

Entry 0 - Amun System, En Route to Omega

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Is this thing on? Start recording. Transmission begin. St-
Been on. Great. God, I—where do I even...?

<Prolonged Silence>

I died. It's strange to even say it like this. But I did, and now I'm not dead. Two years later, not dead, and everything's upside down. My crew's scattered, I'm on a new Normandy, my cheeks have cracks that show some of the cybernetics that are keeping me alive and I'm effectively employed by a terrorist organization.

Goddamn mess. I just don't get it. This doesn't make a single lick of sense. This 'Illusive Man' spending billions upon billions of credits to revive me, as some sort of icon? He could have bought a navy the equal of the salarian's fleet for what he spent on me. He even paid for the construction of the 'Normandy SR2' which comes fully-featured, stealth systems and all. More questions.

What's his endgame? He looks like a fop, speaks like he enjoys the feeling of the world being on his shoulders. I've got Cerberus crew, Cerberus allies, Cerberus emblems on my clothes—the only goddamn thing here not Cerberus is Joker. The one good thing, and even that was spoiled by the revelation that he's effectively co-pilot to an onboard AI.

Fuck, I—I died! I remember being blown towards Amada after that ship blasted the rest of the old Normandy to pieces, hitting Joker's escape pod release and then...not much. Pain, darkness—a lot of both, then nothing. They say I fell into Amada's orbit. Would've burnt up entirely if not for my hardsuit. Still slammed into the ground so hard this Cerberus

grunt said I was "meat and tubes" when they recovered my...my corpse.

I don't remember anything. No afterlife, no spiritual...nothing. Just emptiness. God, I...I can't deal with this shit. Not right now.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 1 - Amun System, En Route to Omega

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Let's try this again. Here I am now, alive and working for Cerberus. I'm doing this because Cerberus has vast resources they're all but thrusting at me—a ship, crew, information and more—and because of the threat that's grown during my... 'absence'. A race of creatures known as the Collectors, who decided to start kidnapping entire human colony populations. No ransom, no sign of the abductees.

This 'Illusive Man' suspects the Reapers, and I'm inclined to agree. Entire colonies vanishing? That's a microcosm of the Reaper's M.O. down to the lack of evidence anything even happened, beyond the structures left behind. We have a lead on how to prepare to handle the Collector threat, which is taking us deep in the Terminus systems. A Dr. Mordin Solus, a salarian bioweapons expert linked with the STG running a clinic on a space station called Omega. Seems to be a pirate den.

There's still so much more. Tali is alive, in fact most of my old crew is—some have vanished or moved on, but I saw her in the flesh. She's leading her own team now, and has some personal cause to distrust Cerberus now.

<Snort>

Color me surprised. So basically, the Illusive Man paid several fortunes to bring me back, then gives me everything I need before telling me 'here's what we know, do as you see fit'. The only thing I can't figure out is HOW he's going to fuck me, or when. Even doing these audio logs has me on edge; I know someone at Cerberus is listening in, or just taking copies. Datapad's clean, but this ship has to have more bugs than Peak 15 did. So go ahead, eavesdrop on my true thoughts.

Not like I've been TACTFUL with your terrorist asses so far, so why start now?

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 2 - Eagle Nebula, En Route to Omega

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 3 - Imir System, En Route to Omega

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

This crew isn't what I expected at all. As a whole, they're good people. Some are rowdy, some are too quiet to survive even Basic—but more than a few see Cerberus the same way I do.

Are they all acting? EDI flat out told me that this ship is riddled with bugs. I found the ones in my cabin—at least I'm pretty sure I have—so I can talk freely here, but everywhere else?

I don't like losing my privacy, especially to some financial magnate with delusions of grandeur. I'll just have to trust, to trust so many people that I barely even know. Blind faith is how people are led to the slaughterhouse. It's not helping matters that my XO is Miranda, who's all practiced, casual PR talk for Cerberus. Still wearing that skinsuit, still nauseatingly arrogant. The worst part is she can back up that smug sense of self-importance. Tall, curvy, intelligent, biotics and—

<Grunt>

Bitch.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 4 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The SR2's so big, it almost feels like a small cruiser rather than a frigate. Yet this ship is faster and even more agile the way Joker talks about it. The cost...I still can't just accept the Illusive Man at face value. It's keeping me up trying to figure out his angle.

I've been going over the dossiers Cerberus pulled together, for potential additions to the crew. Not for the ship crew, but shore parties—people who can help against the Collectors. It figures that a terrorist organization wouldn't care about much more than 'can they perform'. My thoughts are...

<Electronic Beeps>

Dr. Solus. He's straightforward enough, ignoring the fact he's a former government operative who's successfully operated a med clinic in pirate city.

Archangel, the merc seems too risky to take. The kind of person who starts a one-man war against criminals in a space station filled with them is the kind of person who's going to die doing that work. Still, they're on Omega as well so I might as well look into them.

Warlord Okeer—there's no way I'm letting a krogan that isn't Wrex on board. We'll most likely follow up on this dossier if only because Okeer's reported as having contacted the Collectors. If nothing else, he may have information we can use.

Jack the convict? Yeah, let's invite a biotic freak of nature onto a pressurized deep-space vessel. I'm passing on this one. Far too much risk.

I sort of like this 'Kasumi'. Cerberus isn't too proud to recommend her even though she's stolen from them before—but she's an excellent thief. Another security risk...though I doubt this ship has anything on it that she'd want to run off with. Other than the ship itself, but she'll have to go through Joker to get that. <Chuckle> He might go straight to biting.

That's another thing, too—when I met Joker, he was walking. Carefully, but he was under his own power. The Alliance didn't have treatment like that. Did Cerberus do that too?

Right, one more dossier. 'Zaeed Massani', the galaxy's most effective bounty hunter. I presume due to the fact he's listed Cerberus is covering his fee...yet ANOTHER major expense they're happy to throw on my behalf. At this rate, I think the total cost for my revival, this ship and all these other incidentals has got to be equivalent to the cost of getting an entire system's worth of colonies up and running.

I guess for a human-first organization trying to figure out why dozens of colonies have been abducted, that puts things into perspective. I don't know if it makes me more or less at ease knowing that Cerberus is a terrorist group with ideals beyond profit.

We're closing in on Omega, so I'd better get ready. Wish I didn't have two card-carrying Cerberus agents as my backup, but I don't think I need to worry about them shooting me in the back just yet.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 5 - Fathar System, Korar Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We're laying low for a day or two; giving the mercs time to disperse. Archangel turned out to be none other than Garrus Vakarian himself—a classic vigilante by any other name, with how he's been acting.

I never knew he had it in him! Three entire bands of angry thugs teaming up to kill him, and he was holding out for over a day before we arrived. We damn near lost him...I saw flashes of Kaidan while we hurried him back to the shuttle.

But, he's on the team now and I can't deny that it isn't good to have a few people from the old days back. Joker, Garrus—even Dr. Chakwas. I'm not blind; the Illusive Man didn't just blindly pick these people. He wants me comfortable, he wants me to keep working for Cerberus.

Fine. He'll get what he wants until it endangers the galaxy, humanity—anyone or anything I like. In the meantime I'll gladly take his funding. Something I share with Massani, the bounty hunter Cerberus hired to come along. We ran into him right as we got into Omega's main facility. <Scoff> He's got more scars than Garrus does now and the attitude to back them up.

I don't trust him beyond his massive paycheck, but I've dealt with 'skilled merc' before. If he causes problems, he's off the team. If he gets violent? He's not the only one who's quick on the draw.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 6 - Fathar System, Lorek Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I can't believe the Alliance has been shitting the bed so bad. I knew things wouldn't be smooth, even without Udina's greasy hands taking the Council's reins. But if extranet news and reports of assaults, protests and worse are any indication then the rest of the galaxy sees humanity as little better than batarians. Fucking batarians! It's ridiculous. Did everyone forget what Sovereign was? How effortlessly it tore through the Council fleet?

I can't even blame them though. Udina openly called for a human-only Council not one WEEK after the Normandy blew up. What, did he think he could be unfettered once I got spaced? That bastard. He's done more to damage our perception in galactic society than a decades-long First Contact War would've done. And don't even get me started on the Terra Firma sociopaths who've managed to worm their way into the upper echelons of governments local and broader. More than ever, I understand what Williams meant about respecting their creed but not membership. Goddamn opportunists.

I just wish that I hadn't...that I had still been there. They used me as a prop! A symbol, sure—one they could mold and adjust as they saw fit. The only saving grace is Anderson. He's just mentioned in a few reports I've come across, but he was a mediating force that countered some of Udina's worst impulses by the look of it. The man deserves his own damn world for all he's done.

After we're done at Omega, I need to stop by the Citadel. I need to see what the hell's happened to us.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 7 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It's starting to feel like old times, just with new faces and places. Saving a population from a mystery plague isn't too far off from riding into a frontier settlement and fending off the invaders—just without the ancient psionic plant. Dr. Solus is on the team, and I pity the Cerberus agents who have to listen in on his conversations. Forget mile a minute, he might be the first organic to find out if lips can move at FTL speeds.

It's strange though. Why would the Collectors aid the vorcha of all things? And what would they have gained from killing all nonhumans on Omega? Easy pickings to abduct the remaining humans? The station is near its namesake relay, where the Collectors come from. Nothing's off the table, but I don't think interrogating nigh-mindless gremlins is a reliable way to get a lead. Actually, I'm not sure how we get a lead at all. Finding out how to avoid being paralyzed by the Collector swarms is one thing, but we haven't caught them at all yet.

<Grunt> One step at a time. Just have some loose threads to follow up on in Afterlife before we're off to the Citadel after a quick stop. This Aria T'Loak has as big an ego as Udina, but for an asari to cajole all these aliens on Omega tells me she's earned the right to be a bitch. It suits her—and the rest of Afterlife. Music's a little too loud for my tastes, but it's not a bad club. Makes me miss Chora's.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 8 - Amada System, Alchera Surface

On the old Normandy, I actually wrote these entries. It feels appropriate, standing among the wreckage to go back to that—even if it's just this once.

We still don't know what destroyed the old Normandy. It came out of nowhere, then started cutting us to pieces. The damage is extensive; I doubt you could even get more than omni-gel from the ruins. Except for the Mako; it's entirely intact, eezo core and all. I thought about radioing Joker to bring the ship down so we can salvage it, but it doesn't feel right to take any of this away. These ruins belong to those who didn't make it. Those who are still dead.

I wonder if I landed here, or somewhere else on the planet. How long was I among the rest of the corpses? Or did they just burn up in the atmosphere? Only a few of us had armor on, or could get suited up that quick.

I wonder if I'm the first to come. I don't see signs of anyone here. Just ice and snow, and twisted metal.

The choices we make, we live with those consequences. The last thing I remember before I died was Joker in the escape pod. In that moment, it was simple: Either I hesitate, or try to save myself and we both die—or I save Joker.

