

Entry 0 - Earth, Vancouver Alliance Facility

Two months, three weeks, six days and some odd hours since I stepped off the Normandy. Feels like yesterday, but I do have ways to pass the time.

The arrest was straightforward; obviously I went without a fight as did the rest of the Normandy crew still aboard. They even had the decency to not walk anyone but me out in public. I get why they did that; appearances for the batarians and all.

Earth is strange to be at; we're all from here in some way, but to me it just looks like a Citadel ward but on an entire planet. Vancouver's a nice enough city though; being that the Alliance has its earth HQ here it's probably fairly safe from any non-Reaper threat.

I thought about escaping a few times, but it'd stir up more trouble than it's worth—and where would I go? I'm a known quantity and there's more eyes on this place than even the Shadow Broker can see. I wonder if Liara's keeping tabs on me in here. She might even have a camera.

Maybe she'll see that. No visitors, at least other than the stationed guards. No outside news either, save for what I can coax out of Vega. Apparently fire and death isn't raining down all our heads yet. Small victories, or something like that.

My trial's expected to be at the end of the year; there's probably a lot of negotiations and bargaining going on, to maintain peace. Seems Udina can't quite wrangle the batarians even with all that political power. Jackass.

I only just got this datapad; it took two weeks from me asking to getting it. I'm surprised I got it at all to be honest, but it's not even designed to be able to connect to anything else. I could hack it to transfer files elsewhere, but I'd need an omni-tool for that. And freedom.

You'd think I'd have more to write after a couple months. It's probably for the best; no doubt they'll scan everything I write before I leave this cell.

Entry 1 - Earth, Vancouver Alliance Facility

Vega's an odd one. Not for how he acts, but for who he is. The man's almost as built as a krogan and has tats plus hair that should put him as a merc, but he's nothing but respectful. Quiet, even. Smarter than he lets on, too. He's a good soldier. I wonder why someone with his talents is stuck here guarding me.

I did have a bit of fun at this month's physical. The tech was new, clearly freaked out by my little scarring issue. I told her she could touch and poke all she wanted, then 'accidentally' crumpled the ends of the table I was sitting on. Few inches thick and my fingers bruised up good, but I'll take what entertainment I can get. My daydreaming and idle guessing games haven't really held up to month four.

At least I can get out and exercise more. I don't know who made that happen, but I'm grateful. I don't really need to do it; even idle my body maintains its muscle without me lifting a finger. I enjoy it though, being able to move and flex as I want—and punching things helps to vent off all that pent-up stress from being cooped up in a small room the rest of your waking life. I think I get why most ex-cons are less than stable now.

I don't know. I'd write more, but I'd hate to let something slip about certain places, people or things that's better left out of Alliance intel banks. You know what I mean, but sorry. I'm the one on trial, not them.

Great. Now I'm writing to people that don't exist. Screw it, I'll write if something comes up but I can't do this constrained self-reflection shit.

Entry 2 - Sol System, Relay Approach

Not in my wildest dreams, my most harrowing nightmares have I ever imagined what I've seen today. The Reapers made it into the galaxy. They attacked so quickly we had not even an hour of warning that SOMETHING was off. Arcturus had gone dark, and not even forty minutes later Luna base went dark too. Seconds after that, I saw a Reaper as big as Sovereign land atop several skyscrapers, obliterating an entire district in a single shot.

More came. Dozens. No two looked exactly the same, but they were all massive. Smaller ones that walked along the landscape, crushing individuals and vehicles underfoot. I saw a dreadnought over the river implode after a single shot from a Sovereign-class Reaper.

They deployed ground troops in ways that defy sense. Flaming meteors crash, and those inhuman bodies rose from the flames like demons summoned from Hell itself. Husks, warped mockeries of turians chittering in haunting electronic noise not unlike the geth. Batarians, bloated and devouring their own as often as they assault defenders with cannons that sprout from their arms. I thought I saw the worst of what the Reapers can do to organics when I was fighting the Collectors. I was a fool.

We haven't even had time to think. Anderson and I ran blind while he radioed for the Normandy. He stayed behind, leaving just a skeleton crew, Joker, Vega, Williams and I to flee Earth. He wanted to make sure the resistance had good leadership. I don't even know if he's still alive. The entirety of Vancouver could be gone by now, just several hours later. More, even.

Earth, the Sol system—it held the core of our fleet, the majority of our easily-accessible resources. It's gone, now. Even the survivors are doomed unless we rescue them. But it's not possible. There were so many Reaper ships in orbit, descending on the planet.

We got orders to divert to Mars from Admiral Hackett. We did, only to find that Cerberus has shown its true colors. There's something that we found on Mars. Some prothean intel, something that may let us destroy the Reapers. It's a wild goose chase, but it's all we have.

Williams might've died to secure that intel. Some android Cerberus sent to infiltrate fractured her spine and cracked her skull. Lots of internal damage. The Cerberus troops had modifications. Reaper tech. The Illusive Man himself spoke via comms to us while we were there. The way he talked, it was just like Dr. Kenson. His troops have Reaper tech, he speaks like that...Cerberus, they're little more than the new Collectors now. Even if they don't know it yet.

We don't need that. We don't need it to be harder. We're flying to the Citadel to beg them for aid because we have no other options. We aren't prepared, we weren't ready. Not even close. Ash dying on the ship here and now may end up being a blessing compared to what the rest of us might be forced to witness before we're all slaughtered by the Reapers.

Entry 3 - Trebia System, Menae Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Transferred back to an audio log, thanks to Liara still having my old equipment. If she's still alive, I'll have to thank Kasumi too.

Earth, Mars...it was all so much of a blur I forgot what happened. I was running on pure instinct; it's only now starting to come back to me. Another reason why I keep a journal.

We made it to the Citadel, Williams survived and is at a hospital on the Presidium. She's comatose, beaten bad. Doctors aren't sure she'll recover. Even if she does, I'm not sure our bond will. Seeing what the hell Cerberus became on Mars just reignited her distrust of me. I know it distracted her on the mission; it's probably why that android got the drop on her.

The Council was useless. Udina's sole strength, being a cunning, amoral political operative wasn't enough. They just didn't budge. The closest they came was the turian councilor; he offered a deal. Save one of his people's leaders, we get aid. Bastard...but at least that's something. If the asari and salarians want to play it alone? They can burn in Hell.

We barely even have a crew, so doing anything beyond begging will be difficult at best. Just me, Liara and Vega for a shore party. Whatever crew was at the Normandy for retrofitting when the Reapers hit. Comms officer, supply officer, a few techs and some guards. Not enough to run the ship effectively—or at all, if EDI wasn't still around. She and Joker are the only reason we have a chance at all.

At least we're not unarmed. Turns out my old crew left some presents with a trusted contact on the Citadel that brought them to our ship when we docked. Weapons, armor—a lot of the stuff we had before I turned myself in. God, what I'd give to have them back here. Might not make a difference versus Reapers, but it'd be a lot more encouraging than a near-empty ship and horrors in the great dark.

At least Anderson's alive. He managed to get a message out; I just got it an hour ago. I'm, I'm glad he's alive. I just...

We should be closing in on Palaven soon. Based on what the councilor said, Palaven's being hit like Earth was. I'm about to see two homeworlds on fire in a little more than a solar day.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 4 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I'll never get used to seeing worlds on fire. Looking at Palaven, you'd think it was a magma planet. There was a glowing orange spot as big as a small ocean...it was fire.

I don't know if our mission was a success yet—Primarch Fedorian died, but the new Primarch by right of succession, Victus is with us. Problem is, we still don't have a fleet to help shore up defenses elsewhere. Primarch Victus wants an alliance with the krogan before he's willing to send his fleets elsewhere.

I'll give the turians credit, they take dramatic shifts in command well. The moon we landed on had bases running like clockwork even while Reapers walked the surface, crushing entire platoons underfoot. We saw the strength of the Hierarchy there—and how little it mattered.

Perhaps the one piece of good news is we have Garrus back. Special advisor to the Hierarchy, high enough to have generals calling him 'sir.' As good as it is to have him back, I know we're taking a good soldier from Palaven—two, in fact.

I also know now that fighting as we know it, we on the Normandy? It's pointless. It's a hurdle to overcome while we do...I don't know, whatever we need to win. Build this mystery object, organize a galactic fleet. I'm good. Hell, I'm a goddamn terror to these Reapers. I cut them down in scores, and Garrus could hold off an entire offense by himself. But we can't kill a Reaper, let alone thousands. This is a fight beyond any of us.

Entry 5 - Apien Crest Nebula, Trebia System Outer Reaches

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Seems like I'll be doing even less fighting than I thought. Hackett's granted me full authority to form treaties, negotiate on behalf of the Alliance and act with basically whatever the hell action I want in order to make it through this waking nightmare. I've got the military authority of an Admiral and the diplomatic status of a head of state now...great. Negotiation is—look, I kicked a man out of a skyscraper because he wouldn't negotiate. I know times are desperate, but I just don't trust myself to not go ballistic if some uppity politician thinks that 'border security' is more important than pooling resources. Earth had great border security and now it's a goddamn abattoir.

We have to do whatever's necessary, I know. But dammit, if there was someone who's actually good at this sort of meeting-table business...

Some more good news at least. Ash is awake, well enough to send me a message. Apparently drugged up so much she can't speak in full sentences, hence the written message. I don't know if she's well enough to sit up, but I got her the collected works of Tennyson and Whitman since she'll be bedridden for weeks, at least. I don't know, it felt right. I remember she used to talk about poetry a lot, Tennyson in particular.

I wish she was still on board. I know our force is just a drop in the bucket, but familiar faces are good for morale. Loyal ones. I am lucky to have who I have, but the ship's feeling a little empty. I used to spend a lot of time just in the lounge with Tali and Kasumi, chatting about bullshit until I needed to get some shut-eye. Or the odd visit to Mordin, who'd either blast me with a flood of research info or...

I hope they're all safe, sound and killing as many Reaper troops as they can. What I've been reading, these force estimation memos Hackett has routed over and whatever intel Liara compiles? It's giving number to knowledge. We already knew the Reapers eclipsed us in every aspect, but even moves that would decide entire wars just have no impact. General Coronati of the Hierarchy flew his dreadnought armada directly between several Sovereign-class Reapers. He turned quicker, he shot quicker. That fleet took out 'several' Sovereigns. Several!

Palaven's on fire and the turian fleet's struggling to survive. The goddamn batarians are all but extinct...I know this is the point. The Reapers are seeking to crush us, not just kill us. They want us docile and weak so they can harvest whoever they don't kill. I KNOW this. But dammit if it isn't hard to see the chance for victory.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 6 - Utopia System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Specialist Traynor's a good for us. I was skeptical at first, she seemed a little too soft—but she's got a hell of an analytic mind. And she's cute.

Not that I'm getting any ideas; I don't know where she is thanks to a stint in the brig, but Miranda's my woman. I don't know where she's at or what she's up to, but as long as she's alive, I can wait. Not easy if I'm being honest; I never was the type to restrain myself when it comes to sex. But, she's worth it. And she has a lot more than just mindblowing sex that makes me love her. If I get the chance, I'll tell her that in person.

Anyway, Traynor's good—she found a lead that might be worth putting the war summit off a few days. The old 'turian distress signal' trick the Illusive Man used on us back during the Collector mission? He's doing it again with Grissom Academy this time. Sent out an all-clear EDI thought was suspicious. Traynor worked with EDI to confirm it...I don't know what Cerberus wants with the academy, but let's not find out. An entire school of bright young minds and powerful biotics? That's what we need—more people that can help with figuring out what this mystery prothean device does. The more we find out about it, the more I think that's our key to victory. Build it, use it, pray it kills Reapers. Deal with the problems of having something stronger than the Reapers once we've ensured we'll actually survive this war.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 7 - Asgard System, Borr Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I owe Traynor a drink. This is our first victory since the war began; it doesn't mean much in the grand scheme of things, but I'll take what I can get. Grissom Academy evac'd most of the student body, and we got the remaining students out safely. Cerberus wasn't even trying to keep up appearances...was I blind to how bad they were? Or did the Illusive Man change to be somehow worse than he was?

Apparently they've put a lot of their resources into a full-scale fleet. Cruisers, fighter squadrons and enough heavy machinery to take a homeworld. <Snickers> They didn't count on 'Subject Zero' being so damned pissed that she tore up an Atlas mech all on her own. Plus the other troops she all but eviscerated with her students.

Jack, students...I'm surprised, but not. I knew she'd find a place in the galaxy; I just didn't think it'd be this quick. Or with the Alliance. Honestly? It suits her. I'd love someone with her fire—and her biotics—to be on the team again, but those kids of hers are potent and she's leading them better than anyone else could. I hope they survive.

