



FAST FORWARD

LOST IN TIME

CHAPTER 1: First Contact

Earth, 1762 – Uncharted Forest Region

The night sky erupted with flame as the damaged spacecraft tore through Earth's atmosphere. What began as a controlled descent quickly deteriorated into catastrophic system failures. The Gorlaer vessel, sleek and crystalline in design, left a trail of superheated debris across the starlit canvas before disappearing below the treeline with a thunderous impact.

Silence returned to the forest momentarily before being broken by the mechanical groan of a hull breach. Pale blue light spilled from the fractured spacecraft, casting eerie shadows among ancient trees.

Three figures emerged, their movements deliberate and pained. The tallest of them—Commander Vex'ilor—surveyed the unfamiliar landscape, six-fingered hands pressed against a wound that leaked luminescent fluid.

"Atmospheric composition is sustainable," the commander announced in the melodic tones of the Gorlaer language. "But our navigation systems are irreparably damaged. This is not our intended destination."

The second Gorlaer, Science Officer Naal'tir, moved carefully around the perimeter of the crash site, scanning with a handheld device.

The background is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a jungle. In the center, there is a stone structure, possibly a temple or a ruin, with a large, ornate doorway. The structure is partially obscured by dense, dark foliage and vines. The overall tone is mysterious and ancient.

"This world is inhabited by primitive bipedal species. Level 2 civilization. Significant technological limitations."

The third survivor, Communications Specialist Zeph'ara, examined a shattered console pulled from the wreckage. "Long-range communication arrays are destroyed. The emergency beacon is functional but limited to our star system's range."

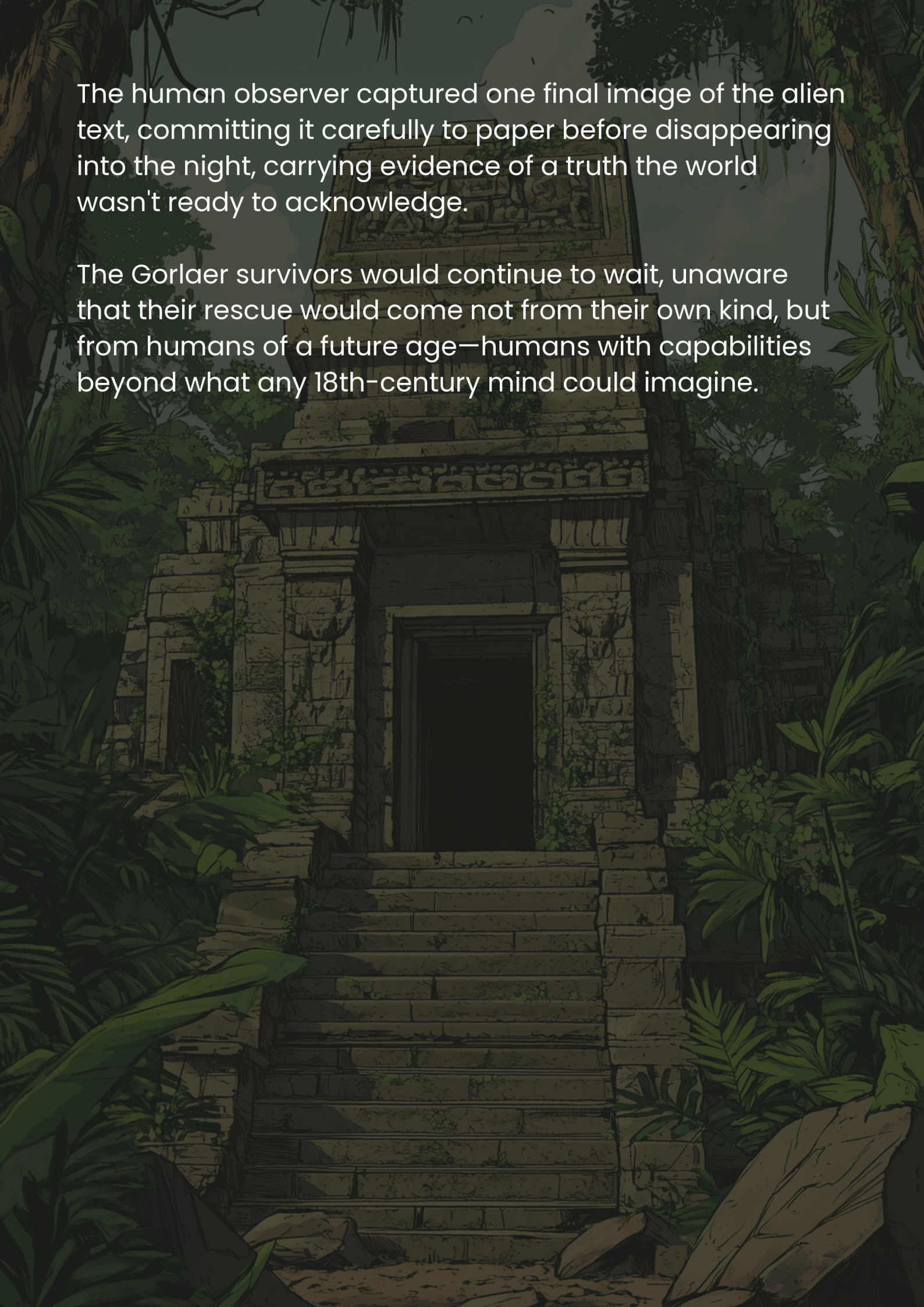
Commander Vex'ilor's elongated features hardened with resolution. "Then we must leave a message that will endure until rescue arrives."

