

Entry 0 - Widow System, Citadel Approach

I never thought I'd keep a journal. Seems like wasted time, and until the last mission I hadn't had much happen that was worth writing down.

The mission itself should have been routine, but in just about every way possible things went wrong. We lost Jenkins to armed recon drones, Geth showed up past the Veil to attack the colony, the people were either killed or turned into...things. And our cargo to secure was destroyed.

A lot more went wrong, but this dream I had—vision, nightmare, hallucination or whatever it is, it won't stop replaying in my mind. Machines, synthetics killing en masse. Glimpses of circuitry and flesh merged, all playing in my mind faster than I can comprehend. I shouldn't have even said anything to Dr. Chakwas. She's been fair, but I know how closely soldiers with traumatic psych profiles are watched when new trauma happens.

She may be smart to keep an eye on me though, if I'm being honest with myself. Alien technology did something to me, and at least here I can admit that it's unsettling. I slept for over half a day, but I feel like passing out for even longer.

That can come later. We're docking at the Citadel soon, and that's coming with me 'debriefing' the Council by telling them about my nightmares. I just might end up being the single biggest setback to humanity's standing on the galactic stage since Shanxi surrendered.

Entry 1 - En Route to Theseus System, Feros

I'm not sure how to start this. Go with the fact the Normandy is my ship now, and that I've invited aliens onto the crew? That Saren, the turian Spectre who was also on Eden Prime betrayed the Council? Or that I'm a Spectre too now?

I was so rattled by the vision I had I didn't even think to write that part out. Apparently part of the Eden Prime mission was to evaluate me for the job. Can't imagine why. The first of anything like this has to be more than just good at it—they need to be a symbol, Mr. or Ms. Earth in the flesh. I'm just a soldier who's good at surviving and has a little luck just in case.

Still, I won't let the crew down—or Captain Anderson. He gave up his post, his career basically to give me this opportunity. Our goal is to hunt Saren, and beyond that...well, it's up to me. I'm not even sure I work for the Alliance anymore. I definitely don't report to them anymore.

Case in point, we're on our way to Feros first to follow up on a lead about Geth attacking another colony. I'm not about to let another colony fall like Eden Prime—and where there's Geth beyond the Veil, odds are Saren has something to do with it.

Still, leading a squad is one thing—analyzing the battlefield, picking the spots with best cover while finding the weak points to shoot at—that makes sense to me. It's instinct, it can be trained. This? Strategizing, deciding a course of action for an entire mission? I passed all the training, proved I can be a leader by some metric—but this never has come naturally to me. Even the damn dress blues feel bizarre to wear around the clock. No one told me to, but Captain Anderson did, so...yeah, I'm basing a lot of this off of what he did I guess.

About the aliens...I agree with Pressly; they shouldn't be on an Alliance ship. But then again, we're not really one anymore, and so far they've all been straight with me. Garrus especially; I would've never figured a turian would be both honor-bound and as hard-boiled as a 20th century detective. I'm keeping an eye on Wrex though. He's been straight too, but I can handle an angry Garrus. Not sure I know how to stop almost a quarter ton of angry shotgun lizard unless I'm at 200 yards with hi-ex rounds.

Entry 2 - Theseus System, Feros

I can't see what the Geth could possibly want with Zhu's Hope (Feros Colony). It's subsistence living even if everything was up and running, and no technology in the colony holds up to what the Geth have. Does this mean that Saren has this much control over them, to make them act entirely on his whims?

We'll find out soon enough. I'm bringing the Mako out for the approach to their base; on foot even if there was cover it'd take us hours. For some reason the Geth haven't tried blowing the bridge and attacking from the air. Maybe they really are after something inside Zhu's Hope.

Entry 3 - Theseus System, Feros

I can't say there's much of a colony left on Feros. Fourteen people can survive, but growth is going to be next to impossible. At least they're safe—though who knows what side effects the Thorian's influence might have. I must have killed dozens of what I have to assume were once colonists...more plant than person—if they even were once human. That thing was able to create clones of the asari it captured easily enough.

We did good work on Feros, but it feels like Saren's slipping away. The only lead we found was a clearing up of the vision I had—I see more, that something happened to the Protheans. But beyond that, it's just gibberish.

We still don't know where Saren is, or the Conduit. One would think an ancient Prothean relic being searched for by the galaxy's most unsubtle former Spectre would have some clues, but we've gleaned nothing so far. In fact, our best lead is the quarian I had to take along with me. She claims if she's quick she can access some data from recently deactivated Geth, so I guess our next lead is finding Geth and gunning them down until we get something.

I wish there was something more concrete. It just feels like we wasted time on Feros, and all this while Saren is enacting plans and becoming more familiar with that massive starship we saw on Eden Prime. I don't think any vessel in the Council fleet could stand up to it, perhaps even fighting as a fleet. Plus, the asari we rescued from the Thorian says that the ship can control minds. I wouldn't have believed it before encountering the Thorian. Now? I just have to hope that control isn't contagious.

