

the grey tower

by

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SEPTEMBER 7TH 1500 HOURS

The planet was a rock. No surprise there. I think Pace is taking all this far too seriously. Once the scouting was done we played a bit of football down there. We all needed a bit of fun to break the tension and forget the futility of all this. Pace just stood watching us the whole time. I didn't think it was possible for one man to look quite so pissed off. I can never figure that guy out. As a unit commander he's never steered us wrong but when I look in his eyes I feel like he'd kill us all if he could get away with it.

SEPTEMBER 16TH 1100 HOURS

A new set of co-ordinates came in from Cyclavir a few hours ago. We've been orbiting this wasteland for over a week now waiting to hear back from the corporation. We know it'll just be another rock once we get there. It's always just another barren rock floating in space. Right now though as the crew prep for launch no one seems to be worried about it. There's a hive of activity across the whole ship and for the moment it seems like we've got a purpose again.

OCTOBER 1ST 0640 HOURS

Oh man... I just had the most messed up nightmare. Hell... I don't even know why I'm talking about it in this log... I haven't thought about any of that stuff in years... I thought I'd left it all behind when I joined up. We're two days from planetfall, the main engines have already cut out so we're in deceleration now. I just need to get some real sleep before we arrive.

OCTOBER 3RD 1400 HOURS

[excited] There's something down there! They never heard back from the advance probes sent out a week ago but command figured they'd failed or been hit by some junk. We've just finished EVAC detail hauling in what's left of them. Doc says they picked up a metallic signature on the surface and then suddenly their power cells went dead. He figures their sensor sweep must have triggered something. We seem to be holding at a "safe" distance for now. I don't have a clue what's down there but I think most of us are ready for a fight. We're trained to hurt things, not to sit around or explore dead planets.

OCTOBER 5TH 1200 HOURS

Pace just got orders from Command: we're going down in an hour. Some kind of automatic EMP blast hits anything approaching the rock. Jin's convinced Pace she can glide a drop-ship down without instruments. Doc thinks it's a stupid risk but Command wants to know what's down there real bad. They're jury-rigging some kind of manual control into the boosters right now. This is gonna be one hell of a ride.

OCTOBER 5TH 1350 HOURS

OHHHHH SHIT..... Fuck me we've lost the back of the ship... Jin! There're more rockets coming at us. We need to ditch NOW!

OCTOBER 5TH 1520 HOURS

The ship's a wreck... they're all dead. We got past the EMP barrier but once we got in close missiles just came at us from out of nowhere. The rest of the team went with the back of the ship, only me and Jin survived. Jin thinks she saw a building to the south as we came down. We're going to head there now and hole up until they can rescue us. This is a fucking disaster...

OCTOBER 5TH 1930 HOURS

This place is dead. There's no-one here and it looks like there hasn't been for a century. All we can find is endless banks of equipment... but none of it's working so who the hell knows what it does? Jin's still running around trying to figure it all out. I don't know where she gets her energy - I can hardly keep my damn eyes open. Maybe if I fall asleep they'll be here to get us when I wake up. But there is one thing... in the middle of the complex...some kind of device... I feel ill just looking at it. Whatever it is I don't want to sleep until I'm far far away from it. I can't stop thinking about Janette... why am I thinking about her now? [he should increasingly tired and introspective by the end]

OCTOBER 6TH 0200 HOURS

Shit! Something's happening. I must have fallen asleep. There's noise everywhere... Where's Jin? [puffing of breath and a pause as he runs to look] She must have started it up somehow... Jin, what's going on? JIN! WAIT! [we hear a girl's screams and a sci-fi suction noise, a storm like wind noise blows in the background, the marine talks in a panicked tone with his voice raised over the sirens and wind] She's been pulled into something, some kind of ... I've got to get out of here... oh shit! [The oh shit is kind of him giving up as he realises he too is going to be sucked into another portal blocking the way out]

OCTOBER 6TH 0730 HOURS

I woke up about 10 minutes ago. I guess I must have blacked out after I was pulled into that portal. Jin was dragged through too, but she ain't here. I'm not sure where I am; it's some kind of circular cavern a few hundred metres wide. I'm at the bottom and I can't even tell how high it is. From here I can see another 30 or so levels but it goes even higher into the darkness. The walls are hollowed out all the way around to make about 20-30 small empty rooms. The only way out seems to stairs leading up to the next level. I can only guess I'm deep beneath that complex. I'm going to start climbing and see what's up there. Hopefully I can find Jin... and a way out.