From a hidden vantage point half a kilometer away, a cloaked figure observed through a brass spyglass. The human witness—a natural philosopher whose name would one day be recorded in history books—carefully sketched what he saw in a leather-bound journal, hands trembling with excitement and fear.

Under the cover of darkness, the Gorlaer survivors gathered raw materials from their vessel. Using tools that defied the human observer's understanding, they inscribed their message on a stone wall—elegant, flowing script that contained their coordinates, identity markers, and a distress call that would wait centuries to be answered.

"Now we wait," Commander Vex'ilor said, gazing skyward.

"We establish a temporary settlement and await rescue."



The human observer captured one final image of the alien text, committing it carefully to paper before disappearing into the night, carrying evidence of a truth the world wasn't ready to acknowledge.

The Gorlaer survivors would continue to wait, unaware that their rescue would come not from their own kind, but from humans of a future age—humans with capabilities beyond what any 18th-century mind could imagine.

CHAPTER 2: The Anomaly

Present Day – Shadow Wing, 38,000 feet above the Atlantic Ocean

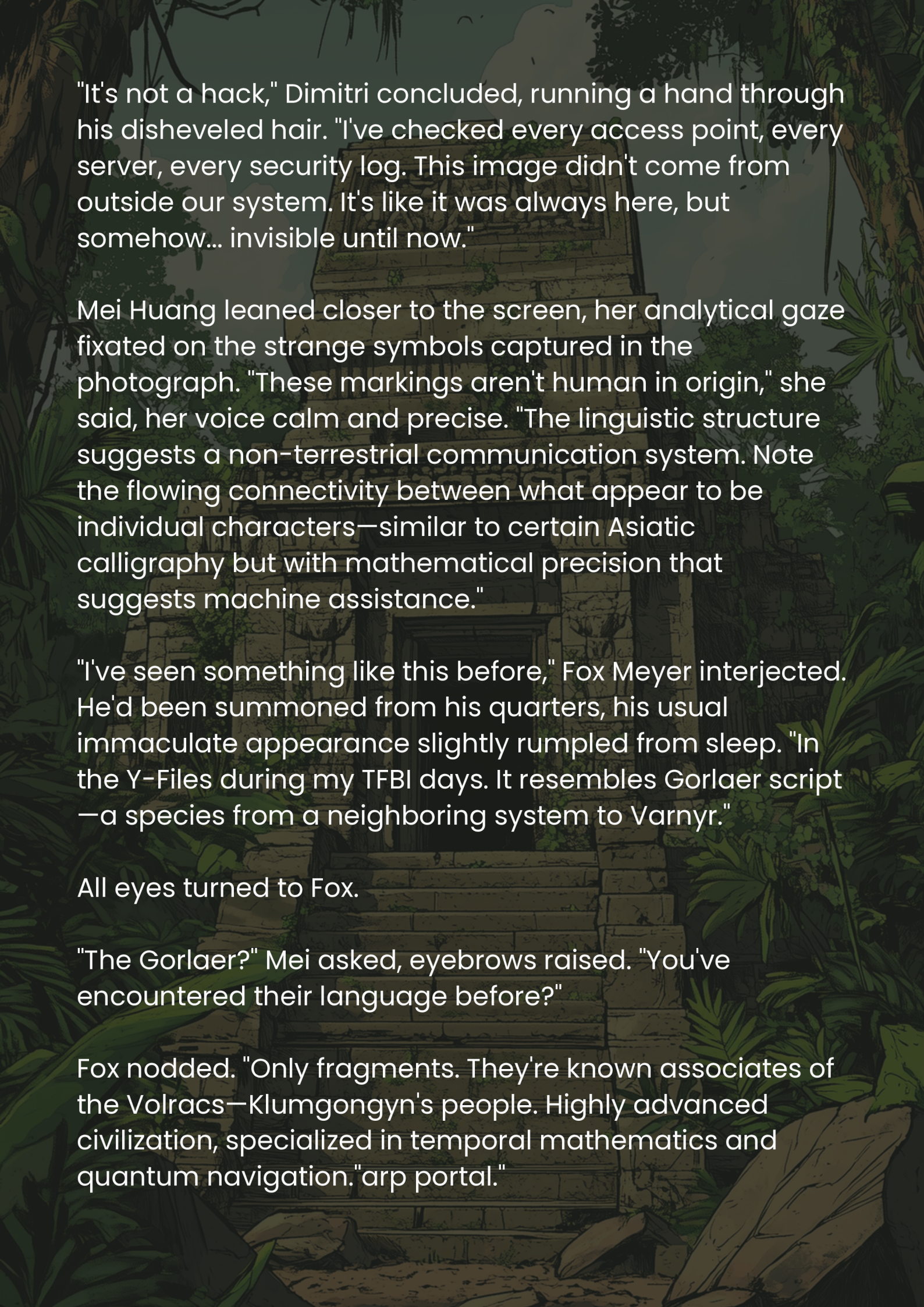
Dimitri Zechev was three energy drinks deep into his night shift when the anomaly appeared. His workspace aboard Shadow Wing—SERPENT's modified Bombardier Global 8000—was a chaotic assembly of screens, half-disassembled tech, and empty cans. The Bulgarian tech specialist frowned as an unexpected alert flashed across his primary monitor.

