite a lot more interesting than my weird canyon. But I'm stubborn.

By the way, I finally understand what the oldtimers mean when they give us that incredibly annoying line, "you're not ready for the good machines." The new projector is really awkward. It does a lot, but it takes an unusual amount of focus, in Archon A, to control it. Greaves says the tough stuff is really out there, like the local jumping; you really have to have some sophistication to do it without killing yourself. I'm not giving up, but I've decided patience will keep me going a lot longer.

It's a good thing I decided this when I did, because this guy at the canyon structure is pissing me off, and it's taking some patience. But I'm getting ahead of myself; if I'm going to write about it I might as well do it in order.

So, I got a bit of a late start, and I when I finally got back to the canyon, day was closing again. I was dressed in better gear this time, I had a tougher suit on where I could do some climbing, and some rope and a rope ladder, etc. I brought my light breather; I knew I'd want it

in the strange air but last time the heavy one had been overkill. When I jumped in, I was alone, or at least my upgraded Chakra didn't show anyone but me. So I thought I could put in a decent climb, and then do a little of my own exploring. Really, the only reason I wanted to meet the explorer from last time, was to see how he was getting up there; the climb was going to be pretty brutal and I wouldn't mind a shortcut. But I wasn't counting on it; I'd be satisfied if I could get to the top and anchor a ladder there.

After the hike, I came around the corner and saw the walls again. I might have underestimated the height of the cliffs earlier: planning a climb gives you a whole different perspective on rock faces. Certainly, there was no likelihood of me actually throwing a grapple to the top of it. I'm not weak, but it was going to be a hell of a toss. I wasn't quite as thrilled about a pure free climb. It wasn't as undercut here at the lip, but it was still pretty ugly. I did some quick math; I wasn't sure just when sunset would be, but I would *not* want to be stuck on the wall when I lost the light, fancy new lamp or not.

I looked up again and got a start: someone was watching me from the top of the cliff. Quickly, I checked my Chakra, and I still didn't show anyone by myself. That was troubling: I don't know anywhere that's over 20 hops away. Either he didn't have a Chakra, which I didn't think was possible, or somehow he had it not broadcasting, which I also didn't think was possible. I got my head back together, and waved. I shouted "hello," but it was over a hundred feet and the air was strange there, so I am not at all sure it carried that far.

He waved back, and kept standing there. In a way, it was aggravating already; it seemed like my problem was obvious, and if he was acknowledging me, he could put some effort of his own into communicating. But such is life, I was trying to be more patient, ha ha. I threw my arms out in a basic question, but he didn't respond. He just looked down at me, arms crossed.

I looked around for a long while, right up at the face of the rock, looking for anything I had missed, like a conveniently hidden pulley system or a handhold ladder. In an embarrassing way, I guess I was waiting for the guy to offer to help. Which he did not do, so basically I just wandered back and forth looking like a putz for 10 minutes. Eventually, I guess I recovered some self-esteem; I backed off and waved once more, then walked further down the canyon in frustration. I'd feel even stupider if I was one turn away from a big plush elevator.

Suffice it to say, there was no elevator. And, in fact, the structure was the only thing of interest; I walked a while, and saw a few of the smaller pipe arrangements, but nothing else. When I got back, I thought he was gone, which might have been a relief. But no, he was up on the wall studying the script again. He noticed right away when I came back, and did another of the blink jumps to the cliff top. I knew the light was going to go soon, and I had to try something, so I provided him with some more entertainment and got out my grapple. I took a big windup swing and tried to toss it to the top of the cliff, and fell short by 50 feet.

The jerk was laughing; he practically fell over. When you can see someone laughing over a hundred feet away, you know you're providing a great show. I gathered up the grapple, and tried it again, falling even shorter. When I looked again, he was actually sitting down, propping his chin between his hands, watching me with what had to be fascination. Right about then, mercifully, the sun set and the light died. I activated the new projector, and sent a glow sphere upward. Honestly, I didn't know how high it could get, and neither did Krause, so it was worth a try. It floated up, slower and slower, but it got there. The guy was standing back up, staring at it closely. It passed above him at last, and he looked back down at me. Then it was too far away and I couldn't see him anymore.

A minute later, I saw the flash of a Chakra and I suspect he was gone. I decided to recall as well; I may have gotten my pride handed to me but at least I scored a point.