Compounding the good news, I got to speak with Anderson just an hour ago. Haven't seen him in battle gear since watching a documentary vid about his life...God, having him up here would be perfect. He handles the diplomacy and the strategy, then I lead up the fireteams. I miss him. But it was good giving him some good news.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 8 - Exodus Cluster, Utopia System Approach

|AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

War summit's on hold yet again; we're on our way to Eden Prime. Cerberus took the colony over, but the critical factor is there's a prothean artifact found there, one valuable enough for an entire cruiser's worth of Cerberus troops to go and secure. Anything prothean could be a lead, but this may hold the key to the device blueprints we found on Mars.

We need to do this first, to do this now—then on our way back to meet with the rest of the summit we'll stop by the Citadel. Not long, just a few hours to refuel and resupply as best we can—and so I can see why Miranda's asking to meet without saying anything more. When she's vague, it's always because she's shouldering a burden that she thinks is solely her own.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 8 - Pranas System, Halegeuse Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I've been praying for a miracle, and God decided to answer—in the way supreme beings are wont to do, naturally. The prothean artifact on Eden Prime was more than we could've hoped for. Not an artifact: it was a prothean. A living prothean, as fresh as he was when he went into stasis fifty-thousand years ago.

If he had been discovered several years ago, how much would've been different? One of the elder races of the galaxy, waking and immediately warning us of the Reapers? Directing us to prothean technology to tell us to see for ourselves. It's maddening to think. We were THERE, so close to avoiding all this death...

But now, there's nothing he can do. He's no scientist or scholar; he's a soldier like me. Warnings are pointless when your enemy is breaking your door down and if one soldier could make the difference in this war? I would've done it already.

He's still another ally. And maybe hearing the last survivor of a revered race say the same damn things I've been saying will help the ones with cold feet pay attention before it's too late. Plus, Liara's almost returned to her doe-eyed old self with him aboard. He's not what she was expecting, but we all can use any distraction in our free time. Me? Ryncol every night. Helps to keep the nightmares at bay, makes me forget this is crashing down around us and who gives a damn about long-term health issues these days?

I should probably slap myself a few times and knock the fatalism out before the summit. They should be arriving soon.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 9 - Pranas System, Sur'kesh Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It's really starting to feel like the end times, biblical undertones and all. The summit was more of a shouting match between the salarian Dalatrass, Victus and Wrex. Victus tried to play peacemaker; Wrex wants a cure for the genophage. The Dalatrass is predictably against even the concept, and in any other circumstance I'd agree. I respect Wrex, he's practically a blood brother. But he and Grunt with few others are the exception. The hundreds of krogan I've gunned down argue against letting them breed like rabbits.

But, we're facing total extinction. I'll take almost any alternative that doesn't end in a Reaper victory, and a krogan threat a few decades down the road sounds like a dream compared to the galactic horror show all around us.

Problem is I don't even have Wrex on my side. He found out that a genophage cure was close, very close—and he also found out I ordered Maelon's research destroyed. Mordin's former student who he executed for his gruesome work on Tuchanka.

The bigger complication is that his work wasn't fruitless. We've got a fertile krogan female aboard, and it sounds like she's completely fertile. As in, she doesn't carry the genophage. A cure might just be days of work away, with Mordin himself back on the Normandy. Even Captain—Major, Kirrahe was around...small galaxy these days.

Things are tense. We could jettison any chance of victory if we don't handle this krogan situation right. Wrex and his people need to stay on our side, and we can't chase the salarian government out. Kirrahe pledged the STG's support, but as much as I honor that commitment we need far more.

I just hope I can keep the salarians and krogan from killing each other long enough for them both to get the Reapers in their sights. Cure or not, that's what matters. Everything else is a means to an end.

God, I know that sounds callous. I know, I just—I got several messages while we were on Sur'kesh. Ash got contacted by Udina; she's been put on the track to becoming a Spectre. Thane is also at the hospital, which has me worried. And now Aria T'Loak is reaching out, apparently on the Citadel.

There's so many people that I want to go see, and so many more I need to see. Even with entangled communicators I still can't be everywhere at once. God! I just...

<Beat>

I have to get back to the main deck. Just needed a few minutes to gather my thoughts and shower.

<Sharp exhale>

See you soon Miri.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 10 - Aralakh System, # Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It always felt like we were sprinting after Saren, racing against time to stop him. I didn't know the meaning of the word 'sprint'. We plug one hole, three more break open. We managed to reach an agreement with Wrex and Victus, only for it to turn out that the turians had a planet-killing bomb planted on Tuchanka 'just in case'.

The Primarch's son died defusing it, along with the rest of his unit. Wrex nearly went into blood rage after hearing about it—and before any of us could even catch our breath, we had to leave the system to avoid a Reaper patrol. Burned so much excess fuel making random FTL jumps that we've got to detour to the Citadel for a resupply now. At least Mordin's work on a genophage cure can still continue while we stop by, but the clock's ticking.

Turian military discipline...Javik, the prothean we found on Eden Prime has said little—but he's shared enough about his people to get a notion. Conquerors who brought the galaxy's population under their sway, wiping their culture out until they were also 'prothean'. They fought merciless wars and never hesitated as a society. Salarian genius mixed with turian militant perspectives...even they couldn't beat the Reapers.

This device, the 'Crucible' as Hackett says the team's calling it is our sole hope. It really is, and that scares me to death. One mistake, one sabotage attempt—hell, one Reaper wandering into that region of space and it's all over.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 11 - Citadel, Presidium

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Looks like we'll be at the Citadel for a day, maybe two. The kinetic barriers on the Normandy needs maintenance as well as our engines <Scoff> The price of having cutting-edge hardware. At the time I didn't even consider long-term issues. But, it did let us outrun several Reaper ships on our way out of the Krogan DMZ. Ups and downs.

Genophage cure is still being developed, so...I guess we stay here until we're ready to go back to Tuchanka. Vega's right; the Presidium is just wrong. You're up there and you don't see barely any sign the galaxy's being slaughtered on a planetary scale. No war, not even whispers of it. I get it, this is a horror that will never leave the mind. I'd love to do nothing more than grab a crate full of Hallex, two of ryncol and find some uncharted world with a lot of snow and mountains. Set some pre-fabs down, hide them from view, blow up the ship I came in on and alternate between being high or drunk until the Reapers eventually find me. Then I blow my brains out after I see the first husk come into view.

But I can't do that. We can't just give up and flee. This isn't a war of honor, there are no noncombatants. Everyone that isn't a Reaper or working for them is an ally, no matter what they may have been before this war started. Even the batarians, what few are left anyhow. I saw a few of them in the prefab cities filling the docks; there was a preacher there doing what he could to keep his people from giving up entirely.

I don't follow their religion, but in times like these I don't think it matters much. Any port in a storm, any faith in a time of crisis. It wasn't what he was preaching that made me linger in the background for awhile, though. It was his desperation. I've never heard a preacher say 'don't give up' with such weary urgency before.

He's right. No matter what, if we keep fighting then we haven't lost. Not yet. We'll get back out there soon. For now, I'll see what I can do here. I did get the chance to visit Ash and have a real heart-to-heart; she should absolutely become a Spectre. She's every inch the soldier I am...maybe even more. She's the kind of loyal you want because it's not blind loyalty. I just wish she could accept that I'm telling the truth about Cerberus. I never trusted them, I never liked them. But they were the only way I could get the resources to stop the Collectors. Maybe we're just too different now.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 12 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Being a desk jockey is a goddamn nightmare. It's what I become when we're stuck in a place that doesn't need something shot for more than a few hours; there's always battle reports to review or in this case, outreach to be made to just about anyone who listens.

I did get to finally meet up with Miri. Looking as good as ever of course, but the circumstances could've been better. Her sister, Oriana is missing, and Miri isn't the type to worry at the first sign of trouble—even with her family. I didn't have the heart to say that missing people at this point is just a euphemism.

She's always welcome on the Normandy, and all she has to do is say the word and I'll come running. Even with all this crashing down around us, my priorities haven't changed. The Collectors threatened everyone I care about, and now the Reapers. They're who keep me getting out of bed in the morning when I strip away everything else.

I also had a run-in with Kasumi. A matter of galactic diplomacy that threatened the hanar homeworld, thanks to the DUMBEST goddamn hanar I've ever had the displeasure of speaking to. I offered her a spot too, but I could tell that the trauma of the Collector base was flashing through her mind as I asked. So she's helping procure whatever she can for the Crucible project, and providing her tech expertise. She gets to be at the safest place in the galaxy and we get a gifted technological mind. If only all our victories could be so neatly wrapped up.

Entry 13 - Aralakh System, Tuchanka Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Left the Citadel on a positive note. Aria has set up shop in a bar near the Presidium—Cerberus took Omega and booted her out. I don't know how she plans to take it back, but in the meantime we've got a beneficial arrangement: I helped her get the Blood Pack, Eclipse and Blue Suns back in her lane and she's got them ready for retaking Omega. In the meantime, they're going to be deployed to help shore up defenses wherever needed. Any allies are better than no allies, I have to keep telling myself. Plus, Aria retaking Omega means Cerberus is denied a stronghold they very much wanted.

EDI and Joker seem to be doing rather well too, especially now that EDI took over the android we recovered. It's more than a little strange seeing Joker 'interested' in a machine, but all I can say about EDI is she's embracing her newfound freedom as any organic. She's thoughtful, curious and...and she's a person. I want to deny it, everything I've learned over the years wants me to deny it—but when I talk to EDI? It's like talking to a human being. Uncanny, like David Archer perhaps—but still human.

I'm glad we were able to rescue the Grissom students. David was with them. He even recognized me. He thanked...

<Beat>

He looks so much better without tubes and clamps. God damn his brother. At least David wasn't ruined by the trauma. Add him to the list of people I'm fighting for.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 14 - Aralakh System, Tuchanka Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We're back over Tuchanka, and Mordin's cure is ready. The plan is to go down within a few kilometers of the Shroud facility, gather our forces and storm it. There's a Destroyer-class Reaper guarding the facility; I think just in case. Can't imagine they'd send less than a Sovereign-class if they knew it was us. Still, it is a Reaper and we only have a token force that can attack from orbit. Not even a single cruiser...it'll have to be a ground assault. There's a lot of cover in the ruins near the Shroud, but there's likely to be a lot of Reaper ground troops as well.

Even assuming we manage to take the Reaper down, there's still the cure. We need the krogan...we need them badly. But the Dalatrass made an offer. If we don't cure the krogan, if we just let them believe it the genophage was cured then we get the full support of the salarian fleet—and their engineers. That's the real prize: salarian minds en masse all working to build the Crucible.

The Crucible's our key to victory—and this would also solve the potential issue of unbound krogan growth leading to another war immediately after this one. The only problem is I'd be asking an entire species to fight and die for a false promise. Wrex and I almost came to blows on Virmire; this would make him as mortal an enemy to me as the Reapers themselves. And Mordin...he won't go along with this. He's too smart to be tricked; that leaves just one option. One fate for the man who fought at my side, saved the entire Normandy crew with his research and is one of the most fundamentally good people I've ever met.

<Beat>

<Sigh>

I'm sorry Wrex. I'm sorry Mordin. The stakes are too high.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 15 - Aralakh System, Tuchanka Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

<Beat>

<Voice Crack>

I...damn this wear. God, damn it. For all that we save, we lose so much more. Maybe we've saved more than we lose. I can't see the scales clearly anymore. Maybe just...

<Beat>

I couldn't do it. The cure, I couldn't stop it. Eve picked up on my mood, she asked about it out of goodwill. Wrex and I started returning to how it used to be. Hopes were high, and I was keeping that damned secret the whole time. We fought a REAPER on foot, and one of my nightmares crushed the other before my eyes thanks to Kalros, the Mother of all Thresher Maws. She lived up to her title...we got our opportunity.

I, I faced Mordin at the Shroud facility. Just us, everyone else retreated. I pulled a gun on him. I have killed THOUSANDS before with my own hands, and I've condemned hundreds of thousands more to an inglorious end. I'm one of the worst killers in the goddamn galaxy, and I just couldn't do it. <Voice Crack> Mordin didn't flinch, he didn't hesitate!

He had the fire of righteous determination in his eyes. Then he turned his back and walked to the elevator. Said, "Stop me if you must." That kind of fearlessness, that level of courage I can't even fathom right now—that's what's needed to stop the Reapers. And he was my friend.

<Extended silence>

He died at the Shroud. It was unstable; it blew up minutes later. He...he nodded to me as the elevator rose. It broke me.

Eve died too, I don't remember if I said that already. Stresses of the cure process. Wrex and the other krogan honored her at the Hollows. The shaman proclaimed her the true 'Mother of all Krogan'. Wrex called me a friend of the Krogan, and of him. They looked so hope...