"That's not supposed to happen," he muttered, fingers flying across his keyboard. "Nothing gets into our systems without authorization."

The anomaly was an image—a high-resolution photograph that had appeared in SERPENT's secure database with no source attribution, no metadata, and no digital footprint. According to the system logs, it simply hadn't existed until exactly 03:27:14 UTC, when it materialized in their archives as though it had always been there.

Dimitri immediately initiated containment protocols and called for backup.

Twenty minutes later, four members of SERPENT's ASIC team were crowded around Dimitri's workstation, examining the mysterious image.



"It's not a hack," Dimitri concluded, running a hand through his disheveled hair. "I've checked every access point, every server, every security log. This image didn't come from outside our system. It's like it was always here, but somehow... invisible until now."

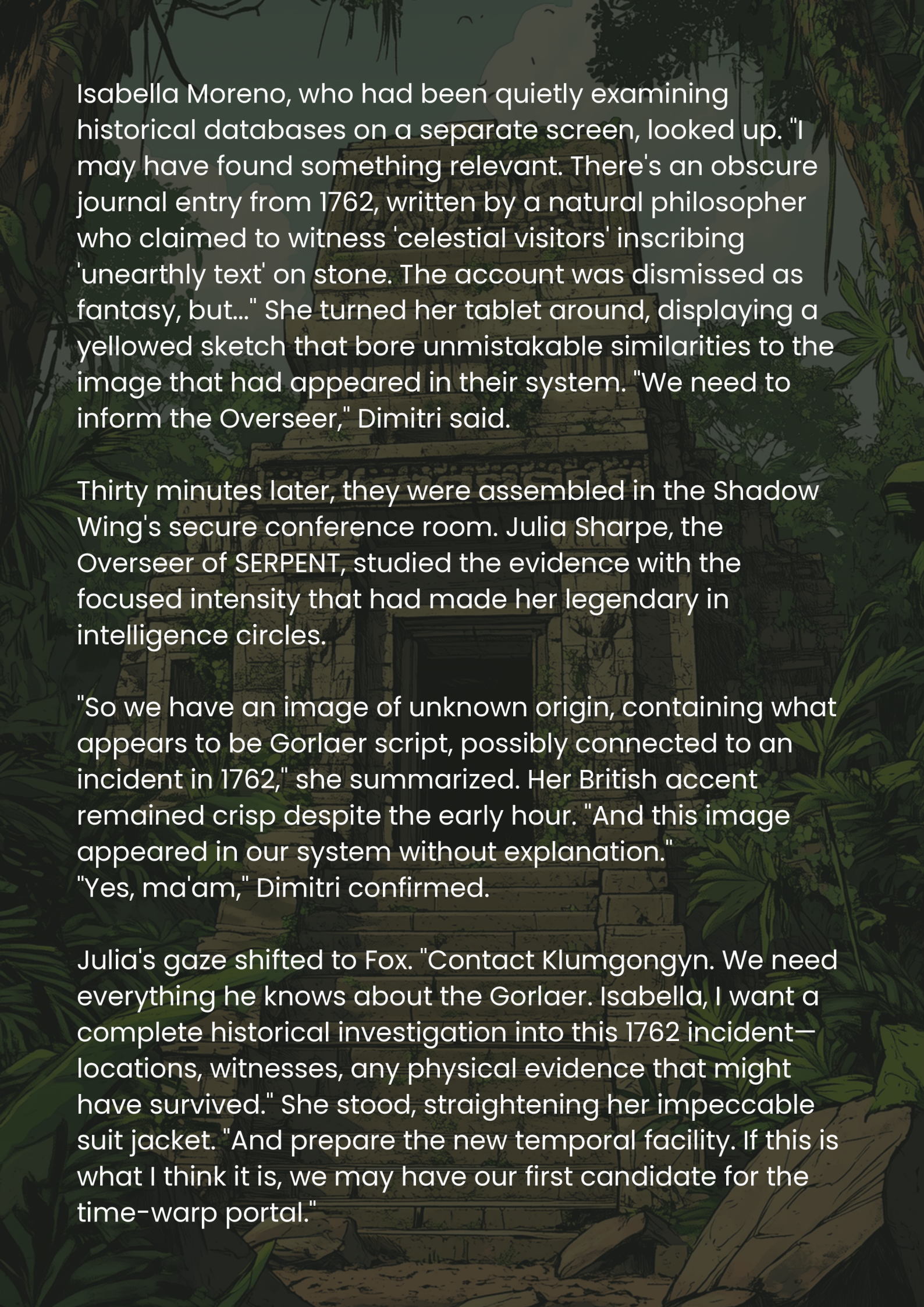
Mei Huang leaned closer to the screen, her analytical gaze fixated on the strange symbols captured in the photograph. "These markings aren't human in origin," she said, her voice calm and precise. "The linguistic structure suggests a non-terrestrial communication system. Note the flowing connectivity between what appear to be individual characters—similar to certain Asiatic calligraphy but with mathematical precision that suggests machine assistance."

