

Star Gate Files: Escape

By

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Supplement to Initial Contact Report – D. Jackson, PhD

... and can find no evidence that the Goa'uld have ever visited this world.

We knew this city was large, but further discussions have confirmed that its scale is beyond comprehension. Given what we now know, this single, metallic city would easily cover the states of New York and Pennsylvania. According to the inhabitants, the city is bound on one side by a large body of water. The other sides of the city are bound by inhospitable desert.

Though this massive city could easily hold up to three hundred million people, equivalent to the population of the United States, most of it appears to be abandoned. They are tight-lipped about the reasons for this or what happened to so many people. Whatever the reason, their society seems to have collapsed. Several large dead zones within the city, devoid of humanity, have resulted from this collapse. The star gate lies a short distance within the largest dead zone. This is why initial contact occurred so long after the first visit. The population resides in what I call city-states spread throughout the city. Most of these city-states, at least two dozen of them so far, are independent of each other, though alliances have been created between some of them. Since resources are extremely limited, a great deal of tension and in some cases outright hostility exists between many of these city-states. Alliances between these city-states are constantly forming and reforming.

Many of the people we have met so far are hesitate to provide much detail about their respective city-state. I have to assume they are afraid this information could be used by an enemy. They know little about the world outside of their own city centers, let alone outside of the boundaries of this metal city.

The people are fairly homogeneous in appearance, fairly light skinned; their average height a few inches shorter than ours. They might be from Earth, but without genetic testing I won't know for sure, and I don't dare suggest that, at least not yet. Their language seems to be a dialect of the Ancients' language. The pronunciation was difficult to understand initially, but I'm doing much better. Dr. Killian and I have been exchanging notes about the differences and similarities between this and the Ancients' language. We can start officially documenting this derivation once Killian's current assignment is complete.

In the short time since first contact, we have developed friendly relations with several of the city-states. One city, Dah'lek, has actually invited us to observe ongoing negotiations between the various city-states and their alliances. One such alliance, its name loosely translates as “Federation”, believes we have come to their world to seize power. The Dah'lek Ambassador of course denies this, but I think he and other cities secretly wish that were true. If they could ally with an outside force it might break the stranglehold on resources that the Federation and other powerful alliances have maintained for decades.

Intermittent power failures have been making the negotiations more difficult. If it's not the lights going out, it's the air conditioning not being able to keep the buildings cool. Colonel O'Neill believes the city must be located in a tropical area since he keeps saying

Chapter 1 - Gate Duty

“Man, this heat really sucks.”

Sergeant Louis “Sully” Sullivan mutters under his breath as he scans the plaza. He looks for anything out of the ordinary, as if standing in a depressed metal bowl the size of a football stadium on an alien planet is ordinary.

The sun had risen less than an hour ago, yet the heat was quickly becoming unbearable. Drops of sweat trickle down his face and neck. He knows the trickles will soon turn into a stream and then a river. The early heat foreshadows how crappy the rest of the day will be. Only the slightest of breezes reaches the SG-4 team at the end of the sunken plaza. Unfortunately, it doesn’t bring even the smallest bit of relief from the heat. Instead it brings more humidity from a nearby ocean, the hint of saltwater mixing with the smell of decades-old garbage.

“What was that, Sergeant?” Captain Al Bundy asks.

“Nothing, Sir, just talking to myself.”

The corners of the Captain’s mouth rise into a slight smile, “Oh, I could have sworn I heard something.”

He pauses, scanning the opposite side of the plaza. “Standing here kind of reminds me of my first few weeks in boot camp. The heat there really sucked.”

The Sergeant gives a short laugh, “Yes, Sir, I bet you have fond memories. I know I do.”