I talked to Krause when I got back. I suspect he's getting tired of me pestering him, but he hides it pretty well. Besides, I don't think enough people are contributing to the Survey, he probably can't afford to brush off volunteers, no matter how annoying. I explained my dilemma, and complained about the laughing jackass. I was pretty aggravated. Between the hidden name on my Chakra, and the local jumping, he apparently was able to draw a conclusion, which he declined to share with me. He seemed to think it was pretty funny. I mentioned something about being tired of having other dudes laughing at my expense, and he seemed to think that was even funnier. Oh well, I'm sure it will be hilarious later; right now I'm just tired of old timers who have forgotten what it's like to have to figure out what they're doing.

Whatever. He did tell me that Emory Something-or-other could point me to something that could help me with the upcoming climb, so I guess that's my next stop.

J-day +7, evening

Emory V-unpronounceable took me to Garmay tower, it took me most of the day to figure out the stinking place. Man, the Archons could be a pain in the ass. Once again, I've got to get some sleep; the worst part is, I'm only so-so at figuring out Archon scripts—I'm not at all sure it's really worth my trouble to actually get to the canyon structure; if all an old timer with local jumps can do is wander around the outside, then what good will it do me? But I'm going to get there. Even if it's just to stand up there and sound my barbaric yawp, then go home.

Anyway, I got my device, in theory it ought to help me scale the rock. Going to try tomorrow.

J-day +8

Um, Ok. Wow.

Not a guy. Not a guy at all. Distinctly a girl. Not sure why that makes everything Ok, the laughing and general glee at my expense, etc. What's a man to do, though? That's just how it works, always has, always will.

She's pretty, in an earthy way – maybe 5' 5" (though she seems taller till you stand next to her), lanky build, blonde. I'd guess early 30s if I were a guessing man, but obviously I didn't ask. She puts off a not-trying-very-hard, "arts major" vibe – a lot of women try very hard to look like they're not trying very hard, so who knows? Whichever it is, it works for me; I bet she cleans up nice, as it were. Very dry sense of humor, too. Name of – but I'm getting out of order again, let me tell it right.

This doesn't need much scene setting, I suppose. I went to the canyon, I found the structure, I waved to the "man" (at a different spot on the structure this time). I didn't waste much time. I activated my Chakra and started climbing. Emory calls it the "sticky." He wasn't as optimistic as Krause about it really helping me climb 100+ feet, but At this point I was ready to finish. I flew right into it, I practically ran up the first 20 or 30 feet. I got to a ledge I could really stand on, and looked up. The person up top was leaning over the edge, watching me. The climb from here looked quite a bit harder, there had been easy holds to get to here but I didn't see much now.

I started up again, and the Sticky was helping. It's hard to describe what it does; it's easier to try your own, I guess — it's a bit like finding handholds where you didn't expect them. You still have to grip, you still have to lift your weight, but your grip feels solid and reliable. I made good distance for a while, but something was bothering me. The Chakra seemed to be... draining, I suppose. I didn't know that you could run a Chakra out of power, I thought they drew their power straight from the Architrave network.

Apparently, there are things you can get that have limited charge, because at about 70 feet, I could distinctly tell that I was losing the Sticky. I looked for another ledge; if I was going to have to return to traditional free climbing, I'd like the opportunity to stop and plan. In the back of my head, I was trying not to think about the chance that draining my Chakra might prevent me from Recalling. I spotted a ledge, off to my left and about 8 feet above; I traversed the lateral as quickly as I could and tried to climb the last few feet.

I was only a stretch short when my Chakra died. I got a good grip on a protrusion when it just went grey in my vision, and all my weight was back in my own hands, so to speak. That had my total concentration, so the words from above gave me quite a shock:

"How're you doing?" It was shouted, and it was female, and I was lost in thought, so much so that I actually had to think a moment to realize that it was my watcher from above. I nodded, then realized that she wouldn't be able to see that. "Fine," I tried to shout back, but it came out as a grunt. "Fine, how are you?" I think I got a laugh out of it, which is really all one could hope for in that situation.

"Your Chakra just died," she yelled back, which I kind of already knew, so I didn't take the energy to answer it. "Don't slip."

I decided to ignore that bit, and went for my next handhold. I got it, though it left me stretched out. It also gave me my first real look at the ledge I was aiming for, and a surprise: there was a door of some kind, which blended in with the rock. From above or below it was really hidden. It gave me some sort of visceral pleasure, a one-up at last on the laughing stranger, because I felt absolutely sure she hadn't climbed this face, which would mean she hadn't seen the door. Unfortunately, nothing witty came to mind, so all I shouted was "hey, there's a door here!" I looked up to see if she reacted. "It's just here on..."