"I've seen something like this before," Fox Meyer interjected. He'd been summoned from his quarters, his usual immaculate appearance slightly rumpled from sleep. "In the Y-Files during my TFBI days. It resembles Gorlaer script—a species from a neighboring system to Varnyr."

All eyes turned to Fox.

"The Gorlaer?" Mei asked, eyebrows raised. "You've encountered their language before?"

Fox nodded. "Only fragments. They're known associates of the Volracs—Klumgongyn's people. Highly advanced civilization, specialized in temporal mathematics and quantum navigation."arp portal."

The background is a dark, atmospheric illustration of a jungle. In the center, there is a stone structure that looks like a temple or a large altar, partially obscured by dense foliage and vines. The lighting is dim, with some highlights on the stone and leaves, creating a mysterious and ancient feel.

Isabella Moreno, who had been quietly examining historical databases on a separate screen, looked up. "I may have found something relevant. There's an obscure journal entry from 1762, written by a natural philosopher who claimed to witness 'celestial visitors' inscribing 'unearthly text' on stone. The account was dismissed as fantasy, but..." She turned her tablet around, displaying a yellowed sketch that bore unmistakable similarities to the image that had appeared in their system. "We need to inform the Overseer," Dimitri said.

Thirty minutes later, they were assembled in the Shadow Wing's secure conference room. Julia Sharpe, the Overseer of SERPENT, studied the evidence with the focused intensity that had made her legendary in intelligence circles.

"So we have an image of unknown origin, containing what appears to be Gorlaer script, possibly connected to an incident in 1762," she summarized. Her British accent remained crisp despite the early hour. "And this image appeared in our system without explanation."

"Yes, ma'am," Dimitri confirmed.

Julia's gaze shifted to Fox. "Contact Klumgongyn. We need everything he knows about the Gorlaer. Isabella, I want a complete historical investigation into this 1762 incident—locations, witnesses, any physical evidence that might have survived." She stood, straightening her impeccable suit jacket. "And prepare the new temporal facility. If this is what I think it is, we may have our first candidate for the time-warp portal."