As my air supply ruptured, I can't say what I thought then. As the brain suffocates, higher thought is one of the first things to go. Did I panic? Was I scared or angry? Did I even realize I was dying? Or was I at peace, knowing that it was my turn to make sure others survived while I joined my comrades at Akuze, or my parents on Mindoir.

Yet here I am now, perhaps the first human to come back from the dead—maybe even the first organic. Revived by Project Lazarus. I wonder if the name was chosen out of respect for the story, or in mockery of it? I saw nothing after I died. Neither Heaven nor Hell, no God or Devil. It's a twisted sort of irony, that a project in the name of one resurrected by Christ produces someone who cannot believe anymore.

I should go. We've got a mission.

Entry 9 - Widow System, Citadel

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Things are worse than I expected. Aliens are side-eyeing us and just about every other human I see that isn't in C-Sec. Security's tighter than ever, and even the damn VI is reporting certain lines of questioning to C-Sec for 'investigation'.

Seeing all that, then Udina himself? If Anderson wasn't there I would've put the bastard on the floor. Not killing; he's made himself too prominent. The death of a Council member so soon after Sovereign's attack would ruin the Council entirely.

Beneath the surface, you really start to see how precarious galactic civilization is. It's like every race realizes that they can just defend themselves, fight for themselves. They're all idiots. Just forgetting how it took all of our fleets combined to take down a single Reaper.

I hate to admit it, but Cerberus is our best shot at fending the Reapers off before they can invade. I'm a colonist by blood and an Alliance soldier until I die, but colonies are at risk and the Alliance is in over its head dealing with their new responsibilities. So let's stay in bed with the terrorists and see what the hell happens. Anderson was worried, hell I am too—but what other choice do I have? I can't even fuck off and be a pirate—we're doing that already!

Screw this, I need a drink. Heard there's a good place on this Ward, let's find out.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 10 - Widow System, Citadel

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

<The recording seems to have been triggered accidentally, mid-conversation.>

Shepard (S): ...enough of your disingenuous assertions.

<Sound of a punch, body hitting the floor>

S: Should've done that two years ago.

Khalisah bint sin al-Jalani (K): You bitch!

S: I get that a lot. You want another, come by any time.

K: Did we get that? Good. I'll thank he...

Mordin Solus (M): Shepard? Omni-tool flickering. Systems active.

S: Huh? Wh- dammit, it's been on the fritz since going through C-Sec scanners. I'll worry about it back on the ship.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 11 - Widow System, Citadel

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 12 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Fixed my omni-tool. It's not going to suddenly turn on recording again. Good.

We recruited Kasumi on our way off the Citadel. She's settling in, wasn't too much trouble. Still skeptical as to her intentions, but we'll see. She also has a job she wants to tackle at some point. We'll see about that.

<Silence>

Alright, elephant in the room. Let me hide that...

<Beep>

There. Out of sight, out of mind. Not worth even deleting. Anyway, we're off to...

What's next? Dammit, this is distracting.

Entry 13 - Imir System, Relay Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Having an AI on the ship's still got my hairs on end whenever it speaks, but so far it's been useful. Status updates on the Normandy, notifying us of relevant on-mission info from just about any source you could imagine.

It can stay for now. I'm not really in a position to turn anyone down, organic or synthetic. We can barely keep ourselves supplied with maintenance equipment; the ship's manufacturing station has been working nonstop. Good planning on Cerberus' part; all we NEED to operate is fuel and minerals. The former's a given; the latter is attainable with the probe/drone system we've got. Crew scans a planet for deposits of useful elements, then deploys a probe to confirm. Drones go down and prepare the raw materials for pickup, simple as that. If we had a source of food and water in a given system we could operate there indefinitely. It's smart thinking, especially since any hope of Alliance or Council aid is as dead as I was. Ingrates.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 14 - Aquila System, Volturmo Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Cerberus asked us to track down a lost ship of theirs, one testing a new landside scouting vehicle. We found it—imagine the Mako as a hovertank, with half the armor and double the speed. I almost told them to shove off, main mission priority and all—but I'm glad I didn't. This thing could come in handy.

Of course, now that we have yet another piece of prized Cerberus tech they'll probably want us to use it on their behalf...ugh. I don't mind it if our goals align, but I don't like being their toadie. Accomplice might be a better word.

Say what you will about the Alliance—that they're too rigid, that they're too focused on appearances and not action now that humanity's settled into galactic leadership—but you knew where you stood there. Now, I'm my own moral arbiter and I gotta tell you, I'm not the best judge of right and wrong. I played real fast and loose with the law as a Spectre and I'm not sure I'm doing much better now. I don't mind the petty crime, or dealing with pirates and smugglers. Part of me enjoys that.

My problem is what I'm not seeing. What Cerberus is getting out of this beyond saving human colonies. They haven't changed; not at their core. But if we pull this off? They're going to be able to say that they've done what the Alliance can't.

Cerberus has military cells, research, and so much funding it's dizzying to think about. Out in the Traverse and Terminus, the Alliance has no authority. Cerberus could fill that void. A human supremacist group competing with the Alliance for the mantle of humanity's voice—and I'm helping them.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 15 - Faia System, Zorya Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Turns out I've got a founding member of the Blue Suns on my team. I'd be surprised I didn't find out sooner, but Zaeed didn't say a thing even while we were gunning them down en masse on Omega. The man's a bitter, devil-may-care killer—but he's good. He's good, and I get where he's coming from. Betrayed by your allies, shot and left for dead...If the Normandy crew did that to me? I'd be broken.

Getting revenge on Santiago seems to have settled him. I doubt he'll be an issue, but I'm glad he's sticking to the cargo hold. Less risk of collateral damage if he just snaps one day.

...Blue Suns. I guess it's not too surprising; Cerberus aimed to recruit only the best for this mission. I wonder how long it'll be before I find out we're recruiting other Spectres? My old crew? God I wish. Having Garrus around made me realize how much I miss the rest of them. Wrex, Williams, Tali—even Liara. Don't miss her messing with my brain though.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 16 - Tassrah System, Relay Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Since I was KIA, am I still in the Alliance? I'm not a Spectre anymore, and Cerberus isn't military. I run the ship like the old Normandy, but that's my choice.

I don't know. We've got a bounty hunter, a cat burglar, an ex-cop and a lot of people explicitly ex-Alliance. My quarters are nicer than a Presidium apartment. I feel like the old rules don't apply.

So, it's up to me then. Basically.

Ahh, it's better if I just keep it in my pants until shore leave. Until we stop at Omega again. Somewhere.

Man, I'm really not cut out for civilian life. Stupid Miranda and that catsuit. At least Williams had armor on. Still didn't really hide much, but it counts.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 17 - Hades Nexus Cluster

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We found a strange orb in a prothean ruin we tracked down on behalf of Cerberus. It somehow shrunk itself when I touched it, and emitted a pulse they say contained remarkable data to refine how biotic energies are utilized.

I say it looks like a big ball of mercury. They think it's inert, but it still reacts to my touch. Not as dramatically, but...maybe it's some sort of communication tool like beacons? Or their version of a massive hard drive?

I'm not the greatest tech expert, but I do alright. It gives me something to do in the rare moment I have downtime and want to spend it on something quiet and contemplative. You know, a good ten or thirty years from now.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 18 - Osun System, Erinle Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Seems that my hopes of staying incognito won't last much longer. I've gotten thirty messages, and these aren't your dime-a-dozen well-wishers. Lorik Qui'in, now Port Hanshan's administrator. Martin Burns, that politician the L2 extremists kidnapped a couple years back. Kirrahe, who's not forgotten Virmire—or our shared sacrifice there. Emily Wong, Sha'ira of all people, and Dr. Michel too.

Lots of people who've done well since I met them, and are doing good work it sounds like. It's encouraging to know some people outside our circle were better off because of our work—and can admit it. All the Council bullshit, sweeping Sovereign under the rug all but literally—it weighs on me. We might be a human lifespan from a Reaper invasion, or less. A lot less, if the Collectors are any indication. This isn't the time for-

Ah, fuck it. I'll have plenty of reason to lose sleep over our mission. Right now, I just want to sit back and soak up the knowledge that I've done some good that real people appreciated. Especially one person in particular, someone who was once a scared little girl like me trying to hide from batarian slavers. She's got a stronger will than I do.

Well, time to keep at it. We got an update from the Illusive Man: the convict he wants me to recruit's been confirmed. We're waiting for the signal so we can dock and take them on; should be any minute. In retrospect, it's a good move not doing this first—A feared bounty hunter and talented renegade are just the people I'd want at my back if I have to wrangle an overpowered biotic.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 19 - Osun System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Didn't know the Blue Suns ran the prison ship—not that it matters, thanks to Jack. Single-handedly tore through guards and mechs faster than Zaeed, Garrus and I while causing enough collateral damage to send the station into meltdown.

Just saying that makes it feel unreal. She whipped out biotics stronger than Benezia, by a long shot. And now she's on the Normandy, hanging out in the lower decks. Much as I hate to admit it, she had us at her mercy even if she didn't realize it. What were we supposed to do, leave her behind while we got on the one ship off the station? I'm not about to find out if a biotic can tear a frigate apart from the outside. So, I give her the ability to do it from the inside.

God, this is like demining with a dowsing rod and a prayer. I swear to God I'm not taking that fucking krogan onboard no matter what info he has. EXCLUSIVELY planetside conversation. I'll shoot him in the back of the head...hump, at the shuttle if I have to.

At least Jack's calmed a bit. She apparently hates Cerberus, which is the sanest part of her I've seen yet—so I gave her access to the files on the Normandy. Between me, myself and I, I'd give her a damn back massage if it meant keeping her settled. Still no goddamn idea how I'm going to handle her. Hostile biotics are bad enough if you've got a fair fight on your hands.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 20 - Xe Cha System, Vem Osca Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Despite all sense and logic, I like Jack. Not enough to let my guard down, but she's...I don't know. She's got a straight nature about her—I don't think she's the type to agree to something, then turn around and betray you. She's too dangerous to need to rely on tricks like that.

Maybe I've read her wrong. But I don't think she's going to do any worse than maybe vanish when we get somewhere she wants to stay for awhile. She's said she's going to stick around until the mission's done, but survival is paramount to her. That's not a given if we can take this to the Collectors themselves.

<Chuckle> I wonder if she read me back. Said I could go pirate with this ship, that she'd even lead the boarding party. If only she knew how tempting that was back fighting Saren...wouldn't raid civilian craft obviously. But, merc ships and slavers? Easy loot, morally sound. All you'd need to do is let the mercs who want to surrender do it, and offload the slaves at the next world they won't get snatched right back up at.

Easier said than done, I know. But it's fun to think about, for when the fiction of me being able to sit down and plan a life 'after' comes true. I couldn't do it until the Reapers are taken care of though. I know too much to be that selfish. Which is why I'm going to see what this krogan warlord knows and wants.

God help me if I have to negotiate with him. Dossier says he's a veteran of the Krogan Rebellions. How the hell does any race even live that long? How'd a KROGAN do it?