<sniff, muffled sobbing>

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 16 - Aralakh System, Tuchanka Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I needed to talk to someone who could understand this feeling, the feeling of total death and destruction wrought at your own hands. I didn't even know I needed it, but I found myself earlier talking to Javik. Just questions about his people, and what he grew up learning about life. We're similar; we both knew strife and loss from an early age. But I was lucky enough to have those moments of grief not rule my life; Javik had no choice but to become what he is.

I don't know if I got any answers from our conversation; I don't know if there are any answers. I just feel myself searching, praying for any solace I can get. I'm not sure if I'm even praying to God anymore. To be entirely honest, I can't tell if I still believe there is a God, or if it's just me clinging to familiar things in the face of total extinction.

The only thing I know for real is that Mordin gave his life for the krogan to have a chance at redeeming themselves. He, until the very last moment embodied a strength of will I hope I can channel even a fraction of. I hope next time I face a trial like that, whatever piece of him is still there—a spirit, or just a memory—keeps my soul steady. Winning this war is all that matters, but if we devolve into just brutal calculus then we're no different from the Reapers and deserve to share their fate.

Maybe I'll start believing that soon. I don't like downtime anymore.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 17 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

In less than two days, I've lost three of the best fighters and most loyal people I could have ever hoped for. Mordin Solus, Thane Krios, Ashley Williams. Three people who at one time went to the gates of Hell with me, because I needed them to. Three people who have died for me, each in their own way.

We, we were going...going to the salarian councilor's office. To meet her. We got to the Citadel and found that Cerberus had attacked it. Full platoons, mechs. So many casualties. It was just like the geth attack three years ago. Fought our way through them all, made it to C-Sec's offices and Thane was out fighting even though no one would've dared ask him to give what little time he had left. He was the one who warned us, telling us he...

<Pained Grunt>

He warned us, made sure we knew it was a trap. The Council was in danger, we had to find them—the salarian councilor, she said Udina did all that. The attack, he was staging a coup. Some assassin showed up. Stabbed Thane. We had to leave him there. I hate the Council, I hope they all burn after this war is over—but until it is, they...

No. No I don't hope they burn. I...we caught up. Ashley was there. Spectre gear, she looked like she was born to be one. I, she—she wouldn't back down. She wouldn't listen, she just didn't...

Anderson accepted her onto the Normandy. I had to, I had to choose between her or Kaidan. There was no right choice, but I still had to make the call. What does it mean now, that I let Kaidan die only to kill the woman he died for? How is everyone dying left and right when we went on a suicide mission and everyone survived?

Williams, she wasn't...she didn't even ask why. I don't even know if she died thinking I was a traitor or not. All I know is when I shot her, I could see her face. She didn't look surprised. She didn't even flinch. She expected me to do it.

Thane died better, at least. No betrayal, no grief. I don't deserve the peace he had at the end, but he still wished it for me. His...his last words were to ask for forgiveness on my behalf, and pray that I find my way to...I don't even have the words. I can't imagine a place that good. It's not meant for me.

But I will try to honor that wish, and be worthy of the dying words of a good man. To do anything else would dishonor his memory.

<Sharp Inhale>

I'm so sorry, Ash.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 18 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I haven't been sleeping well. Or much at all. Few hours, until the dreams wake me up. I don't know if they're nightmares or happy memories. I hear the people I've lost, but I can't see them. It's just darkness all around, with faint glimpses of something beyond. Feels like purgatory. Like I'm stuck in the abyss, only getting to experience faint echoes of those who have gone on to a better place. Wherever that is.

We've been flying scouting and rescue missions in what used to be Alliance space. Feels odd calling it that now that Reapers control the whole damn spiral arm. We took some heavy damage when a Destroyer-class Reaper got the jump on us while we were scavenging; if we didn't have that new armor? We'd be done for. More stops at the Citadel, more repairs.

There was, earlier today—that reporter bitch, the one who tried to get the jump on me twice before. She uh...it was odd seeing her again after last time at first. But, I don't even know how I did it—but when she started throwing questions at me, I saw right through them. She had venom in her words and was accusing more than asking...she was scared. Just like all of us. Maybe a little piece of Thane was helping me keep my cool. We talked, I...I don't know how, but I helped her get her resolve back. More of that iron will we need.

It'd shake everyone's confidence if they knew the truth, but how I keep it together? It's seeing other people doing the same. Maybe that wasn't true before, but now? I need that, otherwise I lose it. Feels like what Wrex described krogan blood rage as one time. I just panic, but I'm fighting, not fleeing. That urge grows, and I lose myself if I'm not careful.

We did get another familiar face and a medical officer back on board—Dr. Chakwas. It took Joker to make me snap out of it; I almost told her no. She's the best, but I just don't want to see anyone else I care about die. I was prepared when we went into the Collector base, but I got too complacent after we won. I was so stupid.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 19 - Athena Nebula, Parnitha Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Javik might be the only other one who understands total war, and the sacrifice of unimaginable numbers for victory. But Garrus understands losing a comrade. He hasn't lost his soul yet, much as he might disagree with me about that. That unflappable turian discipline...he said he's a bad turian in the past, but I've never met a better one.

We spent some time at the Normandy's memorial wall. Thinking, remembering all those who fell. The wall has a few more names now, but it's...not nice, but peaceful. It's a good place to confront their loss.

There's a lot of empty slats left there. God willing, we won't have to add more room. But for all our grief, we're just a few people out of billions who have lost just as much—if not more. Every moment we waste means countless more die.

But there is some good news—for the galaxy, not just us. The Crucible is estimated to be at the halfway point. It's massive, like building something as big as the Citadel. Now the conversation is starting to shift from 'can we build it' to 'can we use it.' There's concerns that something that powerful, something that can destroy the Reapers might take us out along with it.

If the choice came down to me, to kill everyone in the galaxy if it meant taking down every Reaper, every monster the Reapers created? I'd do it. I'd do it, make sure some sort of vid or sign was left behind that tells anyone who survived what was done, then end my life if I survived the blast. Not even out of grief—no one should make a decision like that and walk away. But if that's what it takes? I won't hesitate.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 20 - Nimbus Cluster, Pelion System Approach

When Samara first joined our crew, I was honored and intimidated. Her Code seemed so rigid, that even with the oath she swore I was worried we'd come to conflict. Then I worked with her, helped her track down Morinth—and I saw what she actually was. A broken woman, proud and ashamed of the monster her daughter became, but trying to help her the best way she could imagine.

I had hoped I'd never meet her again after we parted ways, because now that she was free of her oath to me she'd be able to pursue and try to kill me—which she said she would be compelled to do if we met again. But this war pushes such concerns down.

We went to an asari monastery that turned out to be where the Ardat-Yakshi are kept—those who willingly submit to becoming cloistered inside, that is. The Reapers got there first, and turned the Ardat-Yakshi into monsters that reflected what they're capable of. Horrifying wretches that scream, whether to instill terror in us or because their existence is nothing but torment I can't say.

All that can be said is that the Ardat-Yakshi trait is exceedingly rare, and we ensured that a lot less of those monsters can be created now. We destroyed the monastery, but most of the Ardat-Yakshi died, save one.

Why do I bring all this up? Because Samara was at that monastery, as it's where her two other daughters were. One died setting off the bomb—it was either that or turn into a monster herself.

I killed the other. Falere, her name was. If Samara still lingers in spirit she'll no doubt want me to suffer as she's suffered all her life. She...killed herself, in order to not betray her Code which dictated that an Ardat-Yakshi could not exist outside of a monastery—a monastery we destroyed.

Another soul that joined my crew dies, all because I was too slow to stop her. I never expected Samara to do that. In retrospect, I didn't know her as well as I thought.

I wanted so badly to honor her sacrifice. But I couldn't risk Falere turning. She's just one asari, and the Reapers...no. The risk was too great. I won't ever forget that tragedy. Centuries of quiet solitude and a proud woman who spent all her long life righting wrongs...all brought to an end by two shots. My shots.

Garrus blames the war, and in a sense he's right. Without the Reapers, none of this would have happened. But I still pulled the trigger with Samara. I pulled the trigger with Ash. I pulled it with Kaidan, and the way this war's going?

I don't deserve the honor of having such staunch allies.

Entry 21 - Theseus System, Sharring Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Back on the original Normandy, Dr. Chakwas and I made an agreement that when it came to her medical opinion, she's the lead authority. That's how it's established in regs, but that was more of a personal delegation of duty. Informal.

That's why I let her recruit a psychologist and have me sit down with her, even though—it's not that I don't like psychologists, but what's the point? We face horrors every day and are slowly chipping away at our souls just to have a ghost of a chance at winning this war. Krogan, turians, humans and more are dying by the millions galaxy-wide every single day for no other purpose than to stall. It's one giant diversion tactic—make the Reapers think we're fighting to survive when we're actually just building a big...

Riiight. Dr. Pavina told me to be mindful of when I start to hyperfocus on a single subject. Easier said than done. <Sigh> Out of respect for Dr. Chakwas I'll keep up regular meetings with her. Maybe the rest of the crew will benefit from having her around. But no amount of guided introspection's going to help me get over gunning down several of my closest allies. Mindoir, Akuze—that wasn't my fault. This time, their blood's on my hands.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 22 - Minos Wasteland Nebula, Fortis System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

When I saw Jacob wounded and fighting off Cerberus troops, I nearly went into a frenzy. It was like I was back on Titan again, fresh into the survival-at-any-cost hell of N-school. Turns out he was playing defender to a group of Cerberus defectors; scientists mostly, with a few others beyond that.

He lived; most of the scientists got out too. They're safe and sound working on the Crucible project. I asked him to join us, but Jacob's always been his own man—I have to respect that. That's one name that won't be going on the wall anytime soon, God willing.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 23 - Valhallan Threshold Cluster, Paz System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Traynor's fallen into shipboard life well; I'm impressed. For someone who's never served in space before she's adapting well—and has a little bit of an insubordinate streak like Vega. Not where it counts, just in chitchat.

I like that in my crew. Tells me they know when to focus up and when they can relax; keeps their head balanced. And as ridiculous as chess is, taking an hour to just not have anything else on my mind but the game and a friendly face? I can breathe a little easier now.

I know before, I was complaining about being the diplomat, having to stand in meetings while people were fighting, dying all over the place. I'm not saying I don't want to fight—but I'm not as against having time to contribute in ways that don't...hell, I can't even find the words.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 24 - Skepsis System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Wrex sent a message requesting us to look into why one of his scouting parties vanished. The reason he's asking us instead of sending more of his troops? Rachni. His scouts reported sightings and stayed to investigate; now they're not checking in. If the rachni are around again we need to know, so we can prepare. For what, I don't now—I had hoped their threat would've ended for good back on Noveria. I shouldn't be surprised; Cerberus was able to bring me back to life. Reapers, with their tech? They could've possibly created new rachni from just organic paste and raw elements for all I know.

Doesn't change the mission. Does mean I'll be late in following up on a lead Hackett sent me about a promising scientist on the Citadel who's been researching ancient cultures or something. I doubt he's going anywhere after the attack.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 25 - Ninmah Cluster, Maskim Xul System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We made it to Aralakh Company in the nick of time. They were good, but not prepared to take on a nested rachni queen bolstered with Reaper tech. The queen is dead and the Reapers are cut off from at least some of their mutant rachni artillery.

More importantly, Grunt is alive and recovering. Turns out he's the leader of Aralakh, which was made by Wrex from several krogan clans to show their strength as a people. I'm proud of Grunt, but not surprised at all. It's in his blood, and no matter what Okeer thought or tried to do you can't instill that in a tank. That's all Grunt. Though him being 'pure krogan' saved his life; I thought he was dead. Held off an entire swarm of rachni so we could escape and it took everything I had to not say anything. It'd dishonor his status as a krogan leader to be pulled away like that. Thank God his stubborn ass survived. Hell, he's stable now—Dr. Chakwas looked at him, made sure he stopped bleeding but krogan resilience...no wonder Palaven's holding steady even against the Reapers.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 26 - Annos Basin Cluster, Pranas System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Admiral Hackett sent an interesting package of intel after our conversation today. We had sent our combat data from the Reaper on Tuchanka, and that was cross-referenced with existing knowledge of thresher maw capabilities as well as the glut of data coming in on Reaper encounters both topside and in space.

We knew they're not invincible, but we're starting to be able to comprehend them as opponents, not devils from Hell itself. They can create shielding that renders whatever's shielded impervious to harm, but it's not viable for their own bodies. They use kinetic barrier tech, and that's not infinite. What's more, if they land on a planet's surface they have to lower their barriers considerably in order to power their eezo core enough to counteract their enormous mass.