CHAPTER 3: Temporal

Shadow Wing, Over International Waters

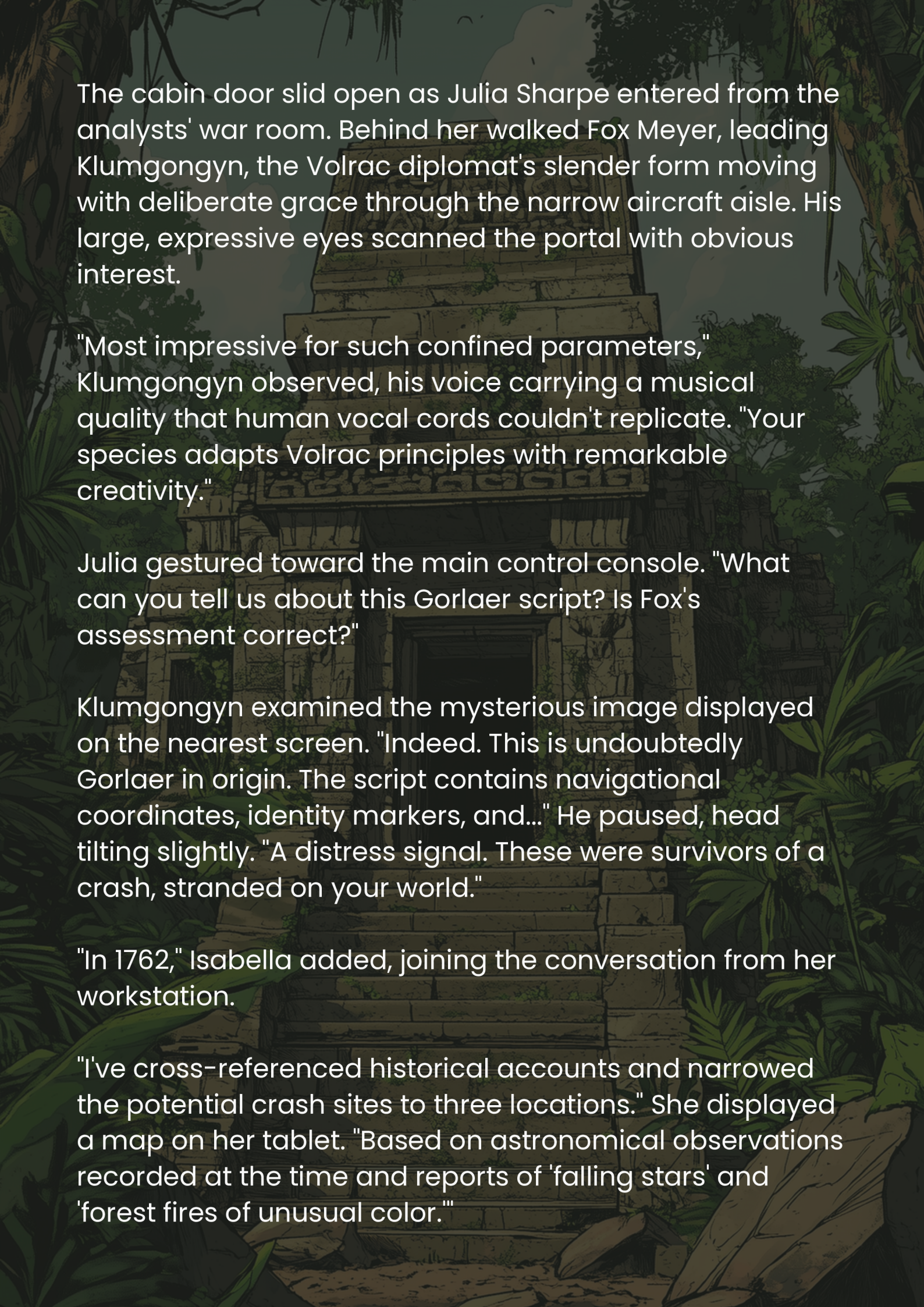
The converted cabin of the Bombardier Global 8000 hummed with energy as Gabriel Adams and his BTRU team secured the newly installed time-warp portal. The device—barely larger than a standard doorway—occupied what had once been the luxury jet's rear galley.

Despite its modest size, the portal represented the culmination of years of collaboration between human innovation and alien technology.

"Final security protocols in place," Gabriel reported, his commanding presence filling the cabin. "All defensive systems calibrated and ready."

Across the compartment, Mikko Häyhä maintained vigilant watch from a reinforced observation position, his sniper rifle within arm's reach despite the cramped quarters. Amir Hussaini and Liam Irwin secured additional access points, their movements economical and synchronized after years of working as a unit.

The portal itself seemed to defy physical laws—a shimmering field of potential energy framed by a polished ring of exotic materials that had been smuggled onto Earth piece by piece over decades. Its installation had required Shadow Wing to remain grounded for a full week—the longest the mobile command center had ever been stationary."

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The cabin door slid open as Julia Sharpe entered from the analysts' war room. Behind her walked Fox Meyer, leading Klumgongyn, the Volrac diplomat's slender form moving with deliberate grace through the narrow aircraft aisle. His large, expressive eyes scanned the portal with obvious interest.