Entry 4 - Hercules System, Eletania Orbit

We came across a garden world that had signs of mineral deposits, so in the process of marking them for collection by the Alliance I decided to put the Mako through its paces. An uncharted world, away from galactic civilization should be a fine place to not worry about collateral damage, right?

Dozens of alien monkey-things turned into a purple smear and a very distressed Tali later begs to differ. The indicator lights showing if the boosters are oriented to 'forward' or 'up' look similar! Though I admit in private that I was having too much fun seeing how many flips I could make it do by alternating the thrusters. I hadn't misused military equipment that much since the keg launch experiment back in Basic.

I swear it's a miracle we didn't kill ourselves. Or blow a hole through the station hull.

Entry 5 - Tereshkova System, Antibaar Orbit

Goddamn Thresher Maw showed up while we were tracking down a Geth scouting force. One minute it was fine, and the next we were gunning it while trying to gun the monster down. The roaring was just like it was back on Akuze...I think I was screaming too, but I kept my cool enough to keep driving. Never let off the gas, never stop and never hesitate again—that killed it.

I don't remember much of the rest of what we did planetside. Sort of blurred together. I honestly thought I'd never see one of these fucked monsters again. Stupid.

Entry 6 - Gagarin System, Rayingri Orbit

Good news, finally. The Geth bases we were tracking were part of a coordinated incursion, so not only have we managed to halt that attack—in the process, Tali was able to piece together some coherent information from the undestroyed terminals at one of the bases. It's a few sentence fragments and several coordinates, but I think they're connected. More importantly, the name 'Benezia' is mentioned in one of the fragments. We may not find her there, but I'll take any lead. Kilometers-long starship he may have, but Saren has been quieter than a ghost lately. I don't want to find out how he plans to make up for his vanishing act.

I also don't want to entirely ignore the opportunity I have now, Saren aside. Being a Spectre means supplies and status, the ability to go places few else can with impunity. I've got a state-of-the-art ship and a loyal crew, and when there's a chance to take in where I'm at? It makes me understand a little better why my parents chose the colony life. They weren't uncomfortable back on Earth; but it's got to be the same spirit our ancestors had during the past centuries of human civilization before the new millennium. Wanting to find the edge of society, then go beyond. There's a lot of beautiful worlds out in the Traverse; it's just a shame most of them are so hostile to life if you aren't in a hermetically sealed radiation-resistant scout tank your lifetime there will be measured in hours.

Entry 7 - Matano System, Inti Orbit

Williams is an impressive woman. She can lift more than me and is a better shot with an AR, yet has a lot more than just gun sighting tips floating around in her mind. It makes it all the stranger that she was stationed on a quiet place like Eden Prime. She's almost N7 material, and with some work could make the cut.

I haven't taken much time to actually talk with the crew, especially the newcomers who I've been bringing out in the field. Idle banter or quick chat between scouting missions is one thing, but I need to make time to get to know who I'm risking my neck with. Especially Tali; while I didn't want to take her on, she's here now. Better to know where we stand and know what she's like than to suddenly find out Normandy specs are being sent to her people.

Entry 8 - Artemis Tau Cluster, Therum Approach

It looks like Benezia's daughter is located in the Knossos system, on a world called Therum. Volcanic to the extreme, it's also got a plethora of Prothean structures that seem to reinforce her being there. Joker plans to keep us dark while we figure out if there's any signs of Geth. The plan is to go in low, quick and hot—overwhelm the Geth before they can respond, so we have the most time to actually secure the woman.

I've gotten some more practice with handling the Mako since Feros, so we should be prepared. Knowing how to dodge Geth artillery in a hopper tank should cross over enough to avoiding lava.

Entry 9 - Artemis Tau Cluster, Therum Departure

I'm here scrambling for help to decipher this damn vision, while Saren's got the full package. The fact he hasn't already tried to make a move we see means that the Conduit must be so hard to find we don't have a ghost of a chance without the full vision.

Benezia's daughter turned out to be a different type of lead. She's not in league with her mother; she's actually of all things, a Prothean researcher. She tried that mind-meld trick asari have to help make sense of the vision, but it didn't do anything for me. Maybe since she saw it, she'll have some better understanding once she recovers from being kept in stasis for several days.

Then there's the Council, especially that mandible-clicking bastard. "If you're smart enough to take the advice," I'm sure I want security tips from the shining exemplar of turian awareness who didn't realize Saren was a bad apple until a human had to point it out. Jackass. I couldn't deal with their bullshit—they can chew me out next time I'm on the Citadel. Should be soon, we need to make a resupply stop before I follow up on a lead Garrus has on this figure from his C-Sec days. Organ trader, real piece of work who needed either a jail cell or a bullet a long time ago. I don't mind going out of the way for Garrus, he's earned it. Can't believe I'm saying it, but he's almost like a kindred soul to me. Both of us trying to do the right thing, feeling constrained by rules and procedures more often than we like—and he's not a bad shot. Not as good as me, but he's got room for growth.