OCTOBER 6TH 0800 HOURS

I've been climbing for over an hour now and I think I've gone up about 20 levels. Looking up the central shaft there's still no sign of the surface. I'm never going to get out of here if I don't find a faster way up. Maybe that's what this place... [He hears a noise]... hold on... SHIT! WHAT THE HELL IS THAT? [Sound of gunfire]

OCTOBER 6TH 0815 HOURS

It's gone now. I fired a few rounds into it. At first it didn't look like it was having any effect but eventually it just seemed to move away on its own. I've never seen anything like that before. I dunno where to start... For a moment I thought I saw something else in the distance... but it didn't make any sense...impossible... [Realising he's mumbling to himself and suddenly gaining clarity again] I hadn't even noticed... the walls have been changing. At the ground level they were just normal rusted metal but up here they're stained. It looks like blood and...err...worse [we're hinting at faeces] encrusted into the surface.

OCTOBER 6TH 0930 HOURS

The walls are getting even more messed up the higher I climb. Some of the stuff hanging from them... some kinda animal remains? I can hear noises coming from above; it could be more of those creatures. There's still no sign of the ceiling. Some of the rooms on this floor have signs of life in them: rotting food, soiled blankets. I think I was right; I think this place was some kind of prison. But there're no bars, these rooms are just open so it doesn't make sense. I'm so tired of climbing these endless stairs, but I HAVE to keep going.

OCTOBER 6TH 1040 HOURS

[Panting for breath] She shot me! Jin shot me! When I found her she was covered in blood, I didn't even recognise her at first. She was ranting about Jake. She looked up at me and had such a look of hate in her eyes. I was terrified...and... for a minute... I thought I saw Janette's face in hers. I couldn't move... I stood there as she put a bullet into me. My suit is still loaded full of medical supplies and food so I'm fine, but things are NOT right here. What was wrong with her? Why was she talking about Jake and why can't I get Janette out of my head?

OCTOBER 6TH 1105 HOURS

[Scared] There's more of the creatures, hundreds of them. They must have been human once... but now... who knows what they are? What happened to them? Their faces and skin are all mangled and melted... My weapons don't do anything to them and they don't even seem to see I'm there. The noises they make... it sounds like a language but I don't recognise it. [now sounding in pain] It's constant... I can't block it out...GET OUT OF MY HEAD [cuts out abruptly]

OCTOBER 6TH 1145 HOURS

I can just about see the ceiling now, I think so at least. It's hard to tell if any of this is real anymore. The walls are pulsing like they're alive and bleeding in pain. I just want to go back and find somewhere safe. I can't take this much longer... I'm covered in blood from wading through this shit. And the noises they make... inside in my head... I'm starting to make them out... just occasional words but I can hear them ALL the time.

OCTOBER 6TH 1230 HOURS

I'm nearly at the hatch but I had to rest. My whole body aches and I can't hold back the pain in my legs for much longer. I can hear them now, I understand. They're talking to me; they want to get out of here. Something's holding them here... they want me to help them... they need me. They tell me things ... She's following everywhere I go... I saw her climbing the stairs but I hid in one of the rooms. I covered myself in a rotting carcass and she walked right past. She used to be so good and hide and seek, but I've grown up... I'm better now and she's still the same little girl..

OCTOBER 6TH 1245 HOURS

Jin was waiting for me inside the hatch. She swung a pipe at me. My right arm is busted up good. She kept calling me Jake and screaming like a... I never realised what he did to her... she never told us. Pace just said he'd been killed by enemy fire... I had no choice though; she was convinced I was Jake. She kept coming at me ...I tried to stop her, knock her unconscious but I couldn't...I...I killed her... [pause] I had NO choice. [trying to convince himself] It was the same with Janette... I never wanted a sister... [crying now]... I never wanted anything to happen to her..