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 21 - Imir System, Korlus Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Okeer was a madman if there ever was one. He spent more time talking about his 'legacy' than anything else—even gave his own life to secure it. It's some odd looking krogan in a vat; as he describes it, a 'pure krogan' that denies the genophage. I don't know if that means he's virile or just unstoppable, but he's staying asleep for now. That's three volatile risks in the cargo hold! I might as well just jury rig another nuke and slap it next to the Hammerhead.

On the one hand, Wrex proved how powerful a krogan ally can be. A pure krogan? He just might be what we need in a ground battle against the Collectors. Or he might go straight into blood rage and slam me through a bulkhead. Cerberus is offering a hefty fee if we sell him—and the one resource we're struggling to find are credits. Long gone are the days where the Alliance just shat out more credits to the first human Spectre.

Oh, and Jack's great. Fine woman, no complaints as long as she keeps that destructive biotic energy turned down range. I swear, I think she threw a biotic surge so strong it ripped a guy in half. Though that may have been Garrus using hi-ex ammo again.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 22 - Sahrabarik System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We've got our break—and just in time. Horizon, a Terminus human colony is under attack by the Collectors as we speak. The Illusive Man's coming up gold on his intel, credit where it's due. Horizon's not more than four hours away, and it's not a tiny settlement. Joker better run this ship like it's about to blow, and not just because the Collectors are in our sights.

Williams—Ash, she's down there. Anderson was cagey about what she's been up to, but we'll find out. More importantly, we'll make damn sure she's not taken. I let Kaidan die before because there was no other option; that's not true this time. I'll never forgive myself if I'm too slow to save anyone in my crew again.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 23 - Iera System, Horizon Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Up until now, the Collectors have been distant. Out of sight. Well we've seen them—seen how they take people, seen their ship and seen undeniable proof they work with the Reapers. It's horrifying, what Reaper technology does to people. I thought husks were the worst I'd see.

Horizon had thousands of colonists; Cerberus estimates a third of them were abducted before we intervened. How many people are off, being dissected, tortured or converted into monstrous machinery?

It doesn't even feel like a victory. We saved most of the colony, but the Collectors are still out there—and they won't be as careless in the future. The Illusive Man's right; we can't beat them by trying to defend. We have to hit them at their home base.

The Normandy's got some good guns, especially with Garrus' upgrades. But I'm not sure it can go toe-to-toe with the Collector ship—assuming we even make it through the Omega-4 relay. No one knows why people don't return when using it. Do they get thrown off into dark space? A black hole? Disabled and taken by the Collectors?

It's our only way forward, literally and otherwise. Suicide mission doesn't even begin to cover it. It's not even a high chance of success, but it's the best we've got.

Now, in every member of my crew I look at I see the ruins of the first Normandy. I've heard them start to talk about getting affairs in order, preparing for the end. They're all falling in, making peace with the idea this might be a one-way trip.

It never gets easy, seeing people commit to an all-but-certain end. We did it once before on Ilos; once we knew the stakes, us in the Mako knew we just had to catch up with Saren and stop him. Did we know what was going to happen when we drove it through the Conduit? Not at all. We just acted, because it was the right thing to do. Because there was no other choice.

Me? I died two years ago. This is borrowed time; I'm not going to seek death, but I know what's waiting for me. Ideally, if anyone dies it'll just be me. Never seems to work out that way, no matter how much I try—but wishing's got to count for something, right?

Maybe it's for the best Ash isn't here. It...wasn't the reunion I wanted. Nothing she said was wrong, yet it hurt to hear. What kind of a fucked up state things are in if I'm starting to come around to working with terrorists?

At least she's alive. Hopefully she doesn't go on any more colonies until this is over. <Sigh> In the meantime, we've got work to do. More dossiers to review, more people to sign onto our happy suicidal band. And more research to figure out how we even make it TO the real battle.

Entry 24 - Newton System, Sesmose Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I haven't really field tested how cybernetic I am, but apparently there's a lot of tech under the skin. Enough to make me not too bothered by being slammed against a bulkhead by pure krogan.

...Boy, that came out wrong. I woke the krogan Okeer developed earlier. He fell out, looked at me then threw me against the wall and threatened me before he even picked a name. Whole thing though, was level. He didn't even raise his voice or tighten his grip. I'm not even sure if he was enraged or just acting as Okeer taught him. He doesn't hold any love for his 'dad' or his ideals; honestly? He's sort of like Jack. No purpose, no goal—just looking for a fight to pass the time. Lucky him.

And lucky me. Put on a good show about being ready to shoot him if he didn't let me go, but krogans don't go down from gut shots. At any rate, dossiers were also reviewed today. We've got...<Electronic Beeping> Tali, which tells me the Illusive Man has a plan on how to recruit her that sidesteps the whole 'Cerberus' problem. Apparently she passed her Pilgrimage too—I owe her a congrats.

Then there's Samara, some kind of assari warrior-monk who this report says has biotics near the potency of a matriarch. Two Jacks—one rigid and devout, the other amoral and selfish. Can't see how that will blow up in all our faces.

Thane Krios, a drell assassin. Literally, the 'pay me to kill your target' type. Can't say I've met a drell before, but this report makes him out to be more skilled than classic human movie heroes.

So that makes a medical expert, a research and intelligence prodigy, a biotic freak of nature, a turian deadshot, 'pure krogan', the epitome of human beauty and supremacy, a legendarily unknown thief, the founder of the galaxy's largest merc group, an ace pilot, an AI, a whole crew complement of former military, all funded by a mysterious benefactor who runs his own private military-industrial complex. And this is before we add the assassin, magic warrior-monk and geth expert.

We don't have a crew, we have the best and brightest on one ship. Frankly, if we can't take out the Collectors then I doubt anyone can unless it's treating their ship like another Sovereign—which just isn't going to happen. Too few ships are left after the attack, even in the Alliance.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 25 - Attican Beta Cluster, Hercules System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

So, in addition to soldier, sniper, renegade and recently-dead I'm going to add spy to the list of hats I wear. Kasumi's catch for joining our team just came up—she wants to steal from a wealthy human magnate on Bekenstein. Apparently it's not just a regular job; she wants her old partner's neural storage implant back.

She's cagey even when not talking about her pass, so I don't know more than that—other than the fact that I'm not sneaking in. I'm wearing a dress, walking in the front door.

Believe me, I tried telling Kasumi that the last time I wore a dress was when I was in the single digits. Tried telling her I don't know the first thing about high society. She was insistent though—and I swear I heard her giggling. This woman...

If I end up imprisoned or worse wearing an evening dress while trying to play rich-woman on the hoighty-toighty-asshole planet, no one bring me back again. Just let me die in shame.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 26 - Serpent Nebula, Widow System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I can say one thing: No matter how things turn out, I'm not ever going to be one of those cretins at Hock's party. Reveling in mindless glamour worth hundreds of millions of credits, gathering priceless relics to sit in my private museum and turning my nose up at the mere mention of anyone lesser than me. I swear, I'd rather hang out around batarians than those vapid little twats.

Ugh, I'm defending fucking batarians now. God help me, all this time in the Terminus systems is making me soft!

The mission had a good outcome though. Kasumi got her closure she was seeking, and we killed Hock for good measure. One less scoundrel getting fat off of bringing the little guy down.

<Beat>

You know, I am glad Kasumi got what she wanted, even if it wasn't what she expected. But I've gotta say—she's incredible. So quiet you forget she's there, more agile than I ever was—and she can leap! Plus, even under that hood she's cute. Part of her charm, really. Nooot that I'm barking up that tree anytime soon...she's got her own past to come to terms with. Besides, she doesn't swing my way. Still glad to have her agile ass backing us up—we just need to make sure she's not going anywhere near the front of the squad.

Oh, and she was right about the dress too. Not that I'll ever get the chance to wear it, but short and tight? Still gives plenty of room to move, and looks pretty damn good on me. Now time to get some rest, then see what comes next.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 27 - Iera System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Been trying to plan a Citadel resupply run between excursions, but it's hard to gauge when patrols will be light and where we can dock with the least amount of attention. Anderson said he'd cover for us but I don't want to put him in any awkward situation OR get us arrested for being a card-carrying terrorist vessel. Maybe on our way to Pragia and...ah, that planet where Jacob found the distress signal.

Seems everyone on this ship's got deep trauma to either deal with, or prevent from getting worse. What's that saying, "Smooth sails make for poor sailors?" Between us all, we've got a damn hurricane propelling us to greatness.

Jack wants to blow an old Cerberus base up she grew up in; Jacob wants to track down a signal from the ship his absent dad was lost on. I'm gonna go out on a limb and say the Cerberus base won't be eventful, and the Gernsback will turn out to be a Reaper den or portal to the Andromeda galaxy. Seems to be a running trend with how we end up.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 28 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 29 - # System, SSV Daddy Issues SR-2

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Chambers is the ship psychologist or, something like that. This would sure be a lot easier if everyone could just sit down, talk it out and focus on the mission. I know that won't happen—hell, it won't work—but I'm not cut out to handle the emotional trauma of everyone I recruit.

Don't get me wrong, I'll do it and keep doing it. They're my crew, and I want them at their best. But we've jumped from Jack's childhood being torn to shreds at an old Cerberus facility to Jacob finding out his father played harem king for a decade while keeping the women too stupid to fight back, to me still needing to help rescue Miranda's sister from her egomaniacal father. Forget gene therapy for curing diseases—if we as a galaxy can fix the mental flaw that causes fathers to do wrong by their children, we probably wouldn't even have slavers anymore.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 30 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I never really got the galaxy's fascination with asari. I mean sure, they're powerful, wise and can live longer than most human civilizations have existed—but, on a personal level. They never really grabbed me. A human and asari with the same mind will be about as interesting to me.

Aria T'Loak's different. Benezia's the first asari I saw that I thought was attractive (nevermind the fact I didn't even consider that as a conscious thought until a week after I killed Saren), but Aria's the first asari that actually makes me interested in her because she's an asari. I guess I see shades of what I'd hope to be like if I turned pirate—just with less batarians, and responsibility. I don't have an ego big enough to need an entire spaceborne city to satisfy, just a ship and loyal crew.

I should clarify that when I say interested, this one time I mean 'curious' and not 'attracted to'. She IS hot, but she's more dangerous than Jack and perhaps as ambitious as the Illusive Man. I prefer the type of woman I don't have to fear assassination from.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 31 - Tasale System, Illium Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I'm predicting we'll be on Illium for awhile. Two of the three dossiers I have point to here, as well as Miranda's sister problem and an unexpected turn. Cerberus wants me to bring some data to Liara, who seems to have become an information broker in the time since the first Normandy blew up. She was a bit awkward and an archaeologist when I met her; I can't imagine what has to happen to force that kind of career change. Still, another face from the old days is welcome—and she might even be able to point us in the right direction for this justicar.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 31 - Tasale System, Nos Astra Dock

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 32 - Tasale System, Nos Astra Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

New entry since it's a 180 in topic, but I didn't even talk about Liara. She's made a name for herself on Illium as an info broker alright; she's got her own office, staff, contacts and a reputation as a no-nonsense broker. I walked in on her threatening some guy with an asari commando unit! Same thing her mother said to me, actually.