Entry 10 - Widow System, Citadel

I always thought that, if I had ever met anyone else who was on Mindoir I'd know who they were immediately. Maybe that was just me rationalizing, from back when the slavers attacked.

I didn't recognize Talitha. I never met her before; it was just pure chance that she was at the docking bay the Normandy uses. Who knows who she may have been had batarians not taken her, slaughtered her parents in front of her and subjected her to abuse beyond the worst crimes any human could envision for over a decade?

She could've been me. I could've been her. The Lieutenant asked me to talk to her, because he figured that I'd have something poignant or compelling to tell Talitha. Some shared survivor's experience, a way to help her remember who she was. His ignorance can be forgiven, but there's nothing that can be said. No words can compete with years of dehumanization and torment. No gentle actions can undo the sight of your friends being gunned down, of your family being burned alive or the weight of your dead father's corpse atop you as you nearly bite your fingers off to stifle your screams from the round that tore through your calf.

Garrus has a contact he'll reach out to, to make sure that she gets the treatment she needs once she recovers from the sedative. There's no mending what was broken, but maybe she can learn to live with it. Keep moving forward.

Entry 11 - Widow System, Citadel

I regret so many things. I regret betting twenty thousand credits I could down an entire bottle of Thessian etherwine in one sitting. I regret challenging Wrex to arm wrestling. I regret the Kro-Choke special at Chora's Den. I don't regret the private dance with that brunette—as long as my next physical with Dr. Chakwas clears.

Most of all, I really regret the etherwine. I feel like it was made for turians. It wasn't, right? I'd be dead. I sure feel like death.

I think I'm just going to go back to sleep and get someone to bang on my door when we're at the next relay.

Entry 12 - Herschel System, Relay Approach

Saelon was a damned nightmare. No wonder Garrus was so bothered by him getting away. The things he had done to those people are almost as bad as what the Geth are doing to us. And he was so delusional too, calling us crazy...better off dead. Trials are only for those who haven't crossed that line from criminal to monster in human form. Or salarian, as it were.

These aliens I have in my crew...they're all damaged souls in some way. Wrex had to kill his own father because he couldn't accept defeat, Garrus is haunted by the horrors who got away at C-Sec. Liara's mother is assisting Saren in his gambit to find a galactically destructive weapon—hell, Tali is the most normal example and she's a member of a people who have lost their entire homeworld because an AI collective took it over.

Kaidan said something earlier, how aliens can be just as 'human' as we are. He had this crude hardass turian instructor, and one day the instructor went too far. Kaidan snapped, and kicked the guy so hard he killed him. Seventeen and he killed someone...looking at him, you wouldn't have guessed he's another one who had weight like that. I guess that's why he's so slow to make a firm judgment. I had him painted as just a romantic—in the general sense, or the—

I'm glad we can keep things professional. All the better that Kaidan being let down well. Even if I was interested in men, I'm a staunch believer in avoiding fraternization. That's what shore leave and lovers back home are for.

Entry 13 - Sol System, Neptune Orbit

It's strange, being a human but not from Earth. Or rather, it's not so much strange, but odd that for so many people Earth is akin to a home that's deeper in meaning than any other use of 'home' could be. For me, it's no different than Terra Nova is to some, or any of the other colony worlds. I barely have enough time to enjoy downtime, let alone read any books but I wonder if any human authors have tried to cover this shift humanity's had. From the pale blue dot being all we are and have been, to being the nest that gave us the ability to fly free.

Sol, Earth—it just doesn't connect to me the same way it does for others. I'm here looking at our home, but it's one I've never even set foot on. Though, it is a beautiful sight from Luna's perspective. Less so with vengeful VI rockets firing at you, but I'll take what I can get.

Entry 14 - Yangtze System, Binthu Orbit

Three times now I've come across this 'Cerberus' group. They've been behind outbreaks of Thorian mutations on colonies, and even luring thresher maws of all things to attack Alliance patrols. Batarians, maybe? Turian holdouts from first contact? They're amoral, ruthless by all accounts and managed to assassinate an Alliance admiral. I tried bringing it up with Admiral Hackett during a video call, but he had nothing to offer beyond the expected. It's strange that this group's able to operate like this—most terrorist cells are too large to go unnoticed or too ineffective beyond one or two big events.

It's something the Alliance has to deal with. Much as it angers me they're out there planning more ways to toy with people's lives, Saren is the bigger fish and I've seen no signs they're in league with him.