It was right then that the rock under my left hand split away from the face with a sharp "crack," and I swung painfully down onto my right hand's grip. I'm pretty sure I shouted something profane. My feet were scrabbling like a cartoon, looking for holds, while I tried to get flat against the rock so I could get my left hand back on the wall somewhere. Up above, I heard her shout "Are you okay?" with a squeaky voice. I heard the sound of a Chakra to the left, and she was on the ledge with the door. "Is your Chakra back up? Can you Recall?"

Her concern was touching, but I had my own problems; the fingers on my right hand were tiring, and that rock wasn't angled well for my left hand. "No, and no," I answered her. I was sweeping my left hand around the wall, looking for anything I could get a grip on, and not having much luck. "They say it's the sudden stop that hurts, but my fingers are getting a head start on that."

"Can you get back to here?" she said. I looked up; she was on her stomach, reaching out, but still a good five feet away.

"Don't think so," I said. "I'm going to have to backtrack," which is when my fingers gave out and I fell.

She swore. I was scraping my hands down the rock trying to catch anything, anything at all. I scraped up my palms and fingers pretty badly but couldn't get a grip on anything. I heard the Chakra flash again, and then I felt arms grip me. If you want a shock, you should try what happened next: while falling, she actually kicked hard away from the rock, what seemed to be taking us away from our one chance of not actually falling the last 50 feet and flattening ourselves against the non-cushioned vegetation.

I confess, I struggled right then. Not quite as mature and manly as I'd prefer, but there you have it. It was barely a second before she activated her Chakra, and we were on our butts, on the top of the cliff face. I'm pretty sure I was mid-scream, but we weren't hurt. She let go of me, rolled away, and started coughing. I flopped backward and just gasped for a bit.

She was up before I was. She didn't ask if I was OK, which sort of seems like the first thing you ask at a time like that, so I did, as soon as I had my breath back.

"Not bad," was all she answered, from the direction of the cliff edge, facing away. She sounded distracted. I propped myself up and she was already back at the cliff, hands on her knees, looking down toward the canyon floor. "Did you get a good look at that door?"

"No," I said. "It was receding too fast, I couldn't make out details." I deadpanned it, and peered out over the edge myself... I couldn't manage that quite as casually, I found myself standing a couple of feet back. She looked my direction for a minute, and laughed, score one more for my team.

I looked up and she was still looking at me. Well, sort of; her eyes were pointed my way but I'm not sure she was seeing me.

“Thanks for that,” I said, pointing generally downward. “That was the closest I’ve come in a long time.”

“Was that Meredith’s Sticky?” she asked. “I hate that thing.”

“I don’t know,” I said, “I got it from Emory... I can’t pronounce his last name.”

“V-----” she said, easily. (I don’t know how to spell it any better than I know how to say it.) “It’s badly-translated Archon Linear B, but you can’t help someone who doesn’t want to be helped. But Meredith found it first, about 3 months ago.”

“I don’t think he was trying to claim it,” I said. Emory is good people, I wasn’t going to badmouth him. “I just told him I was planning to make a tough climb, and he showed me how to get it.”

“Oh, I just like to know names for things. Emory might find a slightly different Artifact, and then we’d have Emory’s Sticky, but I happen to know he didn’t.”

“Who called it a ‘sticky’, anyway?”

“Meredith’s a dork.”

I haven’t talked to Meredith, so I didn’t have an answer for that one. I was trying to come up with something interesting to say, but she shot me a sly glance.

“So what about that light projector of yours, is that ‘Flynn’s Crystal Ball’?”

I tried to pull a nonchalant look, and I think I managed it for a minute before I grinned. “No, Krause pointed me at it. Still haven’t figured it all out.”

“David’s holding out on me! We’re going to have to have a chat about that.”

"I wouldn't, if I were you. A lot of his help doesn't hold up." I gave her a meaningful look. "Hell, he had me climbing chimneys for a Chakra general upgrade, but some people still don't show on my local lister."

She gaped at me a bit, and then actually blushed. Score one more! I think she was flustered for a bit, cause she looked back down without answering. "Yeah," she said at last, "I was getting annoyed for a while. Some of these new folks have, er, really bad manners." A moment later her name flickered up on my list, just "Alli." A lot of folks do that; you don't need a birth certificate when you configure your Chakra; some people don't use their given names at all, some use just their first, some just a nickname, some like Emory take a new name they're happier with. I was just using "Flynn," after all. Someday there may be enough of us here that it's a problem, but no time soon.