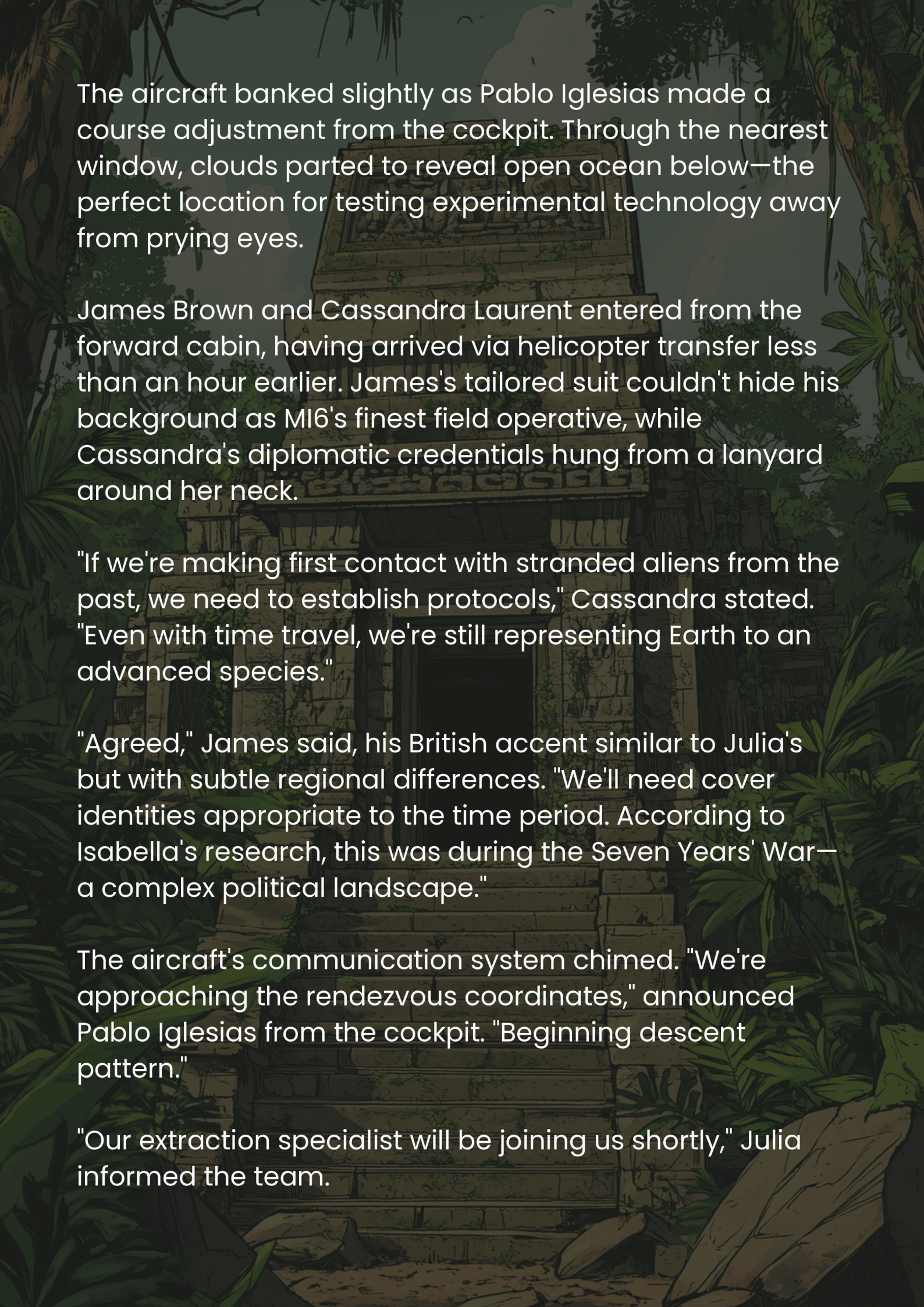
"Most impressive for such confined parameters," Klumgongyn observed, his voice carrying a musical quality that human vocal cords couldn't replicate. "Your species adapts Volrac principles with remarkable creativity."

Julia gestured toward the main control console. "What can you tell us about this Gorlaer script? Is Fox's assessment correct?"

Klumgongyn examined the mysterious image displayed on the nearest screen. "Indeed. This is undoubtedly Gorlaer in origin. The script contains navigational coordinates, identity markers, and..." He paused, head tilting slightly. "A distress signal. These were survivors of a crash, stranded on your world."

"In 1762," Isabella added, joining the conversation from her workstation.

"I've cross-referenced historical accounts and narrowed the potential crash sites to three locations." She displayed a map on her tablet. "Based on astronomical observations recorded at the time and reports of 'falling stars' and 'forest fires of unusual color.'"



The aircraft banked slightly as Pablo Iglesias made a course adjustment from the cockpit. Through the nearest window, clouds parted to reveal open ocean below—the perfect location for testing experimental technology away from prying eyes.