Dealing with high-level assassinations of Alliance officials, making deals with smuggling ringleaders—I'm well outside the norm now. Though as much as I hate to say it, Ms. Blake is more upfront than some law-abiding citizens I've had the lack of fortune to come across. That sniveling little company man on Feros being a prime example...I still can't believe someone would be that devoted to a corporation that sold them out well before.

I don't know. I just try to keep my head above water and stay focused on finding Saren once we do have leads to follow up on.

Entry 14 - # System,

I rarely get on the extranet, usually just to read up on the latest colony news or if I'm looking up specific information. I came across this site that has, it must be hundreds of thousands of hours of salarian music. All their genres and I have to assume all their musicians that have been recorded over their society's lifespan.

Most of it's forgettable to be honest. Maybe my brain's not big enough to understand the subtleties of 'Sequence XT-04HB' or 'My Lisan the Productive', but there's one part I like. Some salarians discovered they like human music and created their own spin on the breakbeat genre and a lot of other niche electronic genres. Salarian mental complexity with that genre as a guiding point? I could listen to this stuff for hours.

Honestly, I never even considered other races' interactions with human culture. I wonder if krogan might enjoy reading about World War II? Assuming they can read. Well, most of them. Maybe I should spend some more time looking into cross-species cultural exchanges, or whatever they'd be called. You know, once Saren's taken care of and I have more than a few hours to myself. It's a realization I just got to; my time with the Alliance is effectively over. Spectres are, grand betrayals like Saren aside, a lifetime appointment. I don't even know what we do if we aren't on an assignment. Look for trouble?

Entry 15 - Matano System, Klensal Orbit

I've come across turians that are good and bad, salarians and even some asari too. Not once have I ever heard of, or seen a good batarian. They're always either smugglers, criminals, charlatans or some other skulking wretch. Their society is insular to a fault and they don't even have the might as a species to back their rhetoric up. It's like an entire species embodies the dictatorship in former North Korea back in the 20th. Ugly, too. I was reviewing the database notes on Klensal earlier (funny enough, involving a criminal outpost that had batarians infesting it) and there it was, the batarians pulling one over on us like galactic mining expeditions were fueled by schoolyard rivalries.

I guess I should consider myself lucky—quarians I can handle. And I have to admit, Tali's proving herself. She's probably the most talented hacker on the ship and I'm half expecting Adams to start calling her 'little sister', but I'm glad to have her on our side versus Geth.

Entry 16 - Columbia System, Ontaheter Orbit

An agent of the Shadow Broker—or someone claiming to be—contacted me today, asking to purchase the files I obtained from the Cerberus base we found Admiral Kahoku's body at. I denied them on account of the files being Alliance property, but it felt reflexive. As if I had rehearsed what to say if I'm ever presented with an opportunity like that.

Don't get me wrong, I probably wouldn't have sold them the files anyway. Cerberus was working with Thorian growth, genetic mutations and some violent insectoid race—to say nothing of what they've done in other facilities. This information, whatever it is can't be allowed to propagate. No matter how many credits they were offering.

Even that feels like it's what I'm supposed to respond with. I think I need to clear my head.

Entry 17 - Exodus Cluster, En route to Asgard Relay

Out of all the crew on the Normandy, Williams is the one I could spend hours with. Talking, sparring, hell even if we're just sitting in silence—there's no expectations, no bullshit. Just two people able to be comfortable in one another's presence.

I'm a woman of principle. I know my stance on fraternization; it's not different just because this time it's a strong-armed woman with black hair and a big—

Maybe next time we're at the Citadel, I go pay that dancer at Chora's another visit.

Entry 18 - Asgard System, Terra Nova Orbit

Pure chance had us pass through the Asgard system right as there was an apocalyptic plot underway. Batarians decided to hijack an asteroid facility and send it hurtling towards Terra Nova. Twenty-two kilometers in diameter, twice the size of the Chicxulub rock. It'd end the planet, to say nothing of all the humans down on the surface.

When the stakes are that high, all that matters is ensuring those responsible are stopped and won't be able to try anything that destructive again. I wish the hostages hadn't been killed by inhuman scum like the batarians. But, better to lose dozens than millions. It wasn't worth the risk of letting Balak escape.

Kate Bowman died a hero that day; without her efforts we would have never gotten the signal. As far as I'm concerned, she gets all the credit. Such as it is for a dead woman. Some days I wonder if we shouldn't just shut down the Harsa relay and let the batarians see how their society lasts when all they've got to exploit is their own system, their own people.

Or hell, just blow the damn relay. Losing a system's worth of planets and a relay is worth eliminating the bulk of that pustule of malformed life.

Entry 19 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

Earlier, I advocated for interspecies ship crews and came a hair's breadth from insubordination with a Rear Admiral. More ways I'm surprising even myself, but in my defense: the Admiral was a jackass. Not without reason, but still—who died and made him chief inspector of all military vessels?