There's other vulnerabilities, but it paints an encouraging picture: we can hold out. We can find ways to keep the Reapers at bay, and buy us some time—enough to not just rush the Crucible to completion, but make sure it works how we want it to. But we need troops, we need ships—we need every advantage we can muster and we need to use them all to their best effect.

Frankly, what gives me the most motivation is the knowledge of how a new Reaper is built. It's painstaking, insanely inefficient. It necessitates an entire species be harvested over years, decades even—and there are only so many species they harvest in a given cycle, I'd wager. No more than ten or twenty, tops.

The Reapers use mass relays, which means with a new sensor array we salvaged and sent off to the Crucible project, we can track every ship in the galaxy. Real-time data, at most a second or two of lag from across the galaxy's expanse. Since we can filter via ship registration, we'll soon find out exactly how many Reapers there are and what cluster they're in at any given time. I'm betting there's more than twenty that've been destroyed since this war started.

Even if we lose, we'll have made this cycle far more trouble than it's worth. And we're planning for every eventuality. Numerous species are deploying data caches and capsules to remote systems, deep space, even out into dark space. The prothean beacon on Eden Prime is what let us have as much warning as we got; perhaps next cycle they can do even better.

Liara actually has her own capsules she's spreading throughout the galaxy on various worlds. Data on the Reapers, the Crucible plans, information about us all—and me. It was touching to see she thought I was worth including...and her words were more than I deserve. I hope those capsules never need to be found, but if they do then the future's in good hands. Less painful ones, too. The VI installed in the capsules is a bit mouthy but not as invasive as prothean imagery flashing through your brain.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 27 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We're having trouble tracking down this Dr. Bryson. I asked Commander Bailey to see if he could look into them, but with the Cerberus attack the whole of C-Sec is busy cleaning up the damage. We might be stuck for a few days...feels wrong spinning our wheels, but Admiral Hackett gave me this lead personally. It's got to be more than just a goose chase, and there's not much else going on that can't be handled by an assault team like the hundreds already deployed.

I don't know, I guess I can see if there's anything that needs doing in the docking bays. Or maybe Cortez could use an extra pair of hands for shuttle maintenance. Not as good as he is, but it's something to do. Going to a bar just feels off right now.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 28 - Widow System, Presidium Commons

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

If you had told me at eighteen that my best friend and goddamn blood brother would be a turian, I would've punched you in the face. Yet I'd jump in front of Harbinger's main gun if it meant saving Garrus. No doubt.

Not only has he been there from the start, always ready to go the moment I need him—he's his own man. He's learned, he's grown and he isn't just a loyal soldier, but a leader in his own right. He and I both know the stakes, know the grim reality of this war. And yet he still manages to find the time to do something stupid like what we did. Good thing he's former C-Sec and I saved Bailey's life, otherwise we might've gotten swarmed while we were taking pot-shots under the traffic lane.

It was fun, though—first bit of genuine, mindless fun I've had in over half a year. Might be the last bit, but...it's a good memory to keep. He's good, though. Might be the only other person in the galaxy that can match me shot for shot. It's been hard beyond words, but even though I'm not worthy of these bonds, they're helping me do what I can so they're not wasted on me.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 29 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Ran into Zaeed earlier; turns out he almost got duped by Cerberus into being Reaper'd up. The man's been taking every job that's going up against Cerberus ever since, pay be damned. I'm surprised he didn't go straight to a remote planet and live out the rest of his days in peace, actually. He's a tough bastard and a career merc, but more than a few times he's talked about settling down. For a guy who was paid eight figures at least by the Illusive Man, he's surprisingly modest.

Still, seeing more of the old crew alive and well keeps me going. That and Vega. He's grown on me; I forgot what it's like to have a true blue marine on the team. Something about all the bullshit we both went through in training and the little quirks about shipboard service, maybe.

It's been nice taking these small moments, but we're heading out soon. Bailey tracked down Dr. Bryson's lab; no response from a call so we're heading out there personally. C-Sec's managed to clear out the obvious traps Cerberus left, but who knows what else is left?

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 30 - Widow System, Dr. Bryson's Lab (Citadel)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Keeping it brief, using this entry for later reference. Arrived at Dr. Bryson's lab, found him and assistant. Assistant became possessed by unknown force, killed Dr. Bryson. Later was released from force, then overtaken by it when C-Sec arrived. Effects similar to indoctrination; only other beings who showed capacity to resist indoctrination are Saren Arterius and Matriarch Benezia. Both extraordinary in willpower, trait not likely shared by lab assistant.

Dr. Bryson's lab focused on finding the entity or weapon that killed the 'Leviathan of Dis', the Reaper corpse batarians acquired decades ago. Current lead is tracking the whereabouts of 'Garneau', a contact of Dr. Bryson.

Dr. Bryson was interested in the Thorian, and surmised that it evolved outside the Reapers' plan due to not relying on mass effect technology. Hypothesis is that the Leviathan would also not need mass effect technology, and may be similar in concept to the Thorian.

Garneau's last location seems to be within the Aysur system in the Caleston Rift cluster. Determined this through cross-referencing...what was it EDI?

<Faint> Sightings of strange creatures, Reaper activity and planets with significant eezo deposits.

Yeah, that. On our way to the Aysur system. Let's find our Reaper-killer.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 31 - Pax System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We believe the Leviathan is a Reaper that for whatever reason isn't acting in alignment with the rest of its kind. The mind control, the possession...it's too close to their abilities to be anything else. The question is, why did it turn against its brethren? And why is it using these orbs instead of Reaper tech?

Maybe it was disabled but still active, and hijacked these orbs. Perhaps the orbs are some sort of communication device, and the Reaper can indoctrinate but not do anything more. But no...that doesn't make sense. Indoctrination is the forceful overtaking of the mind, and people can't last for years under the control of the Reapers without losing brain function. Shiala from Zhu's Hope is the only exception because the Thorian...

I'm getting Liara to gather any and all info she can on the Thorian, the Leviathan of Dis and Reaper indoctrination. We've got no other leads, so it's back to Dr. Bryson's lab. If this is a Reaper that went against its own kind, that means we might be able to use that to our advantage. If we can make the Reapers fight one another...this war might be just a bad memory for us all one day.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 32 - Hydra System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We tracked down the last known location of Dr. Bryson's daughter Ann after some digging for other members of the research team. It's one of two systems in the Pylos Nebula; from there? The search continues.

We might have the key to ending the Reaper threat in months, without having to rely on an unknown device that could destroy us all along with the Reapers. We might have a real victory in our grasp...it just depends on finding the Leviathan. And surviving our encounter. It doesn't want to be found, and even if it isn't a Reaper—it's as strong as one. If not even more.

It's starting to feel a little like chasing down Saren; us and no one else, flying across the galaxy in a race to find the key to stopping our impending doom. It feels like ages since I've been free of fatalism gnawing at my mind. <Sharp Exhale> We really might have a chance.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 33 - Tasale System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We've got Leviathan's location, right down to the system. The younger Dr. Bryson deduced how Leviathan's indoctrination works and let it control her while EDI traced the signal. Long story short, we know where it is but so do the Reapers. Now it's just a matter of finding out just what it is and why it's so insistent on staying hidden.

I do regret pushing Ann so hard. She might have permanent damage from what she endured. But she knew the risks, and she's the one who had the idea in the first place. Hell, she insisted on it. Vega's right to be concerned but this is bigger than any one person. I killed three hundred thousand to delay the Reapers; I'll kill a hell of a lot more than one woman if it means stopping them entirely. Just let the sin lay with me.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 34 - Psi Tophet System, 2181 Despoina Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Reapers aren't gods, no matter how they present themselves. They're machines, and I met their creator. At the bottom of the ocean on a forgotten world, it and its brethren lurked. It...they're difficult to describe. They resemble Reapers—or the other way around, actually. Massive creatures, beings that speak through our own senses. They, the one I spoke to claimed that their species lorded over the galaxy in eons past. They demanded 'tribute' from the so-called lesser races, but it didn't sound like the prothean style of sovereignty. It's like...even then, they lurked in the shadows. Focusing on their own existence and little else. Leviathan is fitting due to where we found them, but Sovereign may be a better word for their species. They act like kings.

But they made a mistake. They created an 'intelligence', a tool to solve the problem their subjects created—synthetic life that rebelled, that fought and killed their own creators. The quarians and the geth but ages past and mirrored countless times. This intelligence was designed to preserve life. Eventually, it determined that the creation of the Reapers and the implementation of harvest cycles was the best path forward, in order to figure out how to preserve life.

This entire war, the death of untold billions, trillions, even more—it's all because of the hubris of one race. The mistake of one machine, one AI. The endless cycle of synthetic and organic life fighting one another. The created fight their creators, and all life suffers for it.

When we were flying away on the shuttle, a Reaper—a Sovereign-class ship—tried to stop us. One of the Leviathans stopped it. It disabled the Reaper in an instant, letting it crash into the ocean.

It wasn't trying to save us. They will enter the war, not because of my argument—but because they've been discovered. They can no longer hide. They were not angered by this, even though I'm responsible. They are...They're not gods. Not even close. But I can't fathom a being more powerful than the one I spoke with in the black abyss of an unknown world.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 35 - Imir System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I feel different, after the Leviathan reached inside my mind. It learned everything it sought about me, and I saw glimpse of it. I'm...not the same as I was. When I see people, I feel faint...surges. Pulses of energy that I can't really see, but sense. It feels like there's a pattern to them that coincides with feeling, with emotion.

I don't know what to make of it. All I know is that I informed Admiral Hackett of our findings, and that there's plans underway to facilitate the Leviathan's sabotage of Reaper forces. Teams of covert agents will place more Leviathan artifacts in Reaper hotspots, letting their forces be controlled and turned against one another. A single artifact could stop a Reaper ground advance. Several, acting in tandem could stop Reapers, emphasis on the plural.

I wonder, maybe we'll be lucky and one of those Reapers will be Harbinger. It's the first, the oldest Reaper in existence. All others are made in its image, and it was made in the Leviathan's. How many lives has it taken? How many people have been snuffed out for this 'experiment'?

No more. We have momentum, we have forces prepared. The Crucible is still our best hope; even the Leviathans are too few in number to turn the tide themselves. But they're going to buy us so much time.

And once the Reapers are defeated, we'll figure out what to do about them. I don't think they understand the Reapers were a mistake. I think they just take offense at their own creations fighting back. There's so much more to think about, to process—but I'm tired. My head's pounding.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 36 - Crescent Nebula, Tasale System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We got word of a Cerberus comms base, a central nerve we could hit to disrupt their galactic communication. Went off to take care of it, and during the mission I...I don't know how to describe it. One of those sword-toting freaks found me when I was cut off from my squad, cornered me. She was closing in and all I had was my sniper rifle. Too close to use, too close to switch to something else. I had that tingling, that sense of someone else that I've had since the Leviathan was in my mind.

I, I don't know how to describe it but I reached out. I forced into her mind, and my urge to survive, my desire to kill the attacking forces, it passed to her. I don't know how else to describe it.

She staggered back, turned around and dove back towards the other Cerberus troops. Cut two down, injured a third before she stumbled. Maybe she was recovering; I never found out. Easier to shoot one of those when they're stunned and at range.

But I controlled her. Her mind didn't matter; it was what I wanted. I did that, just by...reaching out. Knowing I did that, knowing I can do that? It scares me to death. It's no different from what the Reapers can do.

Shit. For this war, I'll take any advantage. Including mind-raping my enemies. God help me if I start to enjoy this.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 37 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The best part about having the Leviathans working against the Reapers is they're a force multiplier for all our other efforts. Ground assaults and fleet battles matter more if we've got the Reapers distracted even a little, trying to keep their own troops in line. So Aria's gambit might pay off.

One of her contacts reached out to me when we docked. Aria's making her move against Cerberus to take Omega back. She's got a detachment of the merc fleet I wrangled for her for this, but the big effort will be retaking Omega itself. Ground assault, which is my specialty. So she wants me leading the charge—without the Normandy, or my crew.

There's not many people that could ask that of me and get it. Somehow Aria's one of them. She's had ample opportunity to screw me over before, but she's been straight in our all dealings. And she cares more about Omega than the Reapers care about harvesting us all. Obsessed, really...but I don't think this is a trick.

She'll give the Crucible project eezo, minerals, more ships—whatever Omega has that isn't nailed down if we succeed. That's good enough for me, especially since the Normandy can still function while I'm playing infiltrator. I'll tell EDI to plan routes for salvage and rescue that put the ship at minimal risk. I don't want them taking any unnecessary risks while I'm gone.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 38 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Tunnels

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Aria's plan was decent, but she got too cocksure. This General Petrovsky is good and Omega's been fortified almost as much as Arcturus Station used to be. Sneaking in on a Cerberus vessel was smart, but she called the general's bluff and he was holding. We made it past the defending fleet, but I'm having trouble seeing a path forward with the troops we have. Looks like I'll be getting full use out of my cloaking field.