Eh, it's not important. Well, that isn't. Liara turning into a shady fraction of the Shadow Broker isn't at all what I expected. We didn't get to talk enough for me to ask, but I think she took the Normandy's destruction hard. It's funny, but I never really noticed if she was that attached to the crew back then. Saren, and Sovereign occupied so much of my mind that anything else was just forgotten, as quick as it might come to mind. That's why I enjoy keeping these logs; looking back is an easy way to keep myself grounded. I wish I still had the ones I kept from before I died.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 33 - Tasale System, Nos Astra Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Illium's technically a Terminus world, but it's a prominent part of asari space in practice, if not officially. Yet slavery's allowed here along with just about every other thing. Earlier today, I ran into a quarian who had sold herself into servitude for years because of debts—and it's treated like any other transaction. Illium must bribe a lot of powerful people to keep this charade of refinement going...I can't believe Liara can stomach working here.

Or actually, I suppose I can. Glitz and glam don't lure everyone, but elegance and the cosmopolitan lifestyle twisting people into accepting increasingly horrible trends is an old story, even among us humans. I don't think Liara's an accomplice to slavery or anything like that; but it's still a shock for her to be handling Illium so casually. Garrus remarked that he sees Illium as no safer than Omega if you aren't careful. I don't think he's that far off.

But, there's a LOT of good times here if credits aren't a concern. I can comfortably say I wouldn't go for a lifestyle like this—right now, when I'm not made of money and have more pressing problems.

I don't know, I'm rambling. I need some sleep; tomorrow we go asari hunting.

Entry 34 - Tasale System, Nos Astra Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

A few years ago I had never spoken with a turian for more than ten seconds. Now we've got our own little melting pot of the galaxy's most diverse and potent fighters. Samara chief among them; she's possibly as strong as Jack in biotics and...just inscrutable. She has this code of honor that she doesn't so much follow as embody, yet she's not once shown any emotion beyond polite gratitude and...well even that was brief.

I read her dossier; but reading that someone's what's basically an asari mystic warrior and seeing them in the flesh are two different things. If we can keep her on our side, our odds just shot up dramatically. I'm less worried about her tearing a bulkhead if she turns on us though—more that she'll fly through the ship walls and snap my neck under her heel. I am not exaggerating, she did exactly that to a merc.

Worst part is I felt 'things' when she did it. Goddamn freak I am. <Snicker> That's not the only foot-related trauma that happened today, either. That goof on the Citadel a few years back who was my 'biggest fan'? He was duped into trying to steal the rights to a bar in Nos Astra. Shot him in the foot, but I felt so bad for him after I pretended that he 'solved the big crime'. He actually bought it too!

Ahhh...I hope he doesn't die. Stupid like that's just asking for natural selection to kick in. He'd be a decent guy if he stopped trying to emulate me.

Entry 35 - # System, En Route to Xe Cha System

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Illusive Man's intel came through again: this time, in the form of a disabled Collector ship. With EDI's cybernetic warfare suite and my team we should have a decent shot at getting info on how to get to their heart—maybe even a way to safely pass through the Omega 4 relay. We're en route; the rest of our tasks on Illium and beyond will have to wait. Hopefully Mordin's student isn't in that dire straits.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 36 - Balor System, Elatha Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Illusive Man's shown his true colors. That Collector ship? It was a trap, and he knew it. How many resources were put into reviving me? Billions of credits, enormous hoards of raw materials and countless hours of manpower. A man like him doesn't invest so much into a project only to carelessly risk it...so what does he want? What's worth more than what he gave up to bring me and the Normandy back?

It's got to be related to the Collectors. Maybe he wants ALL their tech, not just what can be gained by trading slaves with them. Pure human survivalist beliefs aren't enough to explain why he did this. I didn't trust him before, but now I want to cut ties.

The current belief, shared by him and backed up by EDI and Mordin is that we'll need a sort of program, or device to make it through the Omega 4 relay. This is because the Collector base is in the galactic core (also confirmed by EDI), where black holes and enormous supernovae are in more places than they're not. Our only logical conclusion is that the Collectors have some way to travel through mass relays differently than we do. A different set of protocols, some alternate destination—it'd also explain how they can travel through systems undetected, never running across someone's scanners near a relay.

Unfortunately the trail ends there; the Illusive Man had the audacity to say he'd keep in touch on finding a solution but he can go fuck himself if he thinks I'll trust his intel that freely again.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 37 - Nariph System, Jonus Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Got a message from that salarian I helped out, Chorban. He wanted me to scan some keepers on the Citadel with his tools, so I did. Apparently he's been able to figure out much of what we learned on Ilos—that the keepers were bio-engineered, at least partially. That the Citadel wasn't built by the protheans, and that every fifty thousand years some signal goes out to the keepers.

He figured all that out on his own, and he's trying to spread the word. I can't even say how that makes me feel. Invigorated? Happy? A little frustrated? All that and more. Other people are asking questions, waking up.

I've met some good people from almost all species, all across the galaxy. Maybe we aren't as alone in this fight as we feel.

I'm gonna go talk to Miranda. If we're taking time to handle crew issues, it's only fair.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 38 - Osun System, Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Before we discovered biotics, the whole concept of psionic ability was kept in sci-fi. Vampires were always myth. I use were, because the asari have us beat to that. They're called 'Ardat-Yakshi', and they're asari who cannibalize the nervous system of anyone they mate with. Each time they do it, they get stronger. They're able to use their biotics in subtle ways, enhancing their physical appearance and making them seem larger than life. With direct contact they can even manipulate people's minds.

Samara is hunting an Ardat-Yakshi; her daughter no less. It's like a gothic tragedy: the hellspawn borne from the remorseful mother must be slain by the mother, who devotes her life to the deed. I don't envy Samara's position at all; having to kill your own child? Even if they are a monster, it's got to be a challenge.

There's no way she'll have even her disciplined mind on the mission until this is handled. Plus, she has a lead.

We still need to try and get Tali on our team. At least that'll be a new member who doesn't reinforce my unofficial nickname for the Normandy.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 39 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Samara's daughter is here. Aria had her pegged from the start, and she's already struck at least once since she got here. Some poor burgeoning artist girl, lured into drugs, sex and an early death.

Don't get me wrong, I indulge in all those. But that's my choice. I'm the one who decided to embrace my inner freak; no one manipulated me into it. I'm doing this for Samara, but I'm not too bothered by the detour. Part of me is curious, Morinth's been talked up as being a bigger threat than a krogan battlemaster and more cunning than an STG operative.

This personal interest is why I'm back at the ship, trading my nice, protective combat armor and VERY big anti-materiel rifle for the little black dress Kasumi got me for the Hock heist. I can't even smuggle a gun because I'm dealing with a centuries-old fugitive, not the human guard of a rich art collector. Just in case.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 40 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I'm not sure if I'm ready to die. I mean, with this mission. I thought I was prepared, but in Samara I've seen someone who's truly accepted their eventual death in battle. It unnerved me to see her slight smile, how she stated it not without emotion, but with clear peace in her words.

My resolve isn't faltering, but...I guess even for a suicide mission I still want to make it back. I know, I know. That seems obvious to say—but it's a leader's job to keep morale up. I want the crew thinking that it's worth fighting, but after seeing the Collector ship on the inside? How easily they gathered humans, and knowing they're just a fragment of the Reapers' plan?

I don't know. 'Dying fighting' might be our fate whether we like it or not. And I'm not just talking about the Normandy crew. At least Morinth won't drain anymore victims. If only she hadn't been so murderous. The power she and Samara wielded...not even Benezia could've mustered that level of biotic energy. It wouldn't have mattered if I had my gear with me—their fight was well beyond me. Even Morinth herself was; if Samara didn't have my back? I would've been her puppet. I tried, but she was too strong. Too compelling. I always thought I had more willpower than that.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 41 - Tasale System, Nos Astra Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Still no news on where Tali is, but we've recruited as Joker put it, 'another dangerous alien'. Thane Krios just might be as good a shot as Garrus, and he's got biotics and hand-to-hand skills to boot. Strangest part of him apart from being a drell though is his attitude. The first thing I saw him do was take out several guards and Nassana like it was a ballroom dance and he was Fred Astaire. Then he arranged her body neatly and started praying over it. The prayers weren't even for her, but for him.

Maybe it has something to do with his health. He told us he was dying, but I haven't had the chance to ask what he meant. He's not more of a risk than Samara though, so he's got a spot on the team. Not that she's shown hostility, but we are a Cerberus vessel, much as I hate it.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 42 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I always say in these logs how it's important to remember the Reapers, how we're doing this to save humanity—and the galaxy as a whole.

It's not 'humanity' that motivates me to keep pushing forward in a firefight, or to ignore the pain of my wounds while I line up a shot on a critical target. Back before I died, the threat of Sovereign motivated me. An awesome danger approached, and we had to stop it from coming because we saw it personally.

But now, that's not reaching me like it used to. That Beatrice died on the old Normandy. I'm going to save the galaxy from the Reapers, but I'm doing it for my comrades. For Joker, Chakwas, Miranda, Williams—everyone on this ship and beyond who was once with us.

<Beat>

That's a reason to lay down my life. Or to stop a life from devoting itself to killing. Garrus got his closure by gunning down the bastard who betrayed his team; now we're going to help our newest crewmate stop his son from becoming a killer like the rest of us. It's good work.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 43 - Salahiel System, Ekuna Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Illusive Man wants my help. Where he gets the goddamn audacity to ask me for a single thing I don't know.

But, considering it has to do with a possible rogue AI, it may be worth making sure the facility is shut down. That could turn into a massive security risk for the whole region, and at this point I'm inclined to just bomb the facility like we did in Pragia.

Seems like we lucked out on the timing actually; this report says that the facility's in the same cluster we're in now. All credit to Mordin for reminding us we needed to gather some more palladium for his research; I never remember the specifics of logistics.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 44 - Typhon System, Aite Surface

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Overlord isn't so much about Cerberus AI research, but an attempt to trick the geth into worshipping a Golden Calf. The Illusive Man seems to have a running theme about reaching into the realm of God...it looks like it ended about how you'd expect. The resultant AI went mad, took over the facility and killed everyone here save for a Dr. Gavin Archer.

So we're basically dealing with an entity that can control geth, is insane, and wants to get off-world. We can't even risk leaving the planet because of the risk in carrying any implanted vulnerabilities with us, so now we've got to suit up and go to the primary facility. There, we'll try to shut this thing down—or again, bomb it from orbit. Garrus spends his free time calibrating the new Thanix cannons; I guarantee he could hit a bullseye the size of a thimble from L5.