I'm not going to pretend that Alliance doctrine should change; we have good reason to be wary of alien interference. We're a new power on the galactic stage with a formidable military—we'd be fools to think the other races wouldn't love an opportunity to see just what makes the Normandy tick. But these aliens, I trust. I even trust Tali, and she'd be the one who would have both the knowledge and motive to steal ship secrets and send them back to her people.

Still, it is a bit strange falling back to cover when I've got a krogan, a turian and a quarian all fighting next to me. I'll take almost anyone if it's us versus one of the Colossus-class armatures. So far, my best tactic versus them is flooring the Mako dead on. Those quadrupedal legs don't hold up so well when several tons of high-speed military-grade machinery is plowing into them.

Poor Tali just about screamed the first time I pulled that move.

Anyway, we have another lead: this time from the Council, a rare change. They're actually deigning to inform me that a salarian espionage team in the Hoc system found something big that has Saren's fingerprints all over it. We just might have found our lucky break.

Entry 20 - Hoc System, Virmire

I said this might be our lucky break, but nothing's ever simple is it? This is Saren's base of operations—a base where he's apparently cured the genophage to breed a krogan army. The Geth are bad enough, but the standard units aren't too much trouble individually. I've read about the Krogan Rebellions and this time I don't think we could count on discovering a regimented militaristic society to win the war for us.

So, we can't just leave and regroup. But we're the Normandy shore team and a few dozen salarians versus the entirety of Saren's forces here. My team is good, and these salarians are hardnosed—but the numbers just aren't there. Even if our plan works, not all of us are walking out alive. Hell, I nearly had to gun Wrex down and we haven't even started our attack yet. With the way he responded, I honestly thought his care for his people was beaten out of him.

Williams is with the salarian fireteam; they'll be a distraction while we infiltrate the base and plant an improvised nuke dead-center. The distraction team is expected to have high casualties; I didn't want to send her—or any of my team. But Kaidan's the backup technician to arm the bomb if Tali or I can't—and that bomb is the whole reason we're doing this at all. It was the best play to make. I just hope it's going to be worth it.

Entry 21 - Antaeus System, Relay Approach

Kaidan's dead. More than half of Kirrahe's team is dead. We blew Saren's base, stopped the krogan army—but what's the point? The Reapers, that footnote in the vision the beacon on Eden Prime gave me are real. They're more than real. They're the reason why the Protheans vanished. They're the reason why countless civilizations before the Protheans are gone, body and soul. That ship Saren uses, the one bigger than a dreadnought and more agile than the Normandy? It's a Reaper. The Reapers are the ships. They're true AI, that and so much more. Them controlling the minds of organics? Also real.

Saren is a puppet of a force that can dominate entire worlds and crush fleets—and that's just the one Reaper. Sovereign—the Reaper I spoke with—claims they have numbers enough to “darken the sky of every world.”

The only, and I mean only possible lead we have and can hope to act on is a planet Liara recognized in my vision. Ilos is the name, and it's long gone from any star chart. The relay that connects to its system was lost thousands of years ago—no one knows where it is. I just killed one of my crew for goddamn false hope.

The worst part? The last straw of this mountain of futile struggle? The Council, even when faced with undeniable proof of Sovereign's existence denies it even exists. Or rather, that it is a Reaper. They claim Saren is tricking me. They didn't see the scores of salarians, dribbling and maddened by its mere presence. They didn't see how Saren had new eyes, eyes no different than those in the husks the Geth create from our corpses. It's not the Geth doing it, though—those husks are the result of Reaper technology. I'm sure of it.

If the goddamn Geth hadn't swarmed in. I could have saved both Kaidan and Williams. But saving Kaidan would cost us Williams and Kirrahe's fireteam. They're the only ones other than us who know the truth and actually believe it. I had to make a choice. I had to.

And now, I'm weighing the pros and cons of disappearing with this ship and whoever's loyal to me. Fading into the Terminus, finding some niche to settle into. A free life, one where I'm not fighting to convince the galaxy of the threat while half don't believe me and the other half prefer to keep politics in mind instead of decisive action. What stops me is the knowledge that if I don't stop Saren—and Sovereign—then everyone, the entire galaxy experiences what I did on Mindoir. I'm not letting all those innocents die because I can't handle it. But if Sovereign decides to blow the Council chambers while they're in there first, I won't shed a damn tear.

Entry 22 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

There's no leads or no direction to take our search for Saren now. I tried everything I could think of—getting Tali to bug the turian embassy, paying people off at the Zakera Ward docks (a popular hotspot for smugglers), even visiting Barla Von again to see what the Shadow Broker might have. Nothing on all counts.

Do I just pick a direction and order the Normandy forward? Do I sidestep the Council entirely and try convincing the individual governments that they need to prepare for the Reapers? Sovereign is immense, too dangerous for any one ship or even fleet to handle. Maybe if they all unite, we might be able to overwhelm it once Saren makes his move. Or Sovereign, really. They're one in the same as far as I'm concerned.