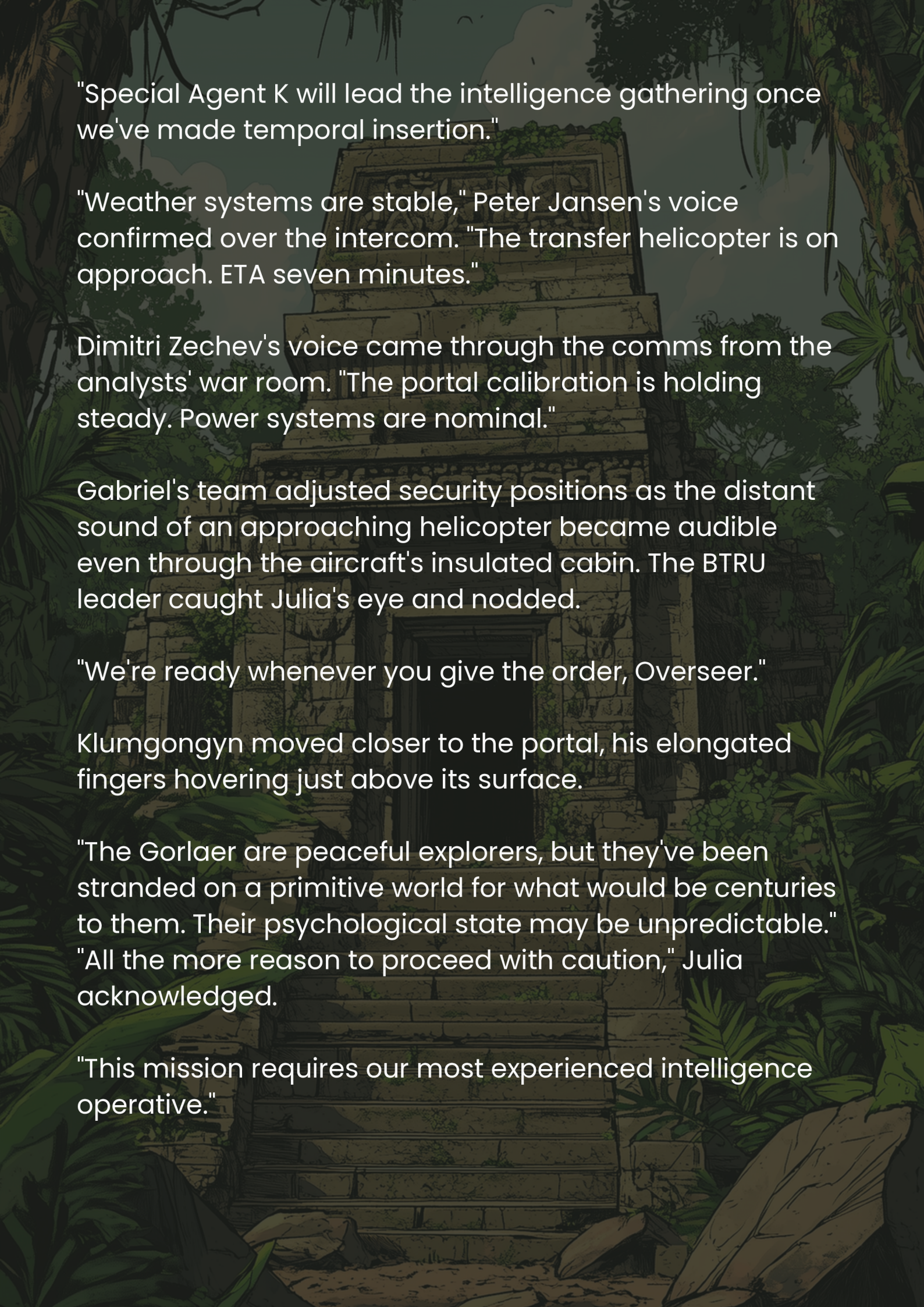
James Brown and Cassandra Laurent entered from the forward cabin, having arrived via helicopter transfer less than an hour earlier. James's tailored suit couldn't hide his background as MI6's finest field operative, while Cassandra's diplomatic credentials hung from a lanyard around her neck.

"If we're making first contact with stranded aliens from the past, we need to establish protocols," Cassandra stated. "Even with time travel, we're still representing Earth to an advanced species."

"Agreed," James said, his British accent similar to Julia's but with subtle regional differences. "We'll need cover identities appropriate to the time period. According to Isabella's research, this was during the Seven Years' War—a complex political landscape."

The aircraft's communication system chimed. "We're approaching the rendezvous coordinates," announced Pablo Iglesias from the cockpit. "Beginning descent pattern."

"Our extraction specialist will be joining us shortly," Julia informed the team.



"Special Agent K will lead the intelligence gathering once we've made temporal insertion."

"Weather systems are stable," Peter Jansen's voice confirmed over the intercom. "The transfer helicopter is on approach. ETA seven minutes."

Dimitri Zechev's voice came through the comms from the analysts' war room. "The portal calibration is holding steady. Power systems are nominal."