The good news is this is an excuse to pilot the Hammerhead again; we haven't really had many opportunities since recovering it. I still miss the way the Mako just laughed at the concept of gravity, but I've grown to enjoy the integrated homing missile launcher. Makes dealing with Prime-unit geth as easy as turning a vorcha's head into a fine mist.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 45 - Iera System, Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

You know, I'm sitting here to find the words, but...Family is...

I don't know how brothers, siblings, can be so cruel. Especially to someone so helpless. I understand sacrifice, I understand hard choices. I left one of the best soldiers and most honest man I've ever met to die on a foreign world, and I left dozens of innocents to batarian 'mercy' to stop an even bigger tragedy.

But this was a gamble, it was an experiment. Archer didn't see himself as playing God, he saw himself AS God. What he did to David is beyond sadism; it's beyond sense.

H...His brother BEGGED him not to, but there he was with more tubes than a husk, half-desiccated. I don't know how he survived. I'm still not sure he'll make it, let alone have a shadow's chance in fire of recovering mentally.

Humanity deserves the chance to rise to the top, but we need to be worthy. If we achieve dominance, or even security by using our forsaken kin in ways as bad as the Reapers, then we don't deserve a damn thing. If the Illusive Man has a problem with me taking David to a place that can actually help him, he's welcome to come stop me. Any Cerberus personnel not on the Normandy are enemies as far as I care.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 46 - Vetus System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I never gave much specific thought to how extensive my cybernetics are, like which parts of me are organic and which aren't. I'm pretty sure my liver's enhanced for certain reasons...eyes too, because my scarring's gotten worse. I look like a cyborg with human skin. I've seen my medical scans; I know I'm not a robot. But I'm not sure I even count as human anymore. I've taken krogan charges without losing my footing, found an anti-tank rifle designed for turian squad usage and can fire it off like I was using a marksman rifle.

Plus, ever since Aite, I've had...I don't know how else to describe it, but an 'awareness' of tech that I didn't before. David somehow...not possessed, but he integrated with my cybernetic components when I closed in on his chamber. The world looked alien, and things I saw were, how to put it. Important.

Power connectors, access panels—I knew where to go, what to touch. That faded, but I still can see it. Terminals, omni-tools, even shipboard systems—I sort of feel a tether that I can 'read' info from. It's almost like that old 20th century movie, where the guy sees computer code. I don't see code, but I understand a lot more in ways I didn't think a human could understand electronics.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 47 - Pranas System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Grunt is...going through some things. He's irritable, he doesn't WANT to be and yet he's slamming his head against windows and bulkheads enough to start to drain our omni-gel supplies. I talked to Mordin about what he might be going through, and I shit you not he said "Ah. Hormonal imbalance fueled by shifting biological imperatives. Krogan puberty likely accelerated in artificially-grown subject."

Grunt's hitting puberty. I've got a teenage krogan on board. Grunt thinks that someone on Tuchanka will know what to...do, based on his tank imprints—but what, wh—what the fuck is this? Am I supposed to give him fifty credits, a slap on the back and shove him into Afterlife? Can't we just go shoot a bunch of Blood Pack mercs together, or shove an asteroid into an empty planetoid?

I can't have Grunt distracted like this, he might go berserk. I'm not having the fucking 'talk' with him. I swear to God, I'm not. Maybe Mordin can, he knows more about krogan anatomy than I do. Actually, that's a good point—he talked to me the other day about a report he wants to follow up on, something about one of his former students being on Tuchanka. Guess we get to find out in person what the krogan did to their homeworld.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 48 - Arlakh System, Tuchanka Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

A goddamn thresher maw! On fucking foot, a goddamn thresher maw! Who the—what kind of—Tuchanka is a fucking deathtrap!

Shit...I've been running triple digit heartrate baseline since getting back aboard the Normandy an hour ago. Swear to God I was having flashes of...this time, it wasn't Akuze. Different in many ways, yeah. <Heavy, quick breathing, exclamation of stressed relief>

And the thresher maw was after waves of varren and these exploding bug-things—they almost reminded me of rachni. Then that stupid goddamn krogan Uvenk tried the worst negotiation I've ever seen. Felt good shooting his plate right off that dumb fucking head of his.

God, krogan homeworld...it wasn't what I was expecting in so many ways. Wrex! Wrex is the, basically shogun of the krogan or something like that now. Apparently he came back here after the Normandy blew up, started knocking heads until he clawed his way to the top. Now he's actually trying to implement reforms! Wrex, a krogan statesman—I never would've guessed.

We still need to go looking for Mordin's student. I just gotta calm down, settle my nerves after that. Seeing an old friend and fighting an old enemy in a few hours rattles you. Woo! Shit, I'm wired. God, I could use some relief alright...isn't it tradition after a great battle to get drinks and a woman?

Eh, that's coming. Well, the woman part. I joke, hell—I'm downright crude I know. But she's great. Iron willed, smart and focused. She's interesting! And stupid, stuuupid hot.

I gotta sound manic. No, I'll just have a quick drink, crank one out, take a nap and head back down. Back to calm, cool and collected Trish.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 49 - Imir System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It's funny how, even after seeing all the horrors I have the one thing that still shocks me is when doctors lose sight, and become butchers. Archer, Saelon, and Maelon. <Grunt> Both salarian, too.

Mordin's student was trying to undo the genophage. They led a mission to modify it, to make sure it was still going to reduce krogan birthrates. I agree with the decision, but I also saw how life was on Tuchanka. Clan females were a prized resource, particularly fertile ones. You'd have an easier time smuggling geth into the Citadel than trying to get to one of the females in secret. It dominates krogan lives, and there were a lot of willing volunteers for Maelon's bloody experiments. A lot of females.

I know how dangerous the krogan are. I know Wrex, and Grunt are the exception, not the rule. But I also know that sometimes it's better to just end it instead of what seems like mercy, but is actually torture. Krogan life is defined by accepting death and charging headfirst into fights, or standing on a corpse of stillborns as you claw for that one-in-a-thousand shot at a future beyond your own life.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 50 - Nariph System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Another colony got hit, Fehl Prime. It was a big producer of medicine for the Alliance; no idea why they put such a big breadbasket out in the Terminus but there were no survivors. The newsfeeds say it was a massive Blood Pack raid, but that's just more coverups by a society too scared to face the truth: we're at war, humanity versus the Reapers. I wish I knew why they're obsessed with us. It can't just be Sovereign dying because of a human fleet, can it?

Every time another colony gets wiped out, I just want to order Joker to gun it to the Omega Nebula and dive through that damn relay. It's a stupid impulse, but it feels wrong. Us, sitting here in comfort while colonists are being taken away to be killed like a bunch of meat. I know I said before I'm not fighting for humanity, I'm fighting for my crew. But you never stop being a colony kid. Collectors are a worse fate than batarians...at least you have a chance of escape from the furry bastards.

At least we've got a lead on Tali's location—far off on one of the spiral arms deep in geth space. I have no idea why she's there other than she chose to go in; I hope she's alright. Tali's a good shot and she's clever, but going to geth space is playing with lightning.

We'll make sure she's safe. Plus, the one thing we're lacking is a tech expert, someone who isn't bothered by anything with an electric current. Kasumi's good, but hers is a more civilized form of the discipline. Tali can improvise, and she never stopped being one of us. Maybe once we have her we'll finally have some luck on tracking down something that'll help us hit the Collectors where it hurts and not just die in the galactic core.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 51 - Skepsis System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Tali's on board, but she's hardly unscathed. Physically she's fine. Mentally? Not only did she witness her entire team die again, but now she's being accused of treason by her own people. How could they think she's even capable of betraying them? She's more loyal to the quarians than she is to me—and she followed me all the way to Ilos! Hell, she's working with me even though I'm working with Cerberus!

I don't see much choice—I need Tali on my crew, and I don't abandon my people. The Illusive Man just sent a message earlier today, telling me he has a lead on getting past the Omega 4 relay. He can wait a few days; if my team isn't at their best it doesn't matter if we make it through or not. Maybe I'm not so sold on us ENTIRELY embracing the 'suicide' part of suicide mission.

Now the challenge of approaching the Migrant Fleet without triggering alarm bells; I don't know what Cerberus did to the quarians, but it was enough for Tali to not even tell me hello before asking about the Cerberus logos when we met on Freedom's Progress.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 52 - Raheel-Leyya System, Rayya Plaza

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Tali's own people are dragging her through the muck. Accusing her of sending active geth back, springing her father's possible death on her during the trial? If I get alone with 'Admiral' Gerrel someone's going to need a new faceplate. What a spineless, disingenuous waste of meat. If I wasn't in charge of representing her, I-

Dammit. Have to cut this short, the shuttle's ready. Retaking a quarian research vessel to try and save Tali's father.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 53 - Ploitari System, Synalus Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

You know, I'm just...I look after my crew. I trust my crew. Tali's like a little sister to me. I hurt for her when we came across her father's body.

So that's why I had to let her make the choice she did, even though I don't agree. Shit, don't agree...Tali threw away her entire life in all but actuality. She can't ever go back home, and all she lives for is the good of her people. I just hope her dad was worth what she gave up for his sake. His memory's sake, even. She's got nowhere else to go but the Normandy, now—and we're going on a goddamn suicide mission.

I've got half a mind to take Tali to Liara and make sure she's safe instead of taking her past the Omega 4 relay, but I know that'd crush Tali's spirit. I respect her too much to treat her like a child. Dammit if I won't take a bullet before it hits her though.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 54 - Osun System, Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I'm glad I told the Illusive Man to wait; if I heard he had a lead on how to get through the Omega 4 relay safely I may have told Tali to wait.

There's a planet that has a massive canyon, almost as big as the continent Australia on Earth. People suspected it wasn't formed naturally for ages, but now it's confirmed—a Cerberus team found the weapon used to make the rift, as well as the target.

It's a Reaper, destroyed half as far back in the past as when the dinosaurs got wiped out on Earth. Personally, I'd mass-manufacture those planet-killer mass accelerators but I'm not the one with resources. The current plan is to go to this Reaper corpse, infiltrate and extract something that the crew there found which may help trick the Omega 4 relay into thinking the Normandy is a Reaper ship.

So basically, it's a gamble on intel that an untrustworthy terrorist leader has given us, ignoring the threat of being ON a Reaper ship. All this prep and we might just fly straight into a black hole and die.

<Beat, then angered grunt and sound of glass shattering on a wall>

GODDAMN IT! If Saren had just had a spine and not given into Sovereign then we might've avoided this entirely! If the whole damn Reaper fleet is hibernating and Sovereign was forced to make a move, then...

<Long sigh>

No. No, because the Collectors being the boogeymen of the Terminus goes back centuries. They'd still act, and if they work for the Reapers then who's to say they wouldn't be able to summon the Reapers anyway?

We've got no choice. The Alliance is blind, the Council doesn't care and Cerberus is suspect at best. It's entirely up to us. With luck, the Collector threat will be taken care of and we'll have many asari lifetimes to figure out how to ensure the Reapers in dark space don't wake up. Or how to destroy them entirely.