"Alli, huh?" I said, "Nice to meet you." The silence was awkward for a minute, so I walked over to get a better look at the structure and its interesting wall. "So what is this thing?" From this angle, it was no more obvious than from below: it could be a prison, a church, a warehouse, a school, a power station...

"It's a theater," said Alli. "But it's not Archon."

That sunk in for a minute, but it could only mean something pretty weird, or pretty profound. At first, I thought she meant that we were the second "wave" of humans to find Architrave Space and that the first ones had been very busy. But the writing was nothing from Earth.

"So..." I said. "Little Orange Men or something? How can it not be Archon?"

“Yeah, we're working on that,” she said. She went back to looking over the edge. “We need to get back down on that ledge.”

OK, I'm back. I had to take a break for a while, my hand was fuzzy and my brain was cramping, or something like that. I've given this all some thought, and I think it's at that point that I started to realize Alli talks a bit like a bulldozer: the conversation is going to be about what she wants to talk about. I have my work cut out for me.

After a moment's discussion, Alli took my hand and blinked us back down to the ledge. I paid careful attention this time, but it still looked dangerous and complicated. Alli can seriously parse! I'm getting out of order again, because it took a few more examples before I understood how ahead of me she was. I can parse just well enough to suspect she's in a whole different class from anyone I've met; scary-fluent.

Down on the ledge, we examined the door. It had dials on it, which Alli started twisting absently. And silently. The ledge was simply too small and too crowded for two people to ignore each other, so I started asking questions. It took me several tries before I was able to get her attention for more than monosyllables.

“So, do you know what's past here?”

“Mmmm,” with a negative tone.

“Can you read the dials?”

“Sorta.”

“Any idea how it opens?”

"Mmmm," etc, etc.

Finally, I had to break out some freshman tactics: "So, when the fig newtons get stale, is there rain at Shea stadium?" Sometimes you have to go on a while with absolute nonsense, and I had some more queued up, but after a second she looked up with a very puzzled expression.

"I like fig newtons," she said. "But I haven't had one in a long time."

"Hi," I said. "I'm Flynn."

"Hi!" She flashed an overly sunny smile. "I suppose you have some questions. Shoot."

"Um," I said intelligently. "OK. What's all over the wall up there, and why are you so happy to be at the door down here?"

"All over the wall up there is some Archon Linear B writing, which I've got mostly translated, but it essentially translates into clues for a puzzle, rather than nice, clear instructions for anything. And there are lots of locked doors that I don't think actually go anywhere."

"So we hope this one does?"

"The writing on the wall mentions the 'middle way' a couple of times. I've been assuming they meant one of the doors or hatches partway up the wall, but nothing has worked. I like your door a lot better."

I'm not going to pretend that I was able to follow what she did to open that door. She promised she'd explain it, just as soon as she understood it herself. It took her the better part of the afternoon to get it open, and the stonework passage inside had collapsed in places, making it difficult and dangerous to navigate. It was either sloppy construction, or very, very old.

Alli huffed when we finally reached a point in the corridor that was too blocked to continue. "We're going to have to get some help on this one," she said. She sounded more annoyed than disappointed. "I'll try to talk Dogear into it." She leaned against the wall and crossed her arms. "Unfortunately, that's the end of the field trip, I think."

"Is Dogear named for a dog, or an ear?"

She laughed. "I have no idea, honestly. People do pick up some weird nicknames. I don't know if he hears high-pitched noises or just has no respect for books. But he's good at this sort of thing, moving annoying rubble."

"Let's buzz him," I said hopefully. I was enjoying both the exploration and Alli's company.

"No good," she shook her head. "He's working on Vebrolai, he won't ditch for something like this."

"Bummer," I said, and meant it. "So, where's happy hour?"

"Not for me," she said. "I've got to go write this up."

I made a difficult decision and took it like a man; the temptation is always there to keep wheedling out a little more time, etc. "Well, thanks for a hell of an afternoon. We should do it again. The exploring bit, I mean; I'd like to skip the 'almost dying' part."

She laughed again. "It was nice to meet you, Flynn. When I find someone willing and able to clear up this stuff, I'll let you know." I nodded. She gave a half wave and a quarter smile, and Recalled.

Hopefully I'll see her again, she's my kind of woman. And if she were seeing someone, I'm quite sure she'd have said so. Even if there's nothing there, she was really interesting to be around.

+9

I slept poorly, but it got the job done. I made sure my notes were in order and talked to Krause. He knows Alli well, apparently; I guess they're both old-old-timers.