The Captain and Sergeant stand next to the star gate’s dialing device, surveying the cityscape, at least what they can see. For reasons that Dr. Jackson could not yet explain, the builders of the city had placed the gate at one end of a football field-sized plaza. Dr. Jackson also could not explain why the builders had placed the plaza at the bottom of a three-story hole. The Doctor thought the plaza might have been used as a receiving area for gate travelers, to ceremonially welcome dignitaries from other worlds. The presence of seats for the receiving crowd would have helped to prove that theory. Unfortunately, the perimeter of the sunken plaza, where the seats should have been, lies buried under several dozen feet of long-abandoned and well-compacted garbage and debris. Thus Dr. Jackson’s theory remains just that. Only two areas of the plaza are free of garbage. One is the well-defined path between the gate and the long ramp at the other end of the plaza. The ramp provides one of the two exits from the plaza. The second garbage free area lies around and behind the gate. A partially buried set of stairs behind the gate area provides the second exit from the plaza.

A thick accumulation of rust covers what isn’t buried by garbage. Rust-streaked buildings, two and three stories high, line the plaza rim. Hundreds of windows, which once looked out over the plaza, are now just black holes, the glass long gone. The area is devoid of life. Even the garbage no longer attracts insects or the creatures that would feed on them.

The Sergeant breaks the silence, “I was just wondering why we have to be stuck with gate duty. SG-1 never seems to get stuck with gate duty. Why is that?”

The Captain nods his head. “Yeah, I’d be lying if I said I’d rather be here than at the negotiations, but there are two good reasons why we’re here and they’re there.”

“And they are?”

“First, because O’Neill is a Colonel. Colonels never get stuck with gate duty.”

“Yeah, I hear that. What’s the other?”

“Because Dr. Jackson is the only one who speaks their language.”

“Ah yes,” The Sergeant said. “I guess there is some benefit to being an archeologist.”

“Yeah, it was a good thing Dr. Jackson was tagging along when SG-9 ran into the citizens here. Initial survey showed the city to be abandoned. They spent over a week wandering around before they literally ran into the locals. Fortunately, Dr. Jackson could speak the lingo. If he hadn’t been with them SG-9 probably would have had to fight their way back to the gate.”

“I s’pose. What is it with this city anyway? The first group they met thought SG-9 was from another city that they were at war with? I read Dr. Jackson’s report, it’s pretty crazy.”

Captain Bundy turns to stare at the Sergeant. “You read it? Really? What the hell for? No social life?”

The Sergeant rolls his eyes. “I heard Jackson going on and on about this place so I got a copy of the report.”

"I never got around to reading it. I guess I was too busy having a life. What did the report say?"

"I think it said something about how funny my CO was." The Captain laughs. "Where was I? Oh yeah, the report says you could drop twenty cities the size of New York on top of this city and still not cover all of it. At one time it might have held several hundred million people, maybe more. Now a lot of it is abandoned, kind of like this place, with the population separated into "Sparta-like city-states." The Sergeant paused for a moment. "What's a Sparta-like city-state? I know he ain't talking about Sparta, Illinois."

The Captain laughs. "No, Sparta, Greece. In ancient Greece they had what were called city-states. There was Sparta, Athens, and uh, Corinth. Maybe some others. They basically were small, independent countries that were the size of cities. They fought each other constantly from what I remember reading." The Sergeant gives the Captain a questioning look. The Captain gives a little smile. "Yeah, I read the same report. I was just yanking your chain."

The Sergeant gives a forced laugh. "Ah, that's funny. Okay, so what the hell happened to this place? The report doesn't go into it."

"No one knows. Jackson hasn't had a chance to do any digging into it.... Ha, get it? Digging, and he's an archeologist?"

The Sergeant rolls his eyes again and shakes his head. "This heat's bad enough, I have to get stuck with an Air Force version of Robin Williams."