I could start looking through the popular ports in the Terminus. Spectres have no real authority there, but I can handle pirate kings and whatever other live-free-or-die bull they've got nestled past those relays. A quiet backwater deep in the Terminus would be an ideal place for a brainwashed turian to prepare to attack Council space.

Entry 23 - Pax System, Morana Orbit

We're headed to Noveria. That's where Benezia is, and if anyone has to know where Saren is then it'd be his right-hand woman. I don't know why she's there; all I know is she was reported as having docked at a facility in Noveria several weeks ago, and that her ship is still there. Of all things, it was Tali coming across a video on the extranet that had several asari commandos and a woman Liara identified as Benezia walking through Port Hanshan's main facility. The video was posted to an asari 'appreciation' site, which raises further questions I'm content to leave unanswered. At least, until we track the Matriarch down.

Our own reconnaissance in the Pax system hasn't turned up any skulking vessels or oddities coming from Noveria itself. We've been running dark for hours now; ever since we got past the relay. She may get the drop on us when we're all on foot, but I don't want her within five hundred meters of an escape ship until she's either dead or chained up. As long as Liara doesn't become a problem, we may have a clear goal once again. And if she tries to help Benezia in any way, even indirectly? I won't hesitate.

Entry 24 - Pax System, Noveria (Port Hanshan)

Feros with the Geth on our asses felt safer than this place. It's like walking through the tall grass barefoot and bowlegged—except you won't even get the chance to react when you're ambushed, thanks to how byzantine Noveria's internal legal protections are. We've been here for half a day and I've already been propositioned twice (to spy) and offered quick, easy credits by playing smuggler.

The reason we haven't just started scouring the satellite facilities is because a garage pass is required to exit, which I'm half-tempted to test by undocking and having Joker deploy us near Peak 15. Benezia was last seen traveling there, so it's our final destination. However, it was tense enough just landing so we're stuck trying to get a goddamn pass while Saren's pet dancer or whatever wreaks havoc.

Spectres get broad legal protections; I just might lean on those and make some corporate spies happy if it gets us on the road. I feel less bad about thievery if all entities involved are unimaginably wealthy.

Entry 25 - Pax System, Relay Approach

I'm itching to do something, but all I can do is sit here, waiting to reach the Citadel. We've got all the pieces now: the location of the Mu Relay, the ability to reach Ilos—if we can muster our forces and meet Sovereign head-on, we might be able to stop the Reapers. Too late doesn't matter; if we do nothing then we've lost for sure.

Noveria was interesting, to say the least. Saren was trying to bring back the Rachni Wars entirely; first the krogan army and now a rachni queen that was discovered and revitalized. We dealt with her brood, traitorous guards and Benezia herself—who managed even in her state to give us the information on the Mu Relay. I almost wish we didn't kill her. Glad I decided to leave Liara on the Normandy; no child should have to witness their parent's death, let alone participate in it.

I suppose that may be hypocritical from me, considering what I did to the rachni queen. It—she—spoke with intelligence and reason, justifying why her children were so violent. If Sovereign wasn't such a dire risk to the galaxy, I may have stayed my hand. But we can't afford to risk a resurgent rachni. Anyone who wants to judge me for genocide should consider what's at stake.

Entry 26 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

The whole goddamn Council's got less braincells between them than a rabid vorcha! Udina deserves a bullet in his sniveling brain. Rotten bastard, so smug and so damned sure that I wasn't just going to blow his brains out right there in front of the Council. If the Normandy wasn't grounded I damn well might have.

They—those fools on the Council—have a fleet alright—for defending the Citadel! Fuck the rest of the galaxy, fuck Earth and Palavan and Thessia—defend the Citadel and everything's fine! Nevermind the fact if Sovereign gets the drop on them then it's a losing battle if not an outright slaughter.

We have the coordinates. We have a ship that can get us there. And they'd rather die than accept they're wrong! You know what? Let them die. Let Sovereign come and kill them all. I'll piss on their corpses before I get indoctrinated too.

Forget this. I need some new scenery.

Entry 27 - Citadel, Chora's Den

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

"Armed to the goddamn teeth I am. Killed more Geth than a turian—quarian with her foot up her ass, and...aah, fuck it. Let 'em all burn, bastards Council bastards.

"You know what the problem is? No you know what the problem is? They're so fuckin' scared, so scared they've turned stupid. I—shit, I don't even know what I'm talkin' about.

"Saren's out there, jerkin' off on Ilos while deciding what planet to reap first with his big warship. Meanwhile me and my crew, only sons of bitches who know where Ilos is, know how to get there and CAN get there because of the goddamn REVOLUTIONARY STEALTH SYSTEMS are stuck here, drinkin' fuckin' space liquor and doing nothing at goddamn all!