Wow, I'm obsessing, aren't I? That's no good. No exploring today, I'm going to get social. There's a party this evening at Station 12, and I will be there.

+10

Ugh. They know how to drink over at 12. No exploring today, either.

+12

It's hard for me to keep this up right now. I've been hanging out with some people I met at the party a few days ago. As long as I've been here, I still clearly have a lot to learn, because I thought I had at least seen most of the people in Architrave Space, even when I hadn't actually met them, and I was clearly wrong. There are groups, clubs, etc., whom I haven't even heard of, and they aren't trying to be secretive. It's just really big here, I suppose, deceptive by way of complexity.

In any case, I've seen some things to make my jaw drop. Much of it is stuff I couldn't get back to on my own, but I'm OK with that, ha ha, as long as I get to see it at all. I'm a little worried that I am sticking my nose into a bit of drama, which is something I try to avoid. That's how it goes, I guess. No reward without risk... sometimes you just have to take your dose of

drama like a man. I can tell you for sure, these people don't think much of the Survey project. They seem to think it's a very bad idea. I don't agree yet, but I like to keep an open mind.

Besides, Tess has certain charms. I tell you, half a year without any feminine attention and now two in as many days. I will have to meet up with this group again, sober. I've learned the hard way not to trust how people act when the alcohol is flowing.

We went to Vaisotel, on the shore by the sunflame sea... it took some doing, as Tess had to partner-jump me through some obscure Doors that wouldn't respond to my Chakra. I will have to go back and figure them out on my own sometime. It seems shameful to have to be helped to these places. Of course, that's set off a bit by Tess leading you by the hand, haha.

Anyway, Vaisotel: really an extraordinary sight. It seems like a waste of time to describe it fully — people should really just go — but I want to get my initial thoughts down: an exquisitely blue and purple sea, waves lashing the rocks to either side of a white beach, the swooping suns passing below the sea's horizon, one after another, each of a different hue, each illuminating the linear clouds with a revealing light, then passing beyond my sight. The gulls cry differently for every sun.

OK, observations recorded. I also used an Artifact during the trip and now I can sort of see artificial adjustments in certain kinds of rock, such as carving, or secret panels. Very convenient, if I ever come across the right kind of rock.

I met Dogear. I'm still not sure why he calls himself that, he seems like an ordinary guy, a little smallish. Has a bit of a northeastern accent, dresses kind of bikerish. He hadn't heard from Alli yet about helping with the rubble, but he said he'd look her up. I wish I could have just told him what we needed — I did try — but I simply don't have the right info for him. I got there very much the long way, and even that way I had help.

Big celebration of some kind tonight, being held at the cathedral. I'm not sure what it's the anniversary of, the discovery of somebody who found a thing and took it to a place. Ought to be fun. The station 12 folks are going as a group, I'll probably head over on their schedule, which is fairly early, so that's all for today.

+15

Hello, yes, another 2-day entry strongly suggesting an all-nighter. Which it was. I'm not even bothered by the sheer amount of drama that is stacking up in my future, not yet. But everything in the right order, that's the rule...

So, drama item number one: hide and seek. When I got to the particular corner of the Cathedral where the twelveheads were meeting, there were already three people there, including the rather interesting Tess I may have mentioned earlier. Mitchell Perkins I had met at the party, and Trevor was an acquaintance passing through. I helped Tess and Mitchell set up the things they had brought, a table and decorations, apparently foodstuffs would be coming later. We had fun with it; Tess is one of those girls who was probably much chased in high school, and was comfortable with it. Don't get me wrong, I'm not the lonely loser type. But I've

been around... I know full well when I'm out of my league, and if Tess weren't flirting with me I'd not be obsessing.

But she was, and I can't claim to be immune. In fact, it barely seemed like trouble at the time, which is often the way of drama, isn't it? We had a great time, surreptitiously throwing things at each other and greeting people as they came by. I met some of the station 12 people I missed the first time around; and this time I remembered names a little better. Also I wasn't drunk yet.

Sometime a little after noon, a lot more people showed up, I finally met Stringer and Terry, who are a couple of old-timers who are apparently the most experienced of the twelvers. Stringer is a big guy, a bit intimidating but sharp as a tack. Terry seems like the quiet type who's usually watching everyone and snickering inside. That is to say, a lot like me, and we got along right away. They both use last names but I didn't catch what they were. If I meet another Stringer or Terry I'll make sure you can tell them apart.