God, thirty-seven million years...that's over seven hundred cycles. What happened to the protheans, hundreds of times over—if not so much longer?

<Beat, sound of drink canister opening and liquid being poured>

If we somehow survive and I can finally sleep soundly again, I'm staying in the Terminus. Maybe settle in on Omega, carve out a niche for me. Half my crew's more suited to life on the frontier anyhow.

Shit...we've got a few days before we'll be at our destination. Maybe I'll get on that data Liara sent to me. Just a favor when I've got some extended on-ship time.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 55 - Hawking Eta Cluster, Thorne System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Now I know why Liara was so strained with me, why she's so obsessed with taking down the Shadow Broker. She's why I'm alive. Not only that; she's why I'm not parts in a Collector base—or worse, their reanimated puppet. Cerberus isn't the only organization that can bring the dead back; I still remember what happened to Saren's corpse.

Liara went up against the Shadow Broker while I was still desiccated meat; he, she, whatever—they wanted to sell me to the Collectors. She gave me to Cerberus because for all their sins, they were against the Collectors and told her they had a plan to revive me. It makes so much sense now, her choice—yet when she told me this, I snapped at her. I blamed her for me being with Cerberus. I shouted at her, and was too damn proud to even apologize during the call even after I heard how pained her voice was.

She lost a friend saving my corpse, Feron or something like that. Any friend of Liara's is a friend of mine, and I owe them both too much. If we survive our mission, she's my first stop. I don't know how much help I can be with tracking the Shadow Broker down, but anything I can do for her, she has. In every sense of the word, I owe her my life.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 56 - Sahrabarik System, Imorkan Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Only the second Reaper we've seen, and even as an inactive shell it's terrifying. I don't know what it is; the way it's designed internally, that damned humming or the army of husks that must have once been the Cerberus team—but it was a miracle we survived. It's thanks to Joker we made it off the ship though. He once said he could make the Normandy dance; I'm starting to think that's not hyperbole.

The mission was a success: we have a device that the Cerberus team recovered before they succumbed to indoctrination. EDI seems to believe that it can be used to emulate Reaper identification signals like an IFF, which should mean that we make it through the Omega 4 Relay.

Should, may, possibly—this is still too much to gamble on. But we don't have a choice; we have to stop the Collectors at their source. Perhaps if we had months or even years we could experiment, find a way to confirm the IFF works. But the Collectors are still out there, abducting entire colonies. Just a few days ago, New Cascadia was hit. That's tens of thousands of humans just gone.

We've had delays to make sure our crew's ready; don't think I'm not aware of the human cost to that. But no one else is—no one else is doing a damn thing about the Collectors! The few who are working to convince people the Reaper threat is real are...shit, I've ranted about this before. There's no point in more chattering.

We have the crew we need. Eleven of the most talented, capable, dangerous people this galaxy has. A bleeding-edge ship that's been upgraded to the nines, piloted by arguably the best helmsman who's ever lived. We'll never be more ready. All that's left is to activate the IFF, make our final peace and go into the abyss.

Oh, I almost forgot: we might have a full dozen. A geth unit assisted us several times by taking out husks on the Reaper. Just the one; it even spoke. And has N7 armor strapped to it. I trust geth less than I trust the Collectors, but with Tali and EDI working to contain it, I think we can afford to reactivate the unit. Worst case scenario, it's scrap and we move on. I'm only even considering this because we truly can use all the help we can get. I'd even recruit a goddamn batarian if it increased our odds of completing the mission.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 57 - Sahrabarik System, Imorkan Orbit

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 58 - Phoenix Massing Cluster, en route to Geth Base

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The geth—Legion, as we're calling it now—is fascinating. It's an independent platform, one that Tali says is running over ten times the normal level of geth hive programs a unit typically does. It speaks, it's not hostile to us and informed us that the geth we fought during Sovereign's attack were 'Heretics' who went against the so-called 'true geth.'

I don't buy any of that crap, but the fact a single geth platform is speaking with us, and telling us of this is a landmark in understanding them. It even asked to join the crew, and if we could assist with handling a threat to the 'true geth' by attacking the base of the heretical geth. Again, I don't believe it—but it gave us coordinates, and I trust the Normandy's going to be able to evade any geth detection. We did on Ilos, after all.

There is always the possibility this is a Reaper trap, but we've planned for that too. We're going to be taking the shuttle instead of the Normandy proper; it kills two birds with one stone: we investigate this potential threat, and EDI has ample time to integrate the IFF into the ship subsystems.

Geth wearing N7 armor, calling me 'Shepard-Commander.' At this rate we might end up recruiting an actual, live prothean.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 59 - Nariph System, Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

<Sharp Exhale>

<Extended Silence>

The crew is gone. Every one. Every single person. Dr. Chakwas. Chambers. Donnelly and Daniels. Every single person except Joker.

Everyone with me on the shuttle of course, we're fine. Miranda's idea; take the whole ground team so we have options. Foolish, so foolish. But it was me who agreed with it. The blame lies with the one who is in charge, not the one with ideas. Besides, I could've just picked a couple people and left the rest.

Maybe they would have just been taken too. <Loud thump> EVERYONE! Colonies, entire generations of humans and now my goddamn crew!

I almost blew Legion's light out when I first heard, thinking he planned this. The damn geth's been annoyingly sincere, almost naive in its dealings with us. Even Tali's managed to come to some understanding with it after some tense moments. EDI said it was the IFF; it had subroutines that were hidden away, broadcasting the Normandy's location.

The damn fault is with me, no one else. I said to use the IFF, I did this to the crew. They're enduring...no, no they aren't. Not yet. They were taken hours ago and we can outrun the Collector ships. That means we can catch up.

Functioning IFF, a gun that could punch through Reaper armor, armor and shielding that can deflect even Collector tech with ease. Twelve of the most formidable bastards I've ever had the pleasure of fighting with. We can go through the Omega 4 Relay. We can do this.

<Beep>

EDI, tell what's left of the crew to gather on the bridge. Except Joker; he can listen via comms. He's done enough.

<Beep>

Damn the odds. We're not leaving anyone behind.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 60 - Sahrabarik System, Omega 4 Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We're as ready as we could be. Everyone left is making their last goodbyes, final preparations, or just embracing the hour or so of calm we have before we go into the abyss. I spoke with Mordin earlier—and everyone else too, but his words stuck with me. It wasn't poignant or anything that should stand out, but...he was talking with his nephew, a recently-tenured professor at some university.

Family. I lost mine before I even came of age, then I lost my comrades—my adopted family by another name—on Akuze. It took time for me to find a new group that I really fell in with, but they're here. Everyone on this ship, everyone from the old Normandy—they're my brothers, my sisters, cousins and more. Alien, human—it doesn't matter. These are, they are all special to me. I'll kill anyone who threatens them.

We're going to save our family, or die trying. I'll gladly face what I did in the skies above Amada once again for that. But for now, I'm laying on my couch with a stiff drink and sending a few voice messages.

Calm before the storm.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

|CALL LOG 1 - Ashley Williams|

Hey Ash. I hope they've got you working hard, Ops Chief. It suits you; I wish I had said that back on Horizon. You're right about Cerberus. I knew it then, I still know it now. If we survive this mission, they're gonna find out what it means to lose their biggest investment. But survival's questionable. We're going through the Omega 4 relay, taking the fight to the Collectors themselves. We've got a strong team, a team you'd be proud to fight alongside. You're a part of it too, Ash. You and everyone who was on the old Normandy. Say hi to Sarah, Abby and Lynn for me.

|CALL LOG 2 - David Anderson|

Admiral, it's Commander Shepard. You took a chance on me, back when you selected me for XO on the old Normandy. People never told me to my face, but I know the rep sole survivors can get—ignoring my childhood, too. People call me a great leader, they follow me even now as we're on our way through the Omega 4 relay. I learned from the best. If we win, this is as much your victory as it is ours. Oh, and for what it's worth: As unfair as it is to you, I'm glad someone like you is keeping Udina wrangled. Sir.

|CALL LOG 3 - Liara T'Soni|

Liara, it's Shepard. I hope this is the right line. I know how tight you have to keep communication, but I just wanted to say that I'm sorry I never thanked you properly for what you did for me. You gave me a chance at life again; I can't even think of the words that could do that justice. I may not even be able to help you save your friend. Please, forgive me if I don't come back. The Collector homeworld's not a place that we'll survive easily, but we'll make sure we take them with us if the worst comes to pass. And if we do make it out? The Shadow Broker's next on the list. Whatever it takes.

Entry 61 - Omega Nebula, en route to Batalla System

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

'The Collectors'. That's a word that won't haunt anyone anymore; no one will ever have to endure what so many did. No one else is going to be melted into paste, used for diabolical construction. The Collectors are dead. Entirely. Their base is a splintered ruin that'll soon be past the accretion disk of a black hole. I doubt even Reapers can make it out of one of those.

We made it there...we made it there and we didn't lose a single person. We SAVED the crew. No one, NO ONE died. We had so many close calls, I can only think that God was watching over us. Maybe not a human God, but something bigger than us was guiding us on. Maybe Kaidan from beyond the grave. Maybe my parents, or my squadmates on Akuze.

I don't know. But this was for them, and for all the people killed by those poor bastards. Even for the protheans, who were worse than killed—they were mutated into the Collectors themselves. A race of husks, condemned to...I can't even find the words. What they were doing was beyond sense. I won't forget it. I won't ever forget it. I wish I could.

We're officially cut off from Cerberus now; with the Collectors gone the Illusive Man's no longer worth dealing with. Too risky, too ruthless—even for me. He tried to get us to save the Collector base so we could use the tech against the Reapers. Against them, 'and beyond' as he put it. That tech was used to create a Reaper made from humans. It was an abomination, and deserved to be forgotten. Humanity can be better than that. We have to, if we want to earn the right to lead as we've taken for ourselves.

But we've won the battle. I'm afraid the Reapers will be even more focused on humans now—humans have killed a Reaper, and now taken out their most valued servants. Plans need to be made. Preparations for defense of core colonies and Earth. People need to wake up, because while my team, my crew, my family are strong—we're not gods. We can't be everywhere at once. All I can think about is how it would've been impossible to beat the Collectors if there was just one Reaper defending the base. Another Sovereign, just as insurance. We won because the Reapers were careless.

I just want to curl up into a ball and cry, then drink until I puke. Cry some more, then watch a few old movies. Then go out, maybe to Afterlife and just...man. Just live, just take a few days to experience life before all this. Before the Collectors, before I died, before Saren and Eden Prime. Before I knew about this terrible horror that's only coming closer.

At least I'm not alone. We're not alone. I don't know how many will stay on with us, but even those who leave are still a part of us. They'll always be welcome back, and supported if they choose to move on. But I really hope Miranda stays. I don't know if what we've got is more than just we-might-die-sex, but I like her. I like her a lot.