Captain Bundy laughs. "Dr. Jackson thinks, based upon what he's heard, that they tried to create the perfect city, everyone living in harmony and working together. You know, typical hippie, dippy crap. They didn't take into account human nature, so as the city expanded what was left behind began to crumble. Whatever the reason, it was a disaster. A lot of the things we depend on in a normal city, like garbage collection, sewers, and running water stopped working almost overnight. The huge city just seemed to collapse, falling apart. I can't imagine what that was like."

"I guess that would explain why we're standing here at the bottom of a garbage dump."

"Yeah, first time I've ever seen a star gate surrounded by garbage. You would think with the set up here, the gate, the ramp, the functional yet very decorative wall surrounding the gate, the supposedly buried seats around the edge of the plaza, this was an important entryway to the city from other worlds. I guess they decided that survival was more important than the niceties."

The Sergeant looks at his watch. "Isn't it about time for Davis or Lorenzo to report in?"

The Captain glances at his watch. "Yep, sure is." He turns his head and speaks into his radio. "Davis, Lorenzo, anything to report?"

The voice of Marine Corporal Anthony "Tony" Lorenzo comes from the radio.

"No, Sir, nothing's changed. That two-man team that showed up an hour ago is still there. All they're doing is watching you and the rest of the team."

"Have they spotted you?"

"Don't think so. They would have left themselves pretty exposed if they had. We're sitting well back from the window in the shadows, so they shouldn't have seen us. Unless they have some fancy tricorder, they don't know we're here."

"Yeah, well, who knows what they might have so be careful? Give a shout if anything changes. Bundy out."

"I bet it's cooler up there."

"Yeah, maybe, but it was a long walk up all those steps, carrying that equipment, in this gravity" His comment is interrupted.

"SG-1 calling SG-4, Come in." Colonel Jack O'Neill's voice struggles to break through the static on the radio. Bundy turns the volume up a bit so he can hear the Colonel.

"SG-4 here, what's up, Colonel?"

"Tensions are running a little high here. We thought things would have cooled off overnight, but no such luck. The Federation bozos started right where they left off yesterday. Dr. Jackson is still in there trying to keep the negotiations going but he's not having much luck."

The Captain and Sergeant look at each other. The Sergeant shrugs his shoulders and shakes his head. The Captain replies,

“The Federation still not happy that we’re here?”

“Nooo, not a bit. They still think we are here to upset the *delicate balance they have achieved amongst the various governments.*” The last part drips with sarcasm.

“Delicate balance as in ‘if you don’t do what we want we’ll starve you out or kick your butt?’”

“Yep, pretty much. They’re positive that we’re here to institute an alien takeover or something just as stupid.” The frustration in Colonel O’Neill’s voice was evident.

“I guess the good Doctor hasn’t been able to convince them otherwise,” the Captain asked, hoping his sarcasm wasn’t too noticeable.

“Not yet. You know how he is. No matter how difficult the problem or how stupid the other side is, all you have to do is talk things out and everything will be just fine.”

“Yeah, it’s worked wonders with the Goa’uld.”

O’Neill laughs, “Yeah, good point. I’ll have to remind him. How does it look on your end?”

The Captain looks around the abandoned plaza in front of him, covered with trash and debris, and then at the surrounding walls. “Closest thing to paradise I’ve ever seen. Actually nothing new to report. I put our Marine sniper team in one of the taller buildings behind our position. They’ve got a clear view of the surrounding area, including the tops of most of the buildings lining the plaza. You expecting trouble?”

There is sudden silence on the radio. “Colonel O’Neill, do you read, over!”

After a few tense seconds O’Neill’s voice is heard. “Sorry, Captain, seems someone isn’t too happy with something. Sounds like the Federation’s security chief-slash-negotiator. Yeah, maybe. Major Carter thinks it may be a good idea for us to make a graceful exit. Our absence might help calm things down, at least so they will play nice with each other. They can contact us when they work things out.”

“*Typical,*” the Captain thought. “*Just typical. Hours of boredom. Then all hell will probably break loose.*”

The Colonel continues, “Dr. Jackson may be successful after all, but I doubt it.”