"Huh? Yeah, yeah I'll keep it down. Leavin' soon anyway. Stupid bouncers. Shot the last ones, these don't stand a chance. Fuck it.

"Should've just went to the Terminus and became a pirate..."

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 1:19.15]

Entry 28 - Citadel, Flux

My head's on fire. I swear this time I actually drank krogan liquor. I didn't think I had a deathwish, but this is proof otherwise. Not even the stims I picked up are clearing it up.

I wouldn't even be out of bed if the Captain didn't call. Anderson, I mean. Said he wanted to see me in person, and he picked the noisiest, flashiest nightclub to meet at. Yeah, I get the cover it offers—but my head's pounding.

Four days now, just me jerking off while Saren's prepared to kill us all or worse. He was so delusional on Virmire! It was pathetic, even laughable if he wasn't so close to making the Reapers' goals reality. He really thought he could stay above indoctrination, the force so strong that I'd worry about myself and my crew if we spent just twice as much time as we did around Saren's base.

I could just lay my head down and pass out here, music and all. The captain better have something worth enduring this hangover for. I'm not really in the mood for consolation—even from him.

Entry 29 - Hawking Eta Cluster, En Route to Ilos

Anderson had a plan alright—the man already gave up his career, but now he might've given his life. He got us off the Citadel though, so if we pull this off it'll be all thanks to him as far as I'm concerned. I just hope Udina was there. Anderson's too good a man to kill him, but no one said he couldn't 'disable' the slimy son of a bitch.

The most surprising part of this gambit's the fact it was unanimous: not a single crew member disagreed, or even looked anything less than enthusiastic. We're mutineers; hell, deserters too. Once we attack a Geth ship, we're technically outright pirates. When I thought about deserting with the Normandy after Vormire, I didn't think it'd actually come about. Here we are now, with the crew all in. Hell, Tali almost sounds excited. Didn't have her figured for a romantic.

I know they've been with me the whole journey, human and alien—but still. All these intelligent, capable, decorated soldiers and comrades of mine have decided they trust me this much, that they've entrusted their reputations and lives to me. We can't afford to fail. I can't afford to fail.

The long, likely uneventful flight to the Mu Relay should let me make good on that promise, thankfully. Dr. Chakwas had just the thing to cleanse all the alcohol and stims out of me. Problem is by 'cleanse' it means 'everything out, all at once from every possible hole'. It's not been pretty, but I feel several pounds lighter. And hollow.

Oh, and apparently at one point on my bender I endorsed a Terra Firma candidate for some spacer council thing. I was still blitzed out of my mind when I left Chora's, so that was probably when it happened. Fingers crossed he's establishment TF—assuming we make it to Ilos in time and things like intra-human politics still matter.

All that nonsense aside, this is the final stretch. Saren's out there, most likely at Ilos already. Nothing's off the table when it comes to stopping him and Sovereign. Even if we all give our lives like Kaidan, if it means stopping the Reapers? There's no question, no room for hesitation. We're coming in at a disadvantage after all; Saren's had plenty of time to lay traps. With luck, most of them should be in space. I don't think he knows how effective the Normandy's stealth systems truly are. If I don't get the chance to add another entry in here, and the Reapers did attack then all I have to say is to run, hide and aim for the head. Don't let yourself get taken alive by anyone on their side. You'll wish you had ate the barrel of a gun.

Entry 30 - Citadel, Huerta Memorial Hospital

It's over. We won—the battle, at least. Sovereign's destroyed, the Citadel is safe and the Reaper invasion was halted before it began. Saren's dead too—by his own hand, which I'm shocked he was able to do. By the end, he was more machine than organic.

Ilos...there's so many things to process. I thought I had, but trying to write all this down? Where do I even begin?

May as well start with Ilos. We were hot on Saren's trail, deep within the forgotten depths of a Prothean city. Along the way, we were stopped by some kind of VI that called itself Vigil. It may have even been an AI, but that's not important. It was in charge of a plan the Protheans hatched, to stop the Reaper invasion. They built the Conduit, a small mass relay linked with the Citadel. They used it to return—no more than a dozen Protheans—after the Reapers finished extinguishing the rest of their race. They threw a wrench into the cycle of death, a wrench that we were able to use. Without their intervention, all Sovereign would've needed to do was signal the Keepers. Then the Citadel would open as a massive mass relay, and Sovereign's ilk would swarm through.

We made it through the Conduit, and hundreds of Geth and krogan holdouts in Sovereign's army. Saren killed himself after we talked to him—a last act of desperate defiance. It wasn't enough. His corpse mutated, or was changed by Sovereign somehow. It was like a husk, but so much more grotesque. I thought we were done for.

As quick as Saren's corpse reanimated, it fell inert—I don't know why or how, but it collapsed and so did Sovereign. The Alliance fleet took their shot, and the Reaper died.