OCTOBER 6TH 1500 HOURS

I must have fell asleep again; the exhaustion is getting to me. Jin's body's still lying in the corner of the room... I wish it could have been different. That's why I signed onto a Cyclavir warship; to leave my regrets behind me. We trained together, all of us did. I think we expected to die out here, but not like this. I've used up all the stimulants and painkillers I had left. But it was worth it... I think I can finally see things clearly again. The voices are quiet now and I can think for myself. Jin never forgave herself for what she did to Jake and what she let him do to her. This place gets in your head, turns your guilt against you. Jin let it consume her; I won't let it destroy me. I found a map under a pile of... let's just say I found a map, and I think I'm back inside that same complex we started in. If I'm reading it right it's only a few floors up to the surface. My odds just went up: I AM gonna get out of here.

OCTOBER 6TH 1515 HOURS

[calmer, more descriptive. He appears to feel he's in a "safe" po-

sition and has switched back to more disciplined "report" mode.] I'm in a large medical bay in the middle of the complex. There's a body strapped down to the table in the middle. This place has been abandoned for god knows how long... yet this guy's hardly decomposed at all. I've found some documents, I don't recognise any of the words but when I look at them... somehow I can just understand what it says. There's a conviction order here for the man on the table - they just call him the navigator. I'm going to keep reading to see if I can figure out what happened here.

OCTOBER 6TH 1543 HOURS

This facility WAS a prison like I thought, but according to the notes I've found they didn't need bars or guards because they had that device. It was supposed to get inside the inmate's heads. Forcing them to face their crimes over and over again until they earn some kind of redemption. It looks like something went wrong though, I can't quite understand it all yet. I think it started when they brought this guy in... the navigator. The notes here are all kind of vague so that's all I've pieced together so far. Will continue research...

OCTOBER 6TH 1620 HOURS

I just watched the security feed of them bringing him in. It looks like they went to a lot of trouble to secure him. Who was this man? What the hell were they scared of? For that matter who were any of these people? They all look pretty much human but we've never had this kind of technology... hell, we don't have it now. Anyway that's not the point... they hooked him up directly to the device. I don't think this was normal; they must have really wanted him locked away. He was screaming his innocence as they hooked it up to him. Once his mind touched the device the whole place went crazy. Prisoners started tearing each other apart with their bear hands - it was sick... Instead of prisoners living out their own crimes this whole place became one living hell... I wonder if anyone got out of here alive... [Pauses to think] I think I've seen enough here. I'm heading back to the surface.

OCTOBER 6TH 1700 HOURS

I saw her again... Janette. It's okay though because I think I understand now. I joined up because I wanted to get away from Earth. I thought I blamed myself...I couldn't help her... I let my sister drown. It's not true though, I must have always known it wasn't my fault. I've just never accepted it. [pauses to consider and put events behind him] I'm nearly at the surface. They MUST have gotten a rescue ship through by now.

OCTOBER 6TH 1800 HOURS

I never thought I'd be so happy to see Pace's miserable face. When I got to the surface they were already boarding the drop-ship ready to leave. I guess they'd already given up on us. The medics had to bring me on-board on a stretcher... I didn't realise until I

was inside... they'd brought the device with them. I tried to stop them but the medics held me down. I didn't have enough energy left in me to resist. They don't know what they're doing... they don't realise what's inside that thing!

OCTOBER 13TH 0240 HOURS

I can't sleep anymore. I can feel the artefact inside my head again. The doctors have me on anti-psychotics but it doesn't make any difference. As soon as I close my eyes I can see them all, every mind trapped in that prison... inside that artefact...calling me... screaming to get out... or just wanting to die. We're dropping the artefact off at Spiky Foose research station in a few days. Maybe then I can finally rest.

NO FURTHER ENTRIES!