“Understood, Sir. Other than that mystery observation team watching us we’ve been left alone.”

“Good. Let’s hope it stays that way. Stay sharp. I can’t imagine them doing anything, but some of these guys are really paranoid. I’ll check back in, uh, thirty minutes, sooner if anything changes. If you see anything suspicious don’t hesitate to contact me.”

“Do you want me to contact the SGC to let them know what’s happening?” Bundy asked.

“No, not yet. There may be other observation teams there keeping an eye on you. With their rampant paranoia, dialing the gate may make them think we are bringing in reinforcements. That might just set them off. We’ll contact you when we are leaving. Once we are close enough you can dial the gate and apprise SG Command of the situation.”

“Will do. We’ll keep the gate secure. You can count on us.”

“I know I can. O’Neill out.”

“Well, Sergeant, maybe you’ll get your wish and we can transfer to a cooler assignment, like maybe Mercury.”

Bundy turns to the two men sitting on the top step of the gate’s platform. “Randall, Martinez, take up positions on the back side of the platform. I don’t like us being this exposed. And Airman, put that damn helmet on and keep it on, got it?”

“Yes, Sir,” Airman Hugo Martinez replies, wiping the sweat from his forehead with his sleeve. He puts his helmet on his head and fixes the straps to hold it securely.

“What did I tell you?” Corporal Charles Randall whispers. He points to the helmet now on Martinez’s head. Attempting but failing to imitate the Captain, he says, “That thing can save your life.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever!”

The two men stand and head to the back of the platform, with Randall taking the left side and Martinez moving to the right.

The Captain activates his radio, “Lorenzo, Davis, you heard?”

The voice of Marine Sergeant Bill Davis comes through the radio. “Yes, Sir, we heard. We’re keeping a watch out. Nothing’s changed.”

“Understood. As the Colonel said, you see anything suspicious shout out.”

“Will do, Davis out.”

“Well, Sergeant, what are your opinions on our situation?”

Sullivan thinks for a moment, “Well, any attack would more than likely come from the other end, down the ramp. The sides are out. They could come down the stairs behind us, but there’s about ten meters of trash covering the steps. The footing would be too iffy to attack across. Snipers are a good possibility. After all, we have our own Marines watching our back. Given the nature of this place, with the likelihood for urban warfare, I’d be surprised if we were the only ones with snipers.”

The Sergeant glances at the dialing device and then around the area. “You know, this ain’t exactly the best form of cover either. Maybe we should move up to the wall. It’s high enough we can duck behind, and the columns on either side of the opening would provide additional cover.”

“My thoughts exactly. After you, Sergeant.”

“Ah yes, as it should be, Sir,” the Sergeant laughs.

The two men walk to the opening in the wall surrounding the gate and dialing device. At almost four feet high and two feet thick, the wall is made of a material that resembles concrete. Dr. Jackson’s report suggested the wall must have provided an artistic focal point for the gate. The opening is wide enough to drive an Abrams tank through, though Bundy would have settled for a Bradley fighting vehicle. On either side of the opening stands a thick, seven-foot tall column, deeply etched with designs and symbols. Parallel rows of smaller but similar-looking columns head from the opening toward the ramp. Closer to the ramp several of the columns have been knocked over or damaged. On either side of the pathway defined by the columns are scattered mounds of trash. Even though the gate has been long abandoned and forgotten, it appears no one wanted to block the path to the gate.

Once at the columns, the two men kneel. From their position they scan the walls and buildings, still amazed at how absolutely disgusting this place looks. The heat doesn’t make it any better.

Time passes slowly. The sun begins to peak over the tops of the buildings behind the Captain and the Sergeant. The heat becomes even more oppressive as the metal at the far end absorbs the sun’s heat and then radiates it back into the plaza. Though the trash surrounding them is decades old, the constantly shifting breeze still brings a hint of decay.