So did the Council, too. On my order. They were in a ship, calling for aid. At the time I was conflicted—their ineptitude was why we were in such dire straits, but their death would leave an enormous power vacuum if we won the battle. But, I chose winning the battle over planning for the future. What's done is done, even if I wish I could go back and tell myself to save their unworthy asses.

We're getting a new Council in the coming weeks, and Udina is not missing a beat in pivoting into an open seat. He wants an all-human Council, with him at the helm. The only thing worse than that for humanity would be a Reaper destroying Earth outright. Is there a quicker way to get the turians, the salarians, even the asari against us? This won't be like the aftermath of World War II. Armies were decimated, not entire societies. And it's not even right! I still think humanity needs to be self-sufficient. Turians are trouble, and don't even get me started on the goddamn vorcha—but we're not going it alone. The Normandy crew taught me about the value of individuals, and the things I've seen across the Traverse taught me about the collective. Let the new Council have a human chairman, sure. But to cut the other races out is to make us weaker—and form new enemies to take advantage of that weakness.

If I wasn't so damn injured after the Citadel battle I could've done something to stop Udina—I don't know, punch him like Anderson did. But I nearly lost a leg and my spine was just about snapped in half from being flung across the chamber. Another couple of months and I should be walking, on my way to a full recovery—but being stuck in bed is torture.

It's not like we're all finished, either. Sovereign was one Reaper. It claimed there were thousands, something that Vigil confirmed. They wait in dark space, traveling through the Citadel relay when it's activated. Who knows how far out 'dark space' is—halfway to Andromeda? Just a few hundred light years off? Let's say two-thousand. Sovereign was stronger, faster and more deadly than any Council ship. Let's say it can travel twice as fast even in FTL. That's well over eight thousand times the speed of light, if not more. A hundred days, give or take a dozen. Not even a YEAR and they could be invading the galaxy anyway. How long before they get curious Sovereign hasn't opened the way?

It took the combined might of our fleets to take one weakened Reaper down. We can't fight them, we can't even hope to outrun them. We have to find some way to stop them for good. Track them down in dark space and blow them up before they wake, or I don't know. How do we even fight a threat that massive?

We need more time. The Protheans worked for centuries after discovering the Reapers, even while they were being exterminated and they found out how to stall them. Maybe we can do that too. The only alternative is waiting like sheep for our murderers to come and harvest us.

Entry 31 - Citadel, Huerta Memorial Hospital

Williams stopped by today, and the rest of the crew sent their best via comm. I'm glad to hear they're all staying on, at least for now. Tali needs to get back to the flotilla soon, and I know Liara isn't destined for the spacer life. Still, they're loyal—more than I have any right to expect. Once I'm fixed up I'll be making sure their faith in me's not hollow.

I also had that reporter, Khalisah-something ask for another interview. It was mostly softball questions, which surprised me. She was searching so hard for dirt on me the first time, but I guess the threat of galactic annihilation calms everyone down.

Still, she's a bitch. Smug little ass probably figuring out how she can milk my words for all they're worth. I probably shouldn't have given the interview, but screw it. I'm cooped up, bored and probably a little goofy from painkillers. Let Udina panic if his little human icon comes off crude or insulting.

Entry 32 - Citadel, Huerta Memorial Hospital

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 33 - Citadel, Huerta Memorial Hospital

Walking's been getting easier. My stamina is still shot, but I should be good to start regular movement in a week, and recovered enough to start Spectre duties in another month. About time, since what Williams and the others have been telling me is that the Geth are still out there, poking beyond the Veil. Our colonies are vulnerable, and the Geth are merciless. The crew's been doing great work without me, but I can't stand just sitting here not being able to do more than pore over reports and offer my advice. That's what Udina gets off to, not me.

Anderson's been helpful to cope, which is a godsend. He's still without a ship, but I think he's adjusted to desk life. Such a waste, but that's how goddamned politics work. The conversations we have, and now light exercise together makes me feel like I'm back in training. It's not a bad feeling with someone like him in charge.

Entry 34 - Fathar System, Dorgal Orbit

Three days out of the hospital. Finally! It feels good to be back on the Normandy. The crew's all here, the ship looks better than ever and we've already tracked down two Geth holdouts in this cluster. There aren't as many as we were expecting, but the risk to comm buoy interference is too much to ignore. That's why we're technically dipping into the Terminus now; with the Normandy's stealth capability there's a low risk of a diplomatic incident.

We've covered most of the cluster's main systems already; the only ones left are Amada and Kairavamori. There haven't been any signs of trouble, so it'll be flybys and scouting most likely. I can't say I'm going to complain just yet; I've been out of practice for a couple months. Hell, I ran the Mako over Garrus' rifle yesterday—but in my defense, someone left the Mako in max gear. I need to get him a repair kit next time we're at a trade outpost, just as a way of apology. He treats his gun better than I've treated past lovers.