Aria's a squad all on her own, so we still can punch through small-scale. Those rumors about her being an ex-commando have to be true; she's as comfortable in a pitched fight as I am and follows combat orders with ease. That part's the most surprising; but I guess she's more of a pragmatist than an egomaniac.

We do know Petrovsky is headquartered in Afterlife, Aria's old club and seat of power. We take him out and the rest of Cerberus' troops are fish in a barrel...but right now our best bet is going to cost a lot of lives. We take down their central power lines, disable the force fields keeping people trapped. Then while Omega's remaining citizens are fighting back—and dying in scores—we rush Afterlife and take Petrovsky out.

It's a brutal strategy, but it's what we've got. Cerberus can't be allowed to rule the Terminus like this; if the Reaper war goes south the vast expanses of uncharted worlds in this region might be our last holdouts. Besides, Omega's mineral resources are still in play—Petrovsky is definitely too much of a strategist to send away a massive bargaining chip.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 39 - Sahrabarik System, Omega Tunnels

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

A merc with honor and integrity, also Aria's former lover if I'm guessing right. Nyreen is an interesting woman; if we weren't in the middle of inciting a rebellion I'd be curious to know how the hell she ended up leading a former drug-running merc band.

That said, we have a bigger concern than Petrovsky's forces. Cerberus experimented on Reaper tech and created some creature called an 'adjutant'. They look like bulky husks and can apparently turn their victims into other adjutants. As Nyreen says, they're such a threat that if it wasn't for her locking the sector down they were in, all of Omega would be filled with the creatures.

The notion that if even one adjutant escapes, it could threaten a planet tells me we should blow Omega. Aria would kill me, but that's a danger I'm not going to risk—even for Omega's resources. But it's a last resort. If we can keep the adjutants isolated and vent them into space later on, there won't be a need to take such drastic measures.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 40 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Omega's back in Aria's hands, and the Omega 4 relay is off-limits to the Illusive Man as long as that holds true. I wonder if the Reapers will hit Omega now, or if Cerberus isn't THAT ingratiated with them yet. Long as we keep getting Omega's resources until that happens, the Crucible should be completed in record time.

On a personal level, I am glad Aria's back in charge. Omega's never been dangerous to anyone outside the cluster with her holding the reins, and she's got a big enough ego to never let it go again.

It was a bloody fight. We lost a lot; thousands of civilians died because I had to make a call—it was the right one, but that just adds to my counter. Nyreen also died, but she took all the remaining adjutants with her. They were a menace, almost as bad as a full-scale Reaper attack. Shame we couldn't take Petrovsky alive; he seemed like a man who kept his word and he told us he'd give us intel on Cerberus—a lot of it, befitting his station. When he killed Nyreen in front of Aria though, I knew he was dead. Call it a...miscalculation.

The Normandy's looking good; EDI and the rest of the crew kept busy while I was gone. We've now got a ship full of beings that, if I'm reading the report right used to be organics before they transferred copies of their intelligence to a ship. EDI and Traynor worked to negotiate with them while the Normandy was used to recharge their engines; as thanks, the ship's 'crew' has offered to lend their aid to the Crucible project.

Our biggest limitation seems to be man and ship power now. We've got the specs and raw materials are flowing in, but it could be a lot quicker if we had the Migrant Fleet. No one knows where they've been; only that quarians have been recalled from Pilgrimage en masse. Absent of any better leads, I'm ordering Joker to take us near the Perseus Veil so we can search for signs of the Fleet. When I was defending Tali at her trial, some of the Admiralty were talking about a plan to retake their homeworld. It wasn't speculative. This would be the worst time to do something like that...but as evidenced by how that trial turned out, quarians can be goddamn stupid sometimes.

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 41 - Dholen System, Charoum Orbit

|AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

We've gained a rough idea on where the Migrant Fleet has been thanks to the galaxy-wide realtime mapping on the Crucible project, but the trail ends at the Far Rim cluster. That's where Haestrom is, but as far as I know Tali got all relevant data from there when we got her onboard for the Collector mission. Cursory scanning doesn't show any signs of mass drive-core discharging in the planets within the Dholen system...maybe they're deeper in. The only other alternative is the Fleet came here, then went into deep space—or they never came out.

Alternatively, the Fleet could have went past the Perseus Veil. That's geth territory and they have the advantage, but it'd be suicide. If those idiots hadn't exiled Tali, then we could've at least had her as a point of contact. <Sigh> What's done is done. Maybe we'll luck out and come across a fleet patrol.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 42 - Tikkun System, Adas Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The quarians have gone militant. They've got stealth ships—because of Tali's time on the Normandy, I assume—and they've retrofitted all their ships for combat. Even the liveships. They're committed to retaking Rannoch, even if it costs them their entire species. I can't persuade that kind of fanaticism, and their fleet would be invaluable. I bet you see where this is going, yeah?

We're hitting a dreadnought, infiltrating it on foot and disabling comm broadcast systems on it. This is because the quarians pushed the geth to the brink, and they apparently did what Legion had worried about—accepted the Reapers' aid en masse and become their slaves. Now all geth are stronger, smarter and deadlier than ever. The relay in this system is under guard; only stealth ships can use it and the ENTIRE Migrant Fleet is here. Whatever fool decided to make this their strategy should be goddamn spaced.

I'm not even sure what we'll do after this. Help in the ensuing battle between thousands of ships? A ground assault on Rannoch? We came out here expecting to negotiate, or the worst-case scenario of finding that several Sovereign-class Reapers ambushed the Fleet.

I already made my mind up, but any better alternative, I'd take. If we leave then we abandon an entire geth army upgraded by Reaper tech that could attack the rest of the galaxy at any time. The Migrant Fleet is the current best hope of beating the geth now. Damn these idiots!

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 43 - Tikkun System, Rannoch Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I want to like quarians as a whole, but with impulsive bastards like Han'Gerrel in charge I'd rather pistol whip all their asses. He talks as if he's thought the strategy out, but taking out a major ship with your best geth expert and goddamn lynchpin soldier aboard? I would've hit the bastard in the face—visor, whatever—if I wanted to do more than leave a bruise.

At least we all got out safe. Me, Garrus—and Tali and Legion. Tali has been with the fleet; Legion we found aboard. It seems the fleet is willing to overlook exile if there's benefit, and the geth used Legion's prototype hardware to broadcast Reaper control to all platforms.

That's what I can surmise at least. Just stopping in here to take a few minutes, calm down so I don't risk a diplomatic incident a second time and prepare to head down to Rannoch's surface. Zaal'Koris crash-landed on the surface, and there's a Reaper base still enhancing the geth. With those enhancements, the Fleet will be demolished—but losing Zaal'Koris is losing the one voice against this selfish war. He was a slippery bastard during Tali's trial. Mm. Gerrel was decent back then too. Bastards, all of them.

It is good to see Tali, and even Legion again. Maybe once there's a lull in the fighting, I can reflect more on having them back.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 44 - Tikkun System, Rannoch Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The last thing I need right now is a goddamn ethical dilemma. I know why Legion would want me to see the history of the geth, especially considering what the true history is—but he needs to...dammit!

One side is desperate to survive and the other side is so committed to victory they've even put their most valuable ships at risk. They're two unstoppable forces, and if they fight each other then there's going to be nothing left but ashes. Not only will that not benefit us against the Reapers, but it'll be such, such a damn waste. Such a loss! The geth have sentience, they have life as far as anyone in their right mind can tell. The quarians deserve a second chance to do the right thing. I understand the prohibitions about AI are there for a reason, I know they can be dangerous—but this cycle of creation and destruction is no different from the Reaper harvesting. It doesn't have any purpose! It's just more death for no reason. There has to be a third way, a different option.

I just don't know if I can see it, let alone help the quarians see it. The geth, if Legion is right would be willing to cease fire if they weren't threatened anymore. It's just a matter of making the quarians see reason. Maybe once this Reaper base is taken care of, we'll have a chance to make that happen. If we can get both the geth AND quarian fleets...

We'll have more time to daydream later. Right now we need to focus up; the Normandy took some damage during the fighter assault and the shuttle's a no-go. We'll be using the Mako I requisitioned to deploy—I just hope I remember how to handle the vertical eezo core. This isn't gonna be bouncing around on an uncharted world with just some mercs.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 45 - Tikkun System, Rannoch Orbit

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The free space on the memorial wall just got a little smaller. Anyone who has problems with putting Legion on there can take it up with me. I just sacrificed an entire sentient race for this war.

It didn't need to happen. The damn quarians, that oaf Han'Gerrel especially refused to listen. They couldn't just take a few moments to wait and see, or even retreat! Seconds is all it would've taken. We could've doubled our resources, had an army that doesn't tire or wear down, and not repeated the same goddamn mistakes! What have we learned? Nothing! Just that if you have the bigger gun or faster reflexes, you can ignore your problems and never learn. If the damn KROGAN can rise above their past...

They can. They have; they call it 'The Miracle at Palaven'. A combination of strategic genius and the iron will of the turians with the unstoppable fury of the krogan. Enough to stop even a Reaper assault, if only for a time. THAT is what we're capable of if we work together. That's what we could've gained. Now, the quarians know if they build more AI they can just gun them down if it goes wrong. Or actually, they can't. They needed our goddamn help to do it. Next time? I'll probably be dead and they'll join me. That's assuming we survive this fucking war.

Oh, and speaking of hubris—the asari councilor wants to see me in person. The old turian councilor was a piece of shit, but I'd take him in a heartbeat if it meant getting the other two back. The other two were reasonable, at least.

<Sigh> Legion deserved better than what he got. Tali did the right thing, but...he fought with us. Just another damn comrade who died because of me. And the geth...I can't imagine how many sentient beings are added to my kill count. I might've killed more than some entire species by now.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 46 - Pax System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It's getting harder to see the 'after' of all this. I'm thirty-two; I've already died once, spent most of my twenties fighting increasingly massive conflicts and killed more people than I've seen. A lot more.

I don't feel like I'm made for the 'after'. I'm a soldier; it's all I've known. My childhood is harder and harder to remember; when I dream, I don't see happy fantasies or moments of my past. I hear the fallen, I see nothing but an enveloping fog that drains everything from me. I turn into a husk, a shell—and then I wake. But even those nightmares are a welcome relief from reality.

How many more will I kill to secure our victory, as fragile as it may be? I'm not the only one who's feeling the pressing dread of an existential conflict. Liara's passed on secret strategy reports from the Alliance—nothing that'd ever be talked about openly. They're technical documents on how to theoretically bypass FTL impact restrictions, as well as schematics for mass-manufactured thrusters. Two approaches for 'total war' against the Reapers. One turns a starship into a kamikaze attacker, the other sacrifices untold millions collectively, so the Reapers are taken with them.

They're not bad ideas. They might even be effective. It's like Garrus said earlier: the ruthless calculus of war. Ten billion for twenty; it'll be more like dozens of trillions for hundreds of thousands—if we're lucky. That's the problem with an existential war: victory is survival. Anything else leaves it unfinished.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 47 - Parnitha System, Thessia Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I know good asari, asari I like. As a people? Especially their government? The Reapers can take them for all I care. They're nothing but opportunistic schemers that look more appealing than the salarians, who at least make no attempt to hide their ulterior motives' existence. It's only now, when THEY are under attack that the asari councilor deigns to tell us of their state secrets that can help the Crucible. The sheer AUDACITY of holding something that important back while the whole galaxy burns!

I swear to God, I'm going to put a round in her skull once we win this war. I don't care if it gets other Spectres after me. And if I get the opportunity? I'll shoot the Normandy's guns at Thessia's parliament myself. Mark my goddamn words.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 48 - Widow System, Relay Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We were so close to having an answer to all this. The Crucible is nearly complete; all we needed was the Catalyst. It's mentioned in the plans, but we don't know what it is.

On Thessia, the artifact turned out to be an intact prothean beacon. I hope whoever decided to keep that knowledge a secret burns in Hell, and everyone they held dear. They deserve to feel the pain everyone who's died in this war did. Imagine if the beacon's knowledge was shared. People would've started to ask questions about the Catalyst stored in the data files. They would've found out! This could've been avoided!

God, I... <Sharp Exhale>

Another homeworld's lost, another civilization's been put to the slaughter. We didn't even get the data; Cerberus and that BASTARD Leng got there. They beat us.

But, fuck it. It doesn't matter. They don't have the resources, not even them! They can't build a Crucible and a Catalyst. They can know about it all they want, but the data's useless to them. We just need to track them down and put an end to their interference! All this time, we've been pecking at them, dancing around a total confrontation because it'd risk too many of our ships. But if they're holding the key to ending this war? The real key, the big gun that blows all the Reapers to bits? Throw our whole goddamn fleet at them. Throw us at them! Whatever it takes.