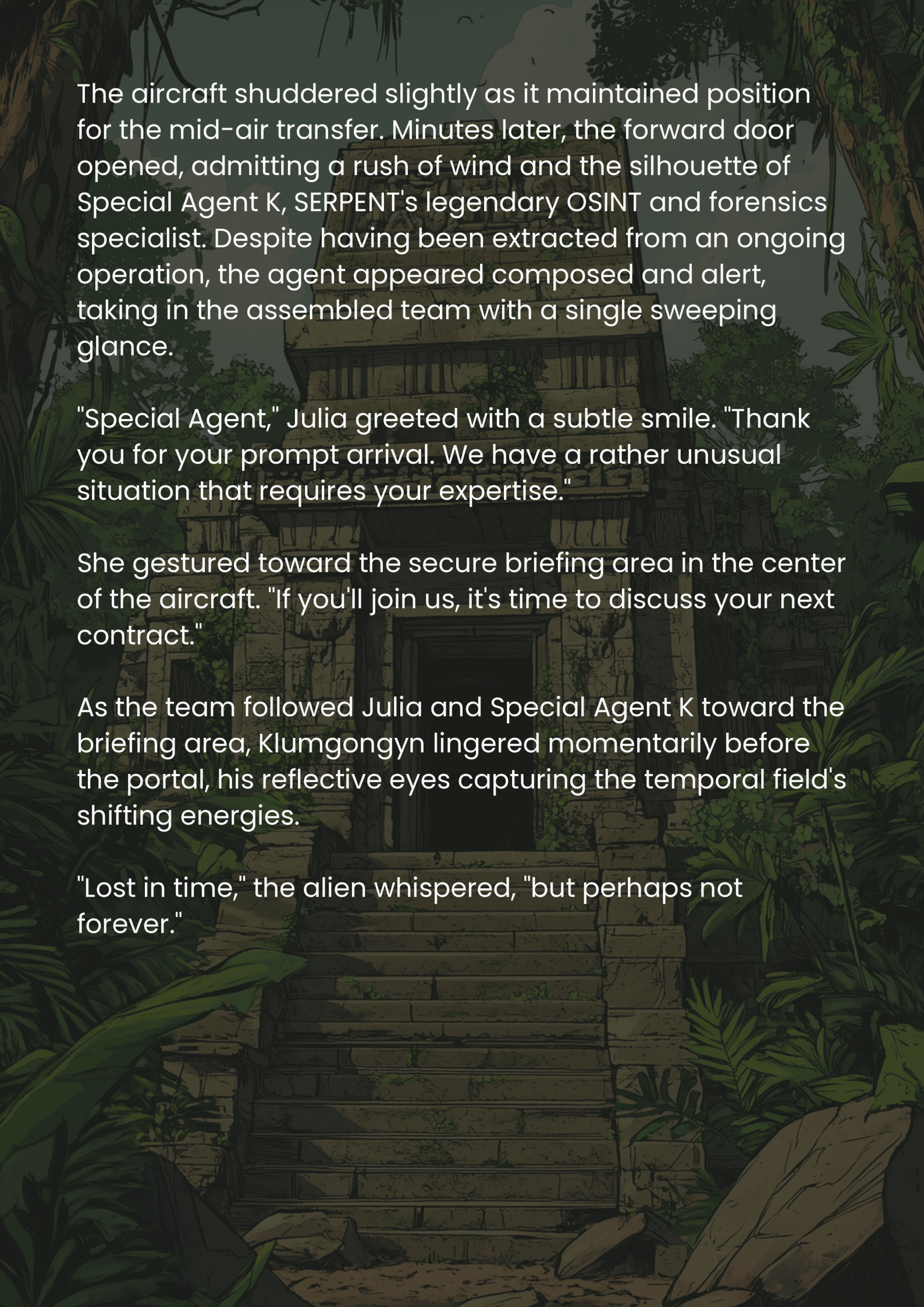
Gabriel's team adjusted security positions as the distant sound of an approaching helicopter became audible even through the aircraft's insulated cabin. The BTRU leader caught Julia's eye and nodded.

"We're ready whenever you give the order, Overseer."

Klungongyn moved closer to the portal, his elongated fingers hovering just above its surface.

"The Gorlaer are peaceful explorers, but they've been stranded on a primitive world for what would be centuries to them. Their psychological state may be unpredictable." "All the more reason to proceed with caution," Julia acknowledged.

"This mission requires our most experienced intelligence operative."



The aircraft shuddered slightly as it maintained position for the mid-air transfer. Minutes later, the forward door opened, admitting a rush of wind and the silhouette of Special Agent K, SERPENT's legendary OSINT and forensics specialist. Despite having been extracted from an ongoing operation, the agent appeared composed and alert, taking in the assembled team with a single sweeping glance.

"Special Agent," Julia greeted with a subtle smile. "Thank you for your prompt arrival. We have a rather unusual situation that requires your expertise."

She gestured toward the secure briefing area in the center of the aircraft. "If you'll join us, it's time to discuss your next contract."

As the team followed Julia and Special Agent K toward the briefing area, Klumgongyn lingered momentarily before the portal, his reflective eyes capturing the temporal field's shifting energies.

"Lost in time," the alien whispered, "but perhaps not forever."

Briefing

Greetings Special Agent.

We have found an image containing an alien language. Believed to be part of the Gorlaer alien species, living closely to the planet of Varnyr where Klumgongyn is from.

What makes this image special, is that besides one sample, there are no marks of this kind in other images. This is the only earthly image which has the language. In 1762 a spaceship from the Gorlaer crashed into our planet in an unknown location. We believe that the survivors of that crash, wrote this message on a wall. The image was then taken by an unknown person, we don't know when or where. It just showed up in our image database.

We believe the message contains information about where the survivors would wait for help. As we've recently taken our new time-warp portal into use, we now have the ability to go back and rescue them. It's your task to find out where the image was taken and what the message means.

As always, Special Agent, the contract is yours, if you choose to accept.

Materials

paper-lost-in-time.png

mural-lost-in-time.png

Answer Instruction

Use the answer to unlock the flagfile, this will reward you with your badge.

Combine the initial crash location with the official name of the hiding place, all in English, with the year of going into hiding.

Example answer format:

billy-castle-dim-sum-gang-palace-1820

Flagfile

Be advised, the flagfile is an encrypted ZIP. Make sure your OS supports the ZIP format. Ensure the password contains no hidden characters or formatting.

PS: Don't forget to claim your Coins and XP, by posting your card in the #card-brag channel in Discord.

<https://discord.hacktoria.com>

Write-Up

There is an attached file called a write-up, this will give you the answer in case you get stuck.

Acknowledgements

This challenge was made by Frank Diepmaat.