I can honestly say that I've got only one love on my mind right now though: love of sheets, love of a warm bed. We've got so much to do, so rest when we can take it. Yeah, that's a good idea.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 62 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Took some long-needed rest and relaxation over the past week. Lounging, shooting the shit with anyone else bored enough to talk...learned that Zaeed's been halfway around the galaxy with the scars and tales to prove it. I mean, I knew that in a vague sense before—but I hadn't heard the specifics. Pretty impressive stuff for a single human lifespan.

I also learned that Samara truly has an iron will, and an unbreakable devotion to her Code. Apparently I've done a lot that is fundamentally against the Code. My guess: a lot of threatening, and a few extrajudicial assaults. The point is, until I release her from her oath she'll serve me without question—but once I do, she'll depart. If we ever cross paths again, she'll be compelled by the Code to attack me.

I can't say I'm surprised; I know when I first met her I was wary. Someone both deadly and fanatically devoted to any faith, belief or ethic isn't to be taken lightly. It's sobering, though. I consider her a part of the family like anyone else...but I have to respect that. I also noticed she didn't say 'kill'. She's very much said that in the same context before, so I don't know if that was a slip of the tongue or an acknowledgment of the difficulty she'd have. Let's hope we never find out.

I trust her. She can decide when she should leave. I'll tell her the next chance I get that she's released from her oath. Hell, I'll take her wherever she wants to go when she wants to leave. I owe her that much.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 63 - Faryar System, Fuel Depot

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I talked more with Legion today. It's proven its sincerity with the assault on the Collector base, and it's got a place on this ship as long as it wants—if it wants. As in, wants the—fuck it.

I can't help but think about how powerful the geth must be, beyond the Perseus Veil. As Legion puts it, the so-called 'heretics' were a minority of the geth. That means the entire force that Sovereign had fighting us, the force that matched the entire Council fleet wasn't even half of the total geth military might. Maybe even a lot less than half.

We're not ready to fight the geth; I should be thankful they aren't expansionist. Legion says the opposite; the geth want to determine their own path, and build themselves up. They...I'm just having trouble wrapping my mind around a true hive-mind society. Even Legion is an amalgamation of individual programs. I guess one could argue organic life is just a series of cells that work in tandem, but that's not the same at all. Right?

I couldn't say. Granted, my only source for much of this is a single geth, so it should be taken with an entire planet's worth of salt. But IF most of the geth rejected Sovereign's offer, then that's an enormous force that doesn't support the Reapers. If push comes to shove and we're facing the Reapers down a possible geth alliance shouldn't be discounted.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 64 - Thal System, Garan Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Harbinger, the entity that controlled the Collectors is a Reaper. Leftover Cerberus data EDI had managed to pinpoint the signal that induced the transformation in some of the Collectors; it was definitely extragalactic. The sound of Harbinger, its goals...that was a Reaper alright. And if a Reaper outside the galaxy is awake, then all the other Reapers have to be alert now.

Traveling twice typical FTL maximums, presuming that they were able to keep a constant speed...They could cover almost thirty light-years a day. They could cross the entire galaxy in ten years, and that's assuming they're that far out in dark space. My guess? A lot closer. Dark space is enormous; you don't need to be too far out to be effectively invisible. Very little efforts are made to scan beyond the Milky Way—just pie-in-the-sky investors who want to start a colony in Andromeda for the most part.

Ten years or less to prepare for an invasion of thousands of Reapers. I did some educated guessing, based on what the Collectors were doing. If they built a single Reaper per cycle, then if the very first cycle was thirty-seven million years ago there's seven hundred and thirty eight Reapers at the most—taking away Sovereign and the Reaper that got destroyed by that enormous mass accelerator cannon.

It's just not a winnable fight. Hundreds of Reapers? We barely took down one. We got LUCKY with one. Our only hope is to find a way to beat the Reapers through other means, not in a direct fight. In that area, the Illusive Man is right.

God, if he just wasn't so delusional. Cerberus if properly utilized could eclipse the Alliance itself in capability and manpower, but the Illusive Man is obsessed with human

dominance. He'd even go so far as to use Reaper technology, knowing the risks that'd entail. We'll have to go it alone, and we're all the lesser because of it.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 65 - Tasale System, Illium Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Arrived at Illium today; it's time to make good on a promise. Liara's followed up on leads on her hunt for the Shadow Broker and thinks she has something; the Normandy's here to back her up.

Maybe along the way we'll find some information that can help us against the Reaper threat. For now, Legion's actually been a surprisingly useful source of knowledge on the Reapers through the geth's dealings with Sovereign, but it hasn't shed any light on weaknesses. Motivation, though...

As Legion told me, Sovereign referred to itself as Nazara to the geth; by 'it' I mean the programs that made Sovereign up. It said as much when we spoke to it on Virmire. I just didn't think about what that meant at the time.

The Collectors were turning humans into a Reaper; they were actually drawing our DNA out to be incorporated into the machinery. EDI even detected traces of our genome in the Reaper chassis—and the design was so painstakingly accurate to a human skeleton. Machines don't design for artistic purposes; it has to have a reason in line with its programming.

There's also things that Harbinger said. "We are your salvation through your destruction." "Evolution cannot be stopped." "Embrace perfection." Plus, the comments about my squadmates. Assessing their genetic potential, even as we fought it.

The Reapers seem to be...so, if they are machines, even sentient—someone had to make them. Some entity however many billions of years ago created a Reaper, and decided its purpose was to be this. What's the end goal? Is it some twisted form of cataloging different races?

I'm tempted to say it doesn't matter, but we can't just defeat the Reapers and go on with our lives. This isn't a war we can win through strength of arms; information, cleverness—that's how we win. I'm going to assign some of the crew to research roles, finding out all we can about ancient civilizations that may be linked to the Reapers.

Time to head to Liara. Plus, she may have info that could help us out. It's nice to have no possibility but good outcomes. If you ignore the possibility of being shot by Shadow Broker agents, that is.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 66 - Hourglass Nebula, Sowilo Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I knew Liara had to be tougher than I thought, to do all she's managed to accomplish since leaving the Normandy. Still, it's strange to see her so driven. I wonder if it's her mother's influence? Or what she must've endured, dealing with the depths of the criminal underworld for so long.

That drive's paying dividends though; she actually figured out where the Shadow Broker is. The Collectors may be dead now, but if they were the type to make deals with them then the galaxy will be better off without their influence. Besides, straight from Barla Von's mouth—the Shadow Broker never tipped the scales of information, they just got rich off of the trade.

I know we aren't setting out to kill the Shadow Broker, but I can't imagine we can slip in and rescue Feron without confronting them. Unlike the Collectors, this foe's probably aware of every single thing about us and our ship—we can still fly in quiet, but if we get into a protracted fight at the Shadow Broker's base it'll make things exponentially more difficult. Though, it can't be worse than storming the hellmouth that was the Collector base.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 67 - Undisclosed

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Shadow Broker is dead, long live the Shadow Broker. The old one? A massive brute with ruthless intelligence who could out-punch a krogan. If I wasn't fueled by superhuman cybernetics, I'd be meat.

The new Broker? Liara. She just walked to the control panels seconds after we took down the old Broker, settling in like she was born to do it. She's changed in more ways than I can count...a lot of it for the better.

No one knew who or what the Shadow Broker was, so there's no chance of immediate discovery. Her friend Feron, he's safe too. So are all the Shadow Broker's data stores—it'll take time for Liara to sift through it all and familiarize herself with it, but anything she finds on the Reapers or Cerberus she'll forward to the Normandy. Maybe with some real evidence the Alliance brass can't deny, they'll start taking the Reaper threat seriously.

God, you know: I feel unstoppable. The Shadow Broker was a fierce specimen of a race so inherently dangerous the Council ordered their world no-contact. He had home field advantage, but Liara and I? We took him out without much trouble, just inconveniences. The kingpin of all black market intel trade in the galaxy went down with about as much effort as it took storming Chora's back when we were going after Fist. A gun is a gun, being stronger won't make it shoot harder. But we've got a lot of dangerous badasses on our ship now, with me at the helm.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 68 - Undisclosed

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Shadow Broker's base is terrifying. There's no other way to describe it. Seeing just how much access he had, it's like privacy of any type just doesn't exist. I'm not even talking extranet browsing—even talking anywhere but the most remote of colonies left you open to his reach. He even somehow had bugs planted on the Normandy—this one!

Liara was kind enough to make sure those are disabled, but still. If it wasn't for the Reaper threat I'd consider getting her to scale back operations. But the Broker apparently had a huge trove of data on not just the Reapers, but the protheans too. Liara hasn't sorted through it yet, but she packaged it into a data disc for us to go through. Maybe we'll find something that'll help stave the invasion off.

She's taken well to being the Broker, but she's still Liara. Sentimental, earnest and vulnerable with those she's close with...I'm glad this search for the Broker didn't break her. I was worried. I know I didn't get to know her too well before I died, but...I guess her seeing into my mind those times chasing Saren left a big impression.

<Chuckle> She even found my old dog tags; them and the N7 armor Legion took from the crash site are the only things from my old life that survived. Speaking of Legion, there's something off about that geth. Not bad, not really—but it's more lifelike than I expected. The Broker had reports on all of the Normandy's crew; I didn't look at them out of respect, but I made an exception for Legion. I do respect it, but...geth.

It's OBSESSED with extranet games. To the point that I'd worry if I didn't know it can probably play twenty of them at once while blowing a husk's head clean off at 200 yards. It also has several ban reports for trash talk...really? All jokes aside, that's an unnerving though. It's too lifelike. I'm not sure what to think about it.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 69 - Vallhallan Threshold Nebula, Paz System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Hit a one-two knockout for uncovering details about Cerberus. Liara's intel package as the one, and EDI as the two. Apparently when Joker unshackled her during the Collector attack, that meant EDI's restraints were entirely removed. She could kill us, or tell us all she knows.

Now I said it too. <Exhale> I don't know. She's crew, she's one of us. If Legion is, then she definitely is. God, look at me. Now I'm accepting machines.

Anyway, that's not the point. The point, is that Cerberus is bigger than I ever conceived of. It's nearly the size OF the Alliance when it comes to funding and scope, but with a lot fewer personnel and zero oversight. What they've done over the years is mind boggling: developing a drug that disables biotics, assassinating Pope Clement XVI, manipulated political party leadership to have their toadies involved and so much more. They've got funding of BILLIONS per year, so in truth even my resurrection? It was a significant expense, but not a total one.

The Illusive Man's profile here isn't as informative, but does shed some insight on the type of man he is. Seems he enjoys sleek, high-end fashion, games of skyball and fucking the galaxy's most beloved human darlings. Plus the odd asari. So much for human dominance.

If even the Shadow Broker doesn't have more on Cerberus, they're better at staying hidden than I thought. Ultimately, they're just a secondary concern however. I don't believe Cerberus will get in my way when it comes to stopping the Reapers. I think they'll get in my way when it's time to make the final decision on how to handle them.