Traynor and EDI, they've come through again—along with Liara. She had the foresight to put a tracker on Leng's gunship. We tracked it to a system, but the trail went dark. Turns out, it's the same place that 'Sanctuary' is located—some apocalypse bunker and resort for the ultra-wealthy.

Massive income yet benign? That screams Cerberus front if I ever saw one. Either way, it's a good place to start the search. We've spent most of this war gathering allies just to hold out—we might be able to let them rest soon.

This was a defeat, but not a total one. And we're so close...so close! I'll rip Leng's goddamn entrails out and grind my heel into his heart until even his soulless ass begs for mercy. He'll pray to die like Petrovsky did. No, I'm not defeated. They'll wish I was.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 49 - Iera System, Horizon Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

My crew, they are...we're about to barge into what might be a Cerberus stronghold, desperate to get the intel we need to finish this war. Everyone's mourning, whether it be family, friends or entire species.

Liara's asking how I'm doing. Traynor's reminding me to get sleep. Joker, even with his family MIA after a Reaper attack is looking out for me because Anderson, who's facing a losing battle on Earth asked him to. Some times I have to sit back and just ask myself, 'how the hell can they even look me in the eye?' I know it's because I've led them through fire and worse, because I'm willing to do what it takes to end this war so everyone left can try and keep living. But there could be better people leading than me. People who could bridge that gap between implausible and impossible. I refuse to accept that there wasn't a way to save the geth and the quarians, or that we couldn't have kept salarian aid entirely while keeping the krogan on our side. Hell, there may have been something that would've stopped the Illusive Man from going off the deep end.

I'm not good enough to do any of that. I'm barely holding it together. Joker saw right through me. Every day I look at myself in the mirror. I see the scars showing my cybernetics, how my eyes are more machine than organic. I can punch steel and dent it without feeling a thing, and now I'm able to use something like biotics to control minds. I'm a god damned monster, barely even human.

Yet still, people follow me. They look up to me, THEY pray for ME. For my success, for my...

Just gotta hold it together a little longer. Me, and the Normandy. She's got damage we can't repair in the field, shuttle too—but we're so close.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 50 -

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I feel better now.

Ah, that's a terrible way to start this entry. It's true, but...whatever. I do feel better. Not happier, not nicer—but level-headed. Horizon was eye-opening. Cerberus was using Sanctuary as a processing facility to research indoctrination. They were turning refugees into husks, and using some method similar to the Leviathans to control the resultant Reaper forces. The Reapers caught wind of this, so when we arrived it was the aftermath of a one-sided slaughter, the Reapers winning of course.

We also found signs of Miranda being there. Once the video log she left said 'Henry Lawson' it started making so much sense. Her father, obsessed with his legacy wanted to achieve something monumental. So he teams up with Cerberus and tries to make the Reapers his pets.

<Pained Groan>

Agh...Alright. Calm, breathing...bunch of nonsense. We saved Miranda, and her sister. Their father's dead and Sanctuary isn't going to be a problem anymore. But we didn't find Kai Leng or the prothean data; just a lot of shipping manifests and data Cerberus left behind. Somewhere in all of it might be the Illusive Man's location, but we'll have to decipher it first. That could take weeks.

But we can't just go hunting Cerberus forces to beat the intel out, even if that would actually work. The Normandy needs repairs, badly—and as much as I hate to admit it, I needed help. I don't even remember Horizon after we killed Lawson Sr. EDI tells me that I started ranting about the Reapers, lashing out and pummeling whatever was in front of me. Just, losing my mind and...yeah. It got bad. She had to wrestle me to the ground and subdue me. Then I was strapped to a bed in the med-bay to make sure when I woke up I wouldn't lose my senses again.

Dr. Chakwas and Dr. Pavilla agree that it's likely an episode brought on by stress. Emotionally driven, not a sign of a neural issue.

So, the decision's been made for me—another annoying reminder that the CMO outranks everyone else on the ship in matters of medicine—that the Normandy is to be docked for an extended time on the Citadel. We're grounded.

I get doing it for the Normandy. I do, and it's not like the war effort will be stalled without us. We've got every damn ally we could conceivably get on our side, working on the Crucible. It still needs a little more work before it's ready, so even if we knew what the Catalyst was, we couldn't use the Crucible yet.

So fine. We'll regroup before we get the intel deciphered, track down Cerberus HQ, find out what the Catalyst is and then finish this fight. Worst case scenario, we still have the Crucible itself. I don't know how we could use it without the Catalyst, but we'll figure something out.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 51 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Admiral Hackett told me that Anderson wanted to give me a place to stay on the Citadel. With the repairs the Normandy needs, it's a good idea to let the engineers have unfettered access and all. Besides, EDI's keeping an eye on things.

This isn't an apartment. It's...hell, it's almost as nice as the place that jackoff Kasumi and I robbed a year ago—Hock, that's his name. How the hell did Anderson afford this!? Massive windows, more square footage than the human embassy, three bedrooms, lounge, full bar and, I-I mean this is a damn mansion!

He's given me so much. The Normandy, the opportunity to fly the new Normandy again, this...Hah. He wouldn't even hear a single word I said that wasn't 'I'll take it'. <Sharp Exhale> I know he doesn't think he's gonna survive the war. He framed it as helping Earth rebuild, but I know Anderson well enough to tell when he's holding back.

You know, I've only known him for a few years. I had just recently been transferred to the Tokyo from the New Orleans, and he just took a shine to me. My credentials got me there, but I had nothing proving I'd be XO material. N7 maybe, but I also had Akuze on my record. Soldiers who have trauma like that without command already tend to not get command. But he gave me a chance, and kept letting me prove myself. He's the first CO I've had who made me feel like serving in the Alliance was more than just a living. More like a life, something worth devoting myself too. Plus, when he asked me if I'd serve on the Normandy of course I said yes. Top of the line, bleeding-edge frigate? That's where the action is.

<Short laugh> How little I goddamn knew.

Shit, maybe I can try to...I can't forget the war, and I don't want to. But we need to be at the top of our game, and with all our forces holding steady? We have breathing room. Time to let the Normandy shine like she did when Joker and I took her out for the first time.

I keep thinking of Hackett, how he's spent this entire war in the safety of a ship bridge or the Crucible's observation vessels. He probably hasn't seen a Reaper up close at all. Yet, no one with half a brain's gonna tell him he's not where he needs to be. The man rose from a goddamn grunt to fleet commander, to now the most powerful human alive. If he AND Anderson think this is where I need to be right now? I'll have to trust them.

Guess I can at least change out of the dress blues. I sure hope the look helped negotiations I took part in because I always hated wearing these damn uniforms. Fatigues are so much better, god damn.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 52 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Well, I lasted about...five hours before someone tried to kill me. Not Cerberus, or any group I know—they talked as much as they shot and thought collateral damage was a funny phrase. I think in the firefight that followed I caused a good two hundred thousand credits in damage, so I guess the debris is a fifty-fifty split.

I mean, the troops were no issue to take down—they're one step above amateurs. Felt a bit unfair once I had the jump on them, really. Although I got a little carried away with the rotary cannon at the skycar dealership...blame Wrex. You see a krogan body slam a shuttle, you start forgetting how to act in civilized company. Still don't know why he thought dipping out of colonization meetings was worth coming to fight a bunch of merc...wait, no, that's dumb of me to say.

So someone wants me dead, someone who doesn't have the resources to take me on when I've got the Normandy I'm guessing. I was wondering how I'd keep entertained while she's being fixed up—but next time I go out in civvies I'm taking a goddamn pistol. This thing the mercs use is a mess.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 53 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I was figuring we'd just pull C-Sec vid records, scan for merc movements and then crash whatever den they're holed up in. Liara had other ideas. I trust her, and maybe I was feeling a little too much of that...what was it? Thessian Sunrise? Some mixed drink the bar across the lane had.

I can now say I've infiltrated a rich-asshole party twice in my life. And managed to gamble for an hour without losing more than a few hundred credits! I call that a good time...but I could've done without the airhead rich girl following me around because she wanted to 'totes know who did my eye mods'. Funny, most people don't even mention the cybernetics.

We miiiiight have a lead on who hired the mercs; the guy who made their weapons turned up dead at the casino but we salvaged data from his terminal. Shouldn't take more than an hour, but it's late and I already got shot at, fell through a fish tank, shot UP a car lot and crashed a party in one day. I'll make use of Anderson's immensely good will and see what a bed not on a starship feels like for once.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 54 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

<Unintelligible>

Clone Shepard: Now if you'll excuse me, the Normandy needs its captain. So...I SHOULD GO.

Brooks: Farewell, Commander. I guess...this is where "legends" go to die.

<Whirring, Loud Metallic Slam>

Wrex: Refresh my memory. Didn't we used to, win these things back in the old days?

Shepard: Can you believe her? She thinks she's so cool with a quip like that...ugh. It's repulsive.

W: Well, you can't be evil and good with one-liners. Wait, no that's a requirement.

S: And do I really sound like that? 'I should go'?

Javik: I am more concerned with the impregnable vault we've been sealed inside. Once was enough for me.

S: I'm more confident than she is. More in control. With me, it's more like: 'That's all for now.'

W: Spoken, like a krogan. Show 'em who's boss.

J: Commander, we are trapped in a canister of solid iridium. We need to escape.

S: Yeah! Much more assertive. And I left the bulk of that racist streak behind. Falling back on Cerberus being 'pro-human'? It's embarrassing.

W: Wait, you were against aliens? When?

S: ...Wrex, I chatted about my unease with so many aliens all the time next to you, back on the SR1. You know, with Ash?

W: Oh. I never really listened.

S: Really? You never eavesdropped?

J: It is doubtful we have much air left. An hour at most.

W: Never had a reason to. I don't wanna hear you and Williams badly flirting with poetry.

S: Hey! You WERE listening!

W: See? You're way more assertive than your clone! Can't fake swagger.

S: Don't change the subject! But, yeah, you know—leave 'em wantin' more.

J: Commander.

S: ...Mm. 'I shou-'

J: Commander! Why aren't you more concerned about this?

S: Hm? Oh. Glyph! You still out there?

<Beat>

Glyph: Yes, Commander.

S: Unlock this damn thing and go find the others! No one steals my ship, not even me.

W: 'O fiery is her wrath, yon captain of-'

J: Krogan. You are forcing me to beg. Stop.

S: You wanna make fun of a little culture? You, me, Armax Arena after we retake the Normandy. Highest kill—Huh? Oh Goddammit! I thought I fixed this!

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 55 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

So, shore leave. Maybe I'll find out what that's actually like. Or maybe there's going to be a half-krogan half-human chimera made in my image.

A fucking clone. What is this, Silver Age sci-fi? I almost felt bad for the abomination, being strung along by that little tart Brooks. What a goddamn moron. Where was she gonna run? We weren't even docked. Guess that's what you get when a Cerberus data analyst decides to act like she's better than everyone. God help me if I was ever that big an ingrate.

Normandy's secure at least—and in need of more repairs thanks to the CAT6 degenerates not knowing how to fly a ship straight. Or shoot straight.

Seriously, it just took a day. Not even a full day actually! Less than twenty-four hours after landing for some extended leave for a plot to steal my ship and my goddamn face to play out!

Ah...shit. I'm more astonished than mad. I mean, who does that? Taking my parts-clone to try and...what, use military rejects to gun aliens down? During an existential war? Morons!

This little sideways frolic happened at a good time, at least. The quarians have been lending so much aid to the Crucible project that a lot of the security forces have been freed up; Reaper forces aren't actually making headway on Palaven. Even Anderson seems in good spirits, like the Reapers aren't as focused on Earth. There's no chance of retaking the system conventionally, but it's a sign the Reapers are actually having to contend with us.

So maybe I just have to keep trusting in the fleets we've put together. We've helped make deals and find people, but the Crucible itself isn't our doing at all. That honor goes to the nation of engineers and scientists working around the clock.

<Grunt> My back still aches from falling through the fish tank. Tali's never gonna let me forget that. I'll check on Normandy's repair estimate after I wake up, then maybe go wander the strip. See the sights, try and remember what honest-to-god shore leave feels like.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 56 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

It occurs to me I've never really had money to just do what I want with. Alliance pay is small and steady, mostly going to savings since they provide the basics—and the assets we get out in the galaxy now are all put towards the war effort. Or, before it was the Collectors, then Saren. Basically, I never learned how to manage money.

I uh...blew around fifty thousand last night. Mostly craps and roulette. A chunk off of varren racing. Did decent on quasar, but not enough to beat my shit odds. I also think I had a little too much and purchased the ENTIRE Home Spun catalog. I woke up to see a big list of possible furnishings ready to move in.