The voice of Sergeant Davis breaks the silence. “Davis to Captain, come in.”

“Bundy here.”

“Sir, Lorenzo noticed some movement. Approximately 11 o’clock high from your position. Wait.” There is a short pause. Davis continues, “There are several possible unfriendlies at that location. They aren’t like our friends on the other side. They’re doing their best to avoid being seen from your position. They obviously don’t know we are up here and are able to see them.”

“Can you tell how many or what they’re carrying?”

“No, Sir. Lorenzo thinks there are at least two, maybe three. Looks like small arms only. I don’t suppose we can do anything about it can we?”

“No, follow normal rules of engagement. Unless they perform a hostile act leave them alone. However, if they fire, don’t wait for my permission. You are free to act. Understood?”

“Yes, Sir, we’ll keep an eye on them. Davis out.”

The Sergeant glances at the Captain. “Well, Cap, what do you make of that?”

Bundy shakes his head. “Can’t be good. No telling who it is though. When SG-1 calls we can mention it, maybe they’ll have an idea. If we had Teal’c with us I’d send him over to say hi.”

“Yeah, that would be fun to watch.”

Twenty minutes pass. Sunlight has crept closer to the two men in front of the gate. The rising temperature has turned the trickle of sweat from the two men into a minor torrent. The Captain and Sergeant sip from their hydration packs. The heat

and humidity suck more moisture from their bodies than they can easily replace.

“SG-1 to SG-4, come in.” It is Major Carter.

“*Oh crap,*” Bundy thinks, “*if she’s calling this can’t be good.*”

“SG-4 here, go ahead, Major.”

“Everything fell apart. A fight broke out between several of the negotiators but it was quickly broken up. Daniel was able to calm them down, but the Colonel said that was enough. He and Dr. Jackson are talking with the Dah’lekian Ambassador. Once they are done we’ll get a ride back to the gate. Everything okay there?”

“So far. A second team has appeared. They are trying to stay hidden, so they may possibly be unfriendlies. We’re keeping them under surveillance. No hostile acts yet.”

“That’s probably not a good sign either. We’ll radio when we head out.”

“Understood. We’ll keep the way clear.”

The Captain leans against the column as he turns to face the Sergeant. “Well, we’ll see what happens now.”

He speaks into his radio. “Okay team, you heard the Major. Look alive. Be prepared for action.”

“Captain,” It is Lorenzo on the radio. “I’ve got eyes on that new team. We count four. They’re staying low, but are keeping a close watch on you. They’re definitely armed. Looks like small arms, nothing heavy.”

“Have you spotted anyone else yet?”

After moment’s pause he responds. “No, Sir. Davis has zeroed in on the four man team and is watching them closely. I’m still scanning the area for anyone else.”

“Keep a close watch.”

The Captain turns to look at the two men standing on either side of the platform. “Martinez, Randall, change your position, move behind the gate’s platform. Don’t give them a good target.

A few minutes pass, though with the heat and sun it seems like an hour.

O’Neill’s voice comes over the radio. “SG-1 to SG-4, come in.”

“SG-4, Bundy here. Go ahead, Colonel.”

“Things really went to hell in a hand basket. Daniel almost had things calmed down then” O’Neill pauses. “Session broke up, lots of accusations and threats have gone back and forth, especially from the Federation’s head negotiator. That man is 100% putz. We’ve got a ride from the Daylak-something Ambassador. We’re leaving now. ETA to your position’s about twenty-five minutes. We’ll radio our progress. O’Neill out.”

“Message received. SG-4 out.” The Captain mutters a curse under his breath. He reaches up and presses his radio’s talk button. “Heads up everyone. Stay down and behind cover.”

“SIR!!” Lorenzo’s voice screams out from the radio. Just a moment after Lorenzo’s warning the sharp crack of a shot echoes across the plaza.

“What the hell was that?” Bundy yells into the radio.