I don't know if I had mentioned it before, but when we were in the Collector base, the Illusive Man asked me to preserve it. When he had his prize in his sights, he made his move. Part of me wonders if this wasn't his plan all along: to use me, to have me put together a team that could capture a massive amount of Reaper tech. Then, Cerberus reaps the benefit.

Blowing the base to bits made his veneer crack. He said something that told me all I needed to know about his character, now that I think about it: "Cerberus IS humanity." He's delusional, and dangerous because he has the resources to make his delusions reality.

I'm starting to circle here. Been reading these documents for hours; I think it's time we figure out a way to take the Hammerhead out for a joy ride. There's got to be a planet with a pirate raid on the horizon somewhere.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 70 - Haskins System, Capek Approach

<NSFW>

<REDACTED>

Entry 71 - Lenal System, Nutus Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Zaeed came to me earlier, wanted to discuss his contract. I told him that he's welcome to stay, but the job's done. Seems like he'll want to leave once we make our next resupply trip.

I'd rather not see him go; the man's abrasive, but he's one of the best fighters I've seen. Squad tactics are a bit middling, but he's as good as I am when it comes to a firefight. It's the creativity—and the experience.

This is a reality I've got to face—my crew is loyal, my crew is good, and my crew is made up of people who'd never in a million years work together without a central figure and a guiding purpose. We blew our purpose up in the galactic core, so...I guess we'll be saying a few goodbyes. Not to everyone, but if I had to guess? Kasumi's probably itching for more than drooling over Jacob and lounging in her quarters. Well, the latter part at least. Samara will stay, but I think I'll speak to her when Zaeed leaves. Tell her that she's released from her oath...as long as I've got Garrus covering me. I respect her more than words, which is why I'm not taking any chances if she decides my crimes were severe enough to attack me right out of her oath.

But I don't know; we may see a few more people strike out elsewhere. This isn't a Cerberus crew anymore; hell, we aren't even Alliance. I'm the captain, but I'm not going to browbeat anyone into staying. As far as I'm concerned, everyone's earned their path forward and then some.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 72 - Kyzil System, Parasc Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Haven't done one of these in awhile...almost a month it looks like. Honestly? Not much has been happening, compared to when we were fighting the Collectors. We've shifted focus to primarily research and the occasional excursion when the situation warrants it—coming across a derelict freighter with malfunctioning security mechs, a batarian red sand production in an old space station and believe it or not, a few humans who still thought the First Contact War was going on.

It's interesting stuff, lets us keep our battle instincts sharp—but we've spent most of our time figuring out better ways to handle husk swarms, possible methods to resist Reaper indoctrination, and estimating where the Reapers may first attack if they come out of dark space. By 'we' I should add it's Mordin, EDI, Legion and a few others. I'm not an idiot, but my technical skill is more to breaking through security systems and hardware maintenance. The theoretical escapes me.

Miranda and I have been spending a little more time together, so that's going unexpectedly well. Never just idle chitchat; there's plenty to do. But you can do a lot while waiting for plasma cutters to cool down, or scouring through the thirtieth report of scavengers who tried to get their hands on pieces of the so-called Leviathan of Dis before the batarians ran off with it. That one worries me; there's no doubt the Leviathan itself is a Reaper. The dead one Cerberus found the IFF on was still able to indoctrinate people, and there's most likely another dead Reaper somewhere deep in batarian space. As if we needed any more reason to kill the bastards.

Anyway. She and I are doing well. I guess it helps we're both not exactly versed in what a good relationship is like. Plus, I have no expectations—I'm just enjoying taking things one day at a time. It helps me stay grounded, not dwelling on what the Collectors were doing so much. You start focusing on your memories of live colonists being melted and turned into slurry for a proto-Reaper, you go crazy.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 73 - Newton System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Admiral Hackett contacted me a few hours ago. Video call, direct to my terminal. The Alliance has a deep cover operative in batarian space, and this operative found evidence of, as the Admiral put it, an “imminent Reaper invasion.” The operative’s an old friend of his, she’s good enough to last a long time in batarian space and she’s currently imprisoned in a batarian government facility.

Our worst goddamn fears are knocking at the door. We have to know more—hell, we have to try and stop the invasion. What other option is there? We aren’t ready to defend against the Reapers. Even just another Sovereign would crush us.

The Admiral asked me to go in alone, so the life of this Dr. Kenson won’t be at risk. I agree; too many infiltrators and this looks like an Op. If this looks like an Op, the batarians go ballistic. We can’t afford an intragalactic war while Reapers are on our doorstep.

I don’t even know what we do if we do confirm the invasion’s imminent. Create enormous antimatter bombs and deploy them against the Reapers? Build huge bunkers in total secrecy, preparing people to live in them for centuries? The total death of the protheans took that long. Maybe the quarians have the right idea, staying on the move. Just fly into deep space and hope you don’t run into a Reaper.

I just don’t see any way we can prepare for an ‘imminent invasion.’

The mission is the focus. The sooner we get to the Bahak system, the sooner I can find out if we need to be finding bunker locations or figuring out how we want to live out our last days.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 74 - Bahak System, en route to Project Base

Writing this because I'm not alone. I don't trust Dr. Kenson, not now. Rescued her, we're on a stolen batarian shuttle back to her base. She isn't alone; she started a project to stop the impending Reaper invasion. Her plan is to throw a massive asteroid into the Bahak relay, destroying it and likely the solar system with it.

She claims this relay can be used by the Reapers to connect to any other relay in the galaxy; a sort of backup for the Citadel relay. She also claims that the Reapers are just days out from reaching the relay, if not sooner. She's been imprisoned for some time, so the timing isn't certain. Why I don't trust her: she found a Reaper artifact that's housed at the Project base. The way she talks about it—how it's beyond comprehension, how they need to be studied? It's too close to others I've heard, others who have been under the Reapers' sway.

We have to destroy the relay. I trust that they're close to making it to this system; even if Dr. Kenson is indoctrinated now, she wasn't when she first got here. There's three hundred thousand batarians in this system, I know. But there's no time. I don't like the bastards, but I'm not a blind racist—there's likely good batarians. The whole damn colony could be pacifists for all I care; we don't have the luxury of waiting for them to evacuate. The current plan I have is to make sure the asteroid's on an irreversible course, call the Normandy in and get the hell out of here. Just us, no Project people or Dr. Kenson. We can't risk indoctrination. Now I just need to figure out how to ensure the Project succeeds. If they're indoctrinated there's no way they'll actually go through with it.

But even if this goes off without a hitch, the Reapers will only be slowed. They'll reach another relay, and then start carving their way through the galaxy. Months, years—it's too soon. We'll barely be able to preserve our knowledge, let alone people—and that's if everyone starts singing kumbaya.

The mission takes priority. I can puke and shake in terror later. Have to focus.

Entry 75 - Sol System, Sedna Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I stopped the invasion for now; three hundred thousand lives paid for a stay of execution for us all. Batarian or not, I still killed a number of people I can't comprehend in terms of a body count. You think of six-digit populations in terms of who fills out a colony capital, or a small city on Earth. You don't think of that population as the body count of one person.

I wonder if the crew of the *Enola Gay* felt the same way when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. One move, one moment—and then hundreds of thousands of people were gone in hellfire. Thousands more suffered agonizing deaths; the nature of war itself was forever changed.

I've proven through my actions that relays can be destroyed. How will that change the galaxy? If we get desperate in our fight against the Reapers, will we start destroying relays and fleeing to other systems?

Maybe it'd be worth it. Find some way to catch the bulk of the Reaper fleet in one location, then detonate an entire dreadnought's worth of antimatter charges at the relay. We'd probably need the system to still be populated, so the Reapers would be lured there. It'd also only work on their first assault, before they spread throughout the galaxy.

This is the state of things now. Numbers, just numbers. How many people are here? How many are worth killing a Reaper? I just killed over a quarter of a million just to slow the Reapers down. Maybe it only bought us a month. Ten thousand souls a day to keep the monsters at bay.

The worst part is that's such a smaller body count than the fight against the Reapers, even if it takes years. It makes SENSE. Embracing mass murder on an industrial scale is a better alternative than the Reapers in our galaxy.

Admiral Hackett debriefed me in person just a few days after we made it out of Bahak. I told him the truth; he understood. He approved of my choices; he even said he'd fight to make sure I'm not scapegoated too hard by the Alliance.

The Alliance looks after their own, I guess. Even when we die and work for a terrorist cell. Probably helps I told the Illusive Man to fuck off...I wonder what that bastard would've suggested I do with the artifact Kenson found? I don't even want to imagine.

The one thing I can take as a positive is that Harbinger itself called me an 'annoyance.' If a being of unimaginable power thinks of you at all in a negative light, I guess that's something. Mosquitoes are an annoyance, and sometimes they kill people. Just need the right tools.

I don't know. I'm just...numb. I've seen visions of galactic devastation and horrifying constructs beyond belief, then I've seen them in the flesh. But there's killing because you need to; hell, because you want to. Then there's this. Killing on such a scale that it's just...

I'm thinking I'll have a lot of time to think about what I've done. The Alliance has to put me on trial, to placate the batarians. Can't have us fighting a war when the Reapers arrive, after all. If I'm lucky I might avoid execution. Though, if the Reapers arrive soon enough I might pray for a quick death.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 76 - Tasale System, Illium Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

This is my final entry; of this log at least. I'm handing it off to Kasumi with instructions to bring it to Liara for safekeeping. She and everyone who doesn't want to be a part of a media and military circus is getting off at Illium; we've got enough resources in credits and minerals to ensure everyone who wants can have a nice payout. More than enough to get wherever they want in the galaxy and have a place to stay.

Joker's committed to staying, as he puts it he's too valuable a helmsman to be tried. The rest of the ex-Cerberus crew is probably going to leave—and I'm ordering all of the ground team to leave here. Garrus would go in the same cell with me, I know that—but we need him and all the others out there. Preparing, warning of the coming invasion.

As for Miranda...that was harder than I thought. We were just starting to find our groove; I don't doubt I won't have much chance to communicate with the outside world once I'm on Earth—let alone former terrorist officers. Really, I feel for Tali the most. She has no one; no home or...well, anything. Nowhere to go. I'll see if Garrus can keep an eye on her, maybe.

It doesn't feel right to just go and sit in a cell while the Reapers are on their way, but there's no alternative. Honestly, at this point I'm expecting to die fighting the bastards. The pirate life is appealing, and staking out a home on Omega is tempting—but I can't run from this. Besides, part of me knows I need to face some kind of consequence for Bahak. To keep me grounded, to make sure it doesn't become too easy to kill at that scale. It's so...divorced from anything I've done before. I still can't even really believe it happened. But it did.

<Long Sigh chuckle> If it wasn't for my crew, I would've ate my pistol the first time I saw the Collector ship's insides. I can't do this alone. Glad I have good people at my back. I just wish I could set them up better than being booted off our ship with severance pay.

That's enough for now. Time to go to Earth.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|