You know? Not the worst thing I've done on a bender. Shit, my first shore leave after Akuze? Bought into a protection racket as a sponsor, then had to lay the ringleader out on a table when I realized my fuckup. And the uh, run-in with al-Jilani. Glad we're both mature about that.

Nah, the craziest thing has definitely got to be taking the Mako through a mass relay. I thought it was going to break apart! Damn thing can take a beating...wait, what was I talking about again?

Oh, right. Ten thousand creds on a claw machine. Sixty thousand total. Me drunk and Zaeed obsessed is a hell of a combo. Wonder what he's doing here...don't think I asked.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 57 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Garrus is great, but—but, hey, he's just, he can't, he's so stuff! Wait, stiff. Not that my ass is any better; maybe that's why we're so peas in a pod. <Laugh> Guy opens up with 'Hey, I've shot mercs before and had my face blown off'!

<Snigger> Maybe he needs an 'I should go' token. Get out of jail free card...ah, I'm fuckin' with 'em. Once he had a beer in hand he was fine—glad it was the destro one. Didn't—no, dextro. Dextro? Turian beer.

<Beat, Long Sigh> He needs some stress relief. Big-time, man. We all do! Maybe this shore leave isn't so bad. Admiri Hackett came in with his...wait, wait did I say AdMIRI?

<Sputtering, laughter>

The, the funny part is she'd make a good admiral! Admiri Miri, commander of the fleets! And she'd make even dress blues look hot. Win-win!

Fuck I'm barely keeping it together. This...mm, couch is fine. Bed can wait...I lost another ten. Thousan...<Mumbling>

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 58 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

So, good news and bad news: The bad news is that I blew a few thousand on that goddamn claw machine Zaeed was obsessed with, as well as around fifty thousand more covering damages. The good news is Grunt's healed up. I can't be mad, honestly. I know I need to be. But when I think about Grunt, all I see is him bullrushing a dozen Collector drones while shouting 'I am krogan' or just laughing like he's on a carnival ride.

Plus, Grunt just...he's like me. Not made for polite manners and civilized society. This downtime's made me realize that; I can fake it if I need to, but really the only thing keeping me centered is Alliance discipline—and the Reaper threat. I was better before I became a Spectre, but now?

Honestly...I think if we survive this war, I'm retiring from the military. It's not something I can stick to anymore, since God willing we won't be fighting any desperate battles or going on wild goose chases at that point. Just rebuilding and maintaining. And call me selfish, but I don't want to help rebuild. Once we're free? I say I and everyone who wants to stick around go out to a system with at least one hospitable world. Go there, use it as a base of operations and just...live. Travel, help where we feel like.

But in the meantime I'm gonna take Grunt to the Armax Arena. Celebrate his 'birthday' with some krogan pasttimes before he goes back to Aralakh Company. If the sushi place was still open I'd consider taking him there for lunch, but...yeah.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 59 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

That combat arena's a lot of fun. Reminds me of that station that used to be out in the Argos Rho cluster, with the advanced simulation chambers. This one's a lot flashier than I heard that one was though—and durable enough to handle 'pure krogan' slamming a sim-Geth into the vid wall.

People must love watching the fights too; I'm already getting some messages forwarded to me. Let's see...

<Electronic Beeps>

'You've got my daughter rooting for you' ...Silvosus? That's turian. I got turian fans? Heh, that's kind of cute. Sure come a long way. 'EC Team'...wait, really? Elkoss wants to sponsor me already? That's gotta be name recognition. They should be offering the sponsorship to Grunt, he's the showboater. He must watch human wrestling expos because I don't know how a krogan learns to 'People's Elbow' a Rocket-class Geth.
<Beat> God I love Grunt.

'Welcome to Armax'...Good to know. 'Making us all proud Commander'...Yeah, Cerberus troops are pretty goddamn fun to shoot now. 'This one is onto you'. Onto what?

Oh, that's bull. Your score was dogshit! And medi-gel just makes you goofy if you overdo it! Fuck you, jelly.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 60 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I can't help but think of Anderson when I'm in this place. This time, it's his mistakes and regrets that come to mind. I don't know them all; just what he's told me and the public archive records.

You never really get over the big ones. Learn to live with them maybe, but you carry that weight forward. <Sound of liquid being poured into glass> Drags you down if you aren't careful. Sometimes even if you are.

My crew keeps me going, but when I'm alone it's harder to stay out of my own head. Lately, the Geth have been on mind. The rest of the galaxy sees them as monsters under the bed, an example of why machine intelligence is to be feared.

EDI came by today, asking questions about what Joker likes. I look at her and Joker and I see two people. She's not human, but that doesn't mean she isn't a person. Mordin spoke more like a robot than her in some ways, and that salarian was more empathetic, more good-hearted than anyone I know.

The Geth could've gotten there. Hell, if Legion is any indication they did get there. You know, he fought me at the end. When I made the call to save at least one fleet, he threw me down and was about to hurl me off the cliff. All he said was 'We will not allow you to decide the fate of our people!'

He was just like Tali there. Desperate to save his people, even if it cost him his life. EDI's ready to lay down her life for all of us, especially Joker. She's bought gifts for us, tried to keep our spirits up, and the questions she asks, all philosophical and genuine...

Condemning the Geth to extinction isn't my biggest regret, but it's the one that never will stop hurting, I think. What a waste.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 61 - Citadel, Silversun Strip

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Normandy repairs are complete, just this morning. We can fly out at any time, but there is some fine-tuning that can be done if we take a few more days.

Until yesterday I would've been at the CIC ready to cast off ten minutes after I heard the news. Kolyat, Thane's son contacted me and asked if I would like to speak at a memorial service for Thane. To recognize his efforts in saving Esheel, the salarian councilor and to honor his life as a whole. I told him he'd be more than welcome to have the memorial here, and I'd be happy to speak at the service.

Of course, I was struggling to even find the words up until the last minute. How do you properly honor a man so selfless he gave up his last months of life to save a stranger? Especially when those months could've been spent with the son he only recently reconnected with?

I still can't think about his last moments. It's not the violent end, or even seeing him so weak. It's his...

<Beat> Sorry. It's his pure altruism. He used the last of life he had to pray for me. The first time I saw him, he did something similar—praying for the wicked soul he just killed. Now he prayed for a wicked soul he hopes will endure.

I don't think I can live up to the wishes Thane had for me, but I can try. I think Kolyat enjoyed hearing so many people speak well of Thane, because it was the unblemished truth. He was...he was a good man. I'm a better woman for having known him.

Anyway, the service yesterday had me thinking. After we leave the Citadel, we're going to hunt Cerberus down. Eliminate one threat so we can focus all our ships, all our attention on the other. The goal is to cut the head off; if we can kill the Illusive Man then Cerberus has no unified leadership, just a fleet without orders. Plus, we'll likely be able to use whatever base the Illusive Man is hunkered down at to track every Cerberus presence in the galaxy. Plus, we'll be able to recover what we need to make sense of the prothean data and find out how we make the Catalyst. Then we might finally see an end to this nightmare.

We might not survive the mission. That's a given with everything in this war, but we have the opportunity to enjoy ourselves right now. To take a little more time and really honor how far we've come before we take that final step off the ledge and dive into the endgame of this war. Win or lose.

There's a few people I want to spend some one-on-one time with, Miri chief among them. Maybe I can convince her to stay on now that Oriana's safe. But whatever the case, we'll spend our final day of rest doing nothing but. This apartment's big enough to have one hell of a party.

Plus, a fan of my exploits in the Armax Arena sent me a large bust of my own head made out of cheddar cheese. Think I'll take a cue from one of the early Presidents of the old US back on Earth and let my dear friends help get rid of this...lovely, pungent gift.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 62 - Widow System, Citadel Dock

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Feels like I haven't been on the Normandy in ages. A couple weeks goes by slow when the rest of your time's been spent racing across the galaxy, you and your crew holding civilization together with nothing but blood and grit.

We deserved that party. Lord knows, we earned it. Because the hangovers, gut aches and bruising—thanks Wrex—pales in comparison to what we're going to plunge ourselves into. If things go off without a hitch? We'll still be invading Cerberus HQ soon, then confronting the Reapers in a futile assault while we pray our ace in the hole works. More are gonna die. A lot more.

We'll honor them, like we honored Thane. Samara, Mordin, Legion, Ash, Kaidan and everyone else in our family who died. I still don't know what's waiting for us after the war. Afterlife? Domestic life? Wandering the stars? I know Tali's going straight to Rannoch. Maybe I'll tag along if Miri doesn't have any preference; help her build that house her dad promised her. She's already got ideas on where the windows are going to be, heh.

Each and every person on this crew, I love more than anything. God, if you're out there in some form and you're not a vengeful son of a bitch—help me not have to bury anymore of my family. Then maybe I can help spare others from any further torment.

Hell of a party we had.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 63 - Pax System, Noveria Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

I didn't think the Reaper war would take me back to Noveria. Miranda looked over the deciphered data we had from our encounter with Leng on Thessia and found the location of a Cerberus base, one that has a lot of ship presence on it—mostly fighters.

It seems strange for Cerberus to have a fighter base on Noveria, unless there's something valuable around. Planet, system, cluster even—we're not sure, but this base might have the lead we need to hit Cerberus where it hurts.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 64 - Horsehead Nebula, Anadius System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

We're in luck, but I can't help but be awed at the Illusive Man's audacity. The fighter base had logs of ship travel; Miranda was able to decode them before Cerberus countermeasures kicked in. Most travel is between here and the Pax relay, but there's some shuttle trips between here and something in the Anadius system. No evidence of what it is, other than the name: Cronos Station.

Turns out, that's his base. Where he sits, overlooking that damn dying star and manipulating people for his own ends. Miranda confirmed the name; though the location surprised her. Never thought the best way to contribute against Reapers is to attack human fanatics, but here we are. Admiral Hackett is sending a force to distract any ships orbiting the station while we infiltrate; unfortunately that'll likely alert Cerberus that we're making a bigger move than a solo strike. Odds are they'll pass that info along to the Reapers...and then the risk of the Reapers discovering where the Crucible is goes up. They've got to know we're building it; too many people to keep quiet. I wonder how desperately they're searching...or if they even care at all.

Doesn't matter. The Cerberus plan seems sound to me and it has Admiral Hackett's thumbs up. Time to see what's hidden in Anadius.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 65 - Horsehead Nebula, Pax System Approach

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

The Illusive Man tricked us one more time. The last time, one way or another. We took Cronos Station, left it in ruins—but he wasn't there. The prothean data was, and from it we learned what the Catalyst is. It's the Citadel itself, incorporated into the Crucible as a magnifier of sorts by one of the species that built on the plans before they were snuffed out.

The Citadel is in Reaper hands. It's in Sol, orbiting Earth now. The largest concentration of Reaper forces is defending the final piece we need to maybe end this war...so really, our task is simple now.

We go in. We get every spaceworthy ship and coordinate our attacks. We fly in from the Utopia, Arcturus and Widow systems to maximize our chances of avoiding Reaper forces. Then we secure the Charon relay and bring the Crucible in.

We're going to have the galaxy's fleets and the one thing that might stop the Reapers in one spot. All it'd take is a single Reaper ship to kamikaze, to make it through our defenses with a lucky shot. The Crucible is durable but it's not able to stand up to concentrated fire from the main cannons of a Reaper.

The key factor is to minimize time the Crucible is in play. The Citadel is hostile territory, so the plan has to be to secure it somehow. Maybe we can bring the Normandy close enough to deploy a team on the outside, find a gap in the shell. It's got to be sealed up like it was during Sovereign's attack. Barring that...I don't know. Anderson says the Reapers have something big going on in London, so maybe there's a connection. An Earth-based assault might be an option.

Better minds than mine are figuring this out, but it helps calm my nerves to think about it. The bottom line is straightforward: We're ending this war now. Securing the Citadel and escorting the Crucible to it is all that matters. Even if the entire fleet is destroyed, even if Earth itself is destroyed—it's worth it. Stopping the murderers of countless civilizations and untold trillions of deaths...that's worth dying for.

At least I got to end the bastard who killed Thane. There wasn't even a man there; just a Reaper-infested machine in human form. I'd almost call it a mercy killing.

We're a few hours out from the Pax relay. This might be the last time I'm safe in my life...I know how I wanna spend it.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 66 - Earth, London

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

This may be the last time I make an entry. We're looking out at what's left of London; there's our goal just a few kilometers away. It's Hell on Earth, literally—but we're here. We have an army on the ground, and the Crucible is still safe with Shield fleet. If we can make it to the beam the Reapers set up, if we can make it on the Citadel...well hell, we won't find any Reaper ships inside the damn place. Not like they'll destroy it either; the Citadel is the cornerstone of their harvesting plan.