“Group at 11 o’clock. They popped up and fired a shot. Do I”

“Take them out!!” Bundy interrupts. Immediately he hears the report of Davis’ sniper rifle quickly followed by two more shots. A burst of automatic gunfire follows – probably more for effect than to hit anyone. As the sniper team returns fire he turns and looks at the Sergeant, who had ducked behind the wall but is unharmed. Bundy turns to face the star gate. He yells for Randall and Martinez to report.

Randall yells out that he is okay. But Martinez is silent. Randall yells out again. “Cap, Martinez is down.”

“Sully, go look.” The Sergeant acknowledges and takes off, running fast and low to the right of the gate platform.

“Randall, stay put. Cover the right side of the plaza, I’ll cover the left. Watch our six also.”

Keeping low Bundy runs across the opening to the left column. As he moves he hears several more shots from above. He reaches the column and ducks down behind the wall.

“Lorenzo, report!!”

“Davis popped the shooter before he could fire a second shot, Sir. Confirmed kill. Confirmed kill on the guy next to him, never knew what hit him. Was anyone hit?”

“Martinez may have been.”

“Crap! The gunner just popped up and shot. I don’t know how he aimed. Dammit, if we could have ...”

“Don’t worry about that now. Is there anyone else?”

“No. When they fired they’d exposed themselves too much. Davis scored on the gunner and his spotter. Two more heads popped up trying to find out who took out their sniper. We both opened up on them. No confirmed kills, but I haven’t seen any movement since. The other, the, uh two-man team, high-tailed it out of here. I caught sight of them just before they disappeared.”

“They’re gone?”

“Yes, Sir. After we took out the snipers I took a quick look at their position. We’d revealed our location and they realized we’d been watching them all along. They didn’t want any trouble. They had their hands away from their weapons and were walking away.”

“Okay, keep watch. There may be others.”

“Understood. Funny thing about that other team, though.”

“What?”

“One of them, just before he disappeared, was waving and pointing up. I think he was trying to tell us something.”

“Ah hell, do you think he was trying to warn us?”

“I think so. I’m afraid to think what it might be.”

“You thinking possible air assault?”

“Maybe, I don’t know. We haven’t seen any evidence of aircraft but it IS a big city.”

“*Just great,*” the Captain thinks, “*things are going downhill fast.*”

“Ok, institute an air watch, but keep watch on the buildings also.”

“Yes, Sir. Davis has already changed to our backup position in case anyone else is out there. I’ll move as soon as he sets up.”

“Roger. Bundy out.”

Bundy scans the plaza. The rising heat waves cause the opposite end of the plaza to shimmer slightly. He yells out, “Sully, how’s Martinez?”

From behind the platform he can hear the Sergeant yelling at someone, probably Martinez. “Pretty frickin’ lucky. If he hadn’t had his helmet on ...” He leaves the sentence incomplete. The Captain knows what he means. “It’s got a nice dent in the side. He got his bell rung. His eyes are just starting to focus.”

“*Best news so far,*” Bundy thought. “Okay, stay where you are. I’ll inform SG-1. Oh, and gently remind Martinez why I asked him to wear his helmet.”

The Sergeant yells back, “Yes, Sir, I’m doing that right now.” There are more yells from the back side of the platform.

The Captain turns on this radio. “SG-4 to SG-1, come in SG-1”

Colonel O’Neill’s voice can barely be heard over the static. “O’Neill here. What’s going on? Your signal is cutting in and out.”

“We were fired on. I repeat, we were fired on. Martinez was hit in the helmet but seems to be okay. Lorenzo reports that they took out the unfriendlies.”

“Any idea who?”

“No, Sir, they declined to introduce themselves. Lorenzo and Davis confirm two kills. Unconfirmed on two others. However, they've seen no movement at that position since.”

There is a momentary pause. Bundy can hear a voice in the background. “Al, this is bad. The Ambassador’s here