My crew got me here, and we got the galaxy here. Salarians, turians, krogan, asari, even drell and batarians are here. So many races, so many people. We're stopping the Reapers at Earth, but we're saving everyone, everywhere.

This planet was never my home; I never even stepped foot on it until I turned myself in. But it's humanity's home, and that means something. Gives me some more resolve. Civilians are helping tend to the wounded, radioing in data from across London—even Allers is out here, filming and broadcasting. Should be a hell of a show.

Doesn't matter what I think now, if we'll win or lose or if I'll even survive. We have our mission, and we have our orders. I'll give EDI a copy of this to upload to the Normandy, just in case. If things do go to shit, some part of me's gonna outlast the goddamn Reapers. Now, time to finally end these soulless bastards.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 67.A - Earth, London (Destroy)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Didn't think I'd make it this far...not by a <Cough> long shot. The Crucible worked. The cost was too high. Always is, <Pained Hiss> but it's done. We got the Illusive Man. Bastard was half-husk. He...he made me shoot Anderson. One more good soul taken by my hand. He wasn't the last. He, Anderson, you...<Sniff>...you were the father I lost. All these years, guiding me, helping...

<Grunt>

I'm sorry, sir. So damn sorry. Wasn't strong enough to resist him. Agh! Shit...just, just a little longer. Not done yet...

The Catalyst, it was an AI. Made by the Leviathans, it was their solution. The story Leviathan told us checks out, it was all true. The Reapers were...nnggh, were what the AI determined was the best option. Harvest life to save life.

It sp...agh...spoke to me. Explained it all, told me why. Told me that the Reapers wouldn't work anymore; we—organics—proved we can beat them. So it let me choose what happens next. Told me I could blow up the goddamn place if I wanted; it might even take the Reapers with me. Told me that the Reapers can be controlled, just not by the Illusive Man. Told me I could do it. Also said I could make all life synthetic and organic if I wanted instead. Both meant I'd die, both meant I'd end the Reaper threat.

BULLSHIT. The Reapers were a mistake from the start. The Catalyst, the AI was a mistake too. It judged WRONG. Synthetics can't, they can't dictate the terms. It's got to come from both. They can't see past their own programming. EDI was better than they were. She was real, she was alive...!

And now she's dead, along with the Reapers and most advanced synthetic intelligences. The Catalyst is flawed. Maybe it was even lying. Don't know. Never gonna find out now.

I overloaded the power conduits the Crucible connected to the Citadel with. Started a chain reaction, don't know if it took the Citadel with it. Blast knocked me out; don't know how I survived.

There's no more Reapers here, just ruins and corpses. No monsters. It's so quiet, now. <Grunt> Somehow I fell back down to Earth. Don't know if it was re-entry, or the beam.

Don't think I'm gonna make it. Left leg is mush; the concrete on it's keeping the blood in. Can't radio for help; gear got blasted when Harbinger shot me with the beam. Just...sitting here, watching the aftermath.

But goddammit. We, we won. No one else is gonna be fucking harvested. No more people are gonna face those unholy terrors. No more indoctrination, no more Reapers.

Ah, shit. I'm tired. Miri, if you get this, I'm sorry. Wanted to try domestic life. Probably would suck at it, but you never know. Before Anderson died, he said he thought I'd be a good mom. Could've given it a shot, if, if you wanted.

Getting harder to speak. Sorry guys, I'd say something for all of you if I could. Just...honor the fallen. Give 'em what we gave Thane. And, just remember: no matter what happened, now or later: the nightmare's over. We can all wake up.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

(Entries after this are not canon to this iteration of Shepard, and are what-ifs)

Entry 67.B - Citadel, Crucible (Control)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Didn't think I'd make it this far...not by a <Cough> long shot. The Crucible is here. The cost was too high. Always is, <Pained Hiss> but it's done. We got the Illusive Man. Bastard was half-husk. He...he made me shoot Anderson. One more good soul taken by my hand. He wasn't the last. He, Anderson, you...<Sniff>...you were the father I lost. All these years, guiding me, helping...

<Grunt>

I'm sorry, sir. So damn sorry. Wasn't strong enough to resist him. Agh! Shit...just, just a little longer. Not done yet...

The Catalyst, it's an AI. Made by the Leviathans, it's their solution. The story Leviathan told us checks out, it's all true. The Reapers were...nnggh, were what the AI determined was the best option. Harvest life to save life.

It sp...agh...spoke to me. Explained it all, told me why. Told me that the Reapers wouldn't work anymore; we—organics—proved we can beat them. So it let me choose what happens next. Told me that the Reapers can be controlled, just not by the Illusive Man. Told me I could do it. Said I could make all life synthetic and organic if I wanted instead. Both meant I'd die, both meant I'd end the Reaper threat. Also told me I could blow up the whole goddamn place and take the Reapers with me.

It's got no reason to lie. It thinks long-term; we proved we got this far. Even if it wiped out the Crucible, plans and all—some other cycle would figure it out. Start it again. It's like basic infosec: defense has to be perfect. Offense just has to have one good day.

This is my farewell. Apparently, <Pained Hiss> taking control of the Reapers means I lose my body. Basically, I die. Blowing the Reapers up, or making them servants of an AI just like EDI but that thinks like me, talks like me, has my memories?

Shit, sorry if I just blow up a planet for giggles. I just...if I can make the Reapers do something good, that means something. Maybe actually do what the Catalyst was meant to, and mediate synthetic and organics. The geth, the quarians...they could've made peace. It wasn't impossible.

Hell, if the Reapers can't do much then I'll take 'em all into a black hole. Plus, <Grunt> there's less damage to the galaxy this way.

So, here I am. Facing my death, except this time I know it's coming. No way around it. I'm sorry, Miri. I want to come back to you. But...the mission comes first. We both know that.

To my crew? Never forget who we all are. Never forget what we accomplished. And if a Reaper starts talking like me? <Sharp Inhale> Be wary. I don't really know what I'm doing, trying this.

|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 67.C - Citadel, Crucible (Synthesis)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Didn't think I'd make it this far...not by a <Cough> long shot. The Crucible is here. The cost was too high. Always is, <Pained Hiss> but it's done. We got the Illusive Man. Bastard was half-husk. He...he made me shoot Anderson. One more good soul taken by my hand. He wasn't the last. He, Anderson, you...<Sniff>...you were the father I lost. All these years, guiding me, helping...

<Grunt>

I'm sorry, sir. So damn sorry. Wasn't strong enough to resist him. Agh! Shit...just, just a little longer. Not done yet...

The Catalyst, it's an AI. Made by the Leviathans, it's their solution. The story Leviathan told us checks out, it's all true. The Reapers were...nnggh, were what the AI determined was the best option. Harvest life to save life.

It sp...agh...spoke to me. Explained it all, told me why. Told me that the Reapers wouldn't work anymore; we—organics—proved we can beat them. So it let me choose what happens next. Told me that the Reapers can be controlled, just not by the Illusive Man. Told me I could do it. Said I could make all life synthetic and organic if I wanted instead. Both meant I'd die, both meant I'd end the Reaper threat. Also told me I could blow up the whole goddamn place and take the Reapers with me.

It's got no reason to lie. It thinks long-term; we proved we got this far. Even if it wiped out the Crucible, plans and all—some other cycle would figure it out. Start it again. It's like basic infosec: defense has to be perfect. Offense just has to have one good day.

So I'm gonna take a leap. I'm gonna trust this Catalyst because it's right. We blow up the Reapers, billions of years from now they might be back, just in a new form. Controlling them? <Pained Gasp> Agh...no, can't work. That just sets the clock back to when the Reapers were first made. Same bad decision can be made, even if the AI thinks like me.

So I'm gonna do something to the entire galaxy. I'm gonna make you all like me. Some synthetic, some organic. No more distinctions. Don't ask me how it works, and if this is bullshit? If I'm just letting the Crucible go to waste, with me being tricked by the Catalyst? Hate me. Use me as an example. But don't worry. The prothean beacons helped us prepare for this cycle. There's seeds out there that'll help the next.

But maybe the nightmare's gonna be over now, and maybe my death will help everyone be a little closer, a little better. I'm sorry, Miri. I gotta do this. This might solve this whole damn eons-long conflict. It's worth trying.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Entry 67.D - Citadel, Crucible (Refuse)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Didn't think I'd make it this far...not by a <Cough> long shot. The Crucible made it here. The cost was too high. Always is, <Pained Hiss> but it's done. We got the Illusive Man. Bastard was half-husk. He...he made me shoot Anderson. One more good soul taken by my hand. He wasn't the last. He, Anderson, you...<Sniff>...you were the father I lost. All these years, guiding me, helping...

<Grunt>

I'm sorry, sir. So damn sorry. Wasn't strong enough to resist him. Agh! Shit...just, just a little longer. Not done yet...

The Catalyst, it's an AI. Made by the Leviathans, it's their solution. The story Leviathan told us checks out, it's all true. The Reapers were...nnggh, were what the AI determined was the best option. Harvest life to save life.

It sp...agh...spoke to me. Explained it all, told me why. Told me that the Reapers wouldn't work anymore; we—organics—proved we can beat them. So it let me choose what happens next. Told me that the Reapers can be controlled, just not by the Illusive Man. Told me I could do it. Said I could make all life synthetic and organic if I wanted instead. Both meant I'd die, both meant I'd end the Reaper threat. Also told me I could blow up the whole goddamn place and take the Reapers with me. Problem is, that'd take out synthetics galaxy-wide because that's what Reapers are. Might've even taken all ships out too. Sent everyone into an extinction.

You know what I think? It's <Cough> bullshit. The Catalyst is a Reaper. It's THE Reaper. The one in charge, doing all this harvesting. It doesn't matter what it thinks or what it offers. It's the enemy, and the Crucible won't help us.

We made a mistake, we backed the wrong horse. Blow most of the galaxy up, control the goddamn Reapers or turn all life into cybernetic-fueled freaks like me? Those aren't, agh...choices. They're more manipulations by this AI bastard.

<Beat>

So I didn't use the Crucible. I can't trust the leader of the Reapers. I won't have the blood of the galaxy on my hands because I fell for a trap.

There's no going back now, anyway. <Cough> The Catalyst deactivated itself. The Reapers have already moved in to destroy the Crucible. Everyone's gonna die or flee, then die running from the Reapers. Then, thousands of years from now some other species is gonna take to the stars. Maybe they'll find Liara's warnings. Maybe not.

It wasn't our fight to finish. <Pained Hiss> We backed the wrong horse. I'm sorry, everyone. I let you all down. Wish I could be there at the end. <Grunt> But I'll keep an eye out in the afterlife. When I died before, I didn't see it. But maybe you just can't remember what eternity is like if you come back from it.

See you soon.

<Gunshot>

<Extended Silence>

<Extended Silence>

<Extended Silence>

|ERROR: NO STORAGE SPACE REMAINING|
|AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0|

Entry 68 - Earth, London (Destroy, Survived)

[AUDIO RECORDING START - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]

Well...we did it.

The Crucible worked. No more Reapers. Just a shitload of scrap metal to take care of. No risk of indoctrination; they're totally shut down. The troops the Reapers made, they're entirely gone. Not even dust to prove they were there. Just memories, vids and the dead they left behind.

I got found several hours after my last entry. Passed out, barely breathing and with dangerously high levels of radiation. Apparently it was touch and go with me for some time.

I didn't make it through unharmed, though. Wheelchair bound for the foreseeable future, thanks to the crushed leg they had to cut loose. Maybe a few years from now things will be repaired enough to manufacture a decent prosthetic, but I'm not in any rush. Also for the foreseeable future, I won't be needed. What's left to kill? The galaxy's still shell-shocked and the Reapers are gone. We've probably got a good ten, twenty years before opportunists get to become a real issue.

Fortunately, our ships still work. All tech works fine actually...all tech that wasn't utilizing synthetic intelligences. VIs are gone. AIs, too.

Joker says that the last thing EDI did was look at him. She didn't get a chance to say anything before the power surge hit the Normandy; Joker blacked out when it did. When he came to, the ship was crashed on a planet and EDI was silent. Her body slumped in the co-pilot's chair, and the ship was nonresponsive.

She really was alive, so ready to embrace what it meant to be one of us. I hope, in her last moments she found peace. We're not going to see another woman like her, perhaps ever.

I don't think I'm going to keep these logs up. No desire to review them anymore, and there isn't nearly as much to keep track of or make sense of now. Just repairs and trying to live life. It's...these are a part of who I was before this moment. The soldier, the commander. Who I am now? I've got no idea. I guess I'll find out in the coming days.

[AUDIO RECORDING END - TIMESTAMP 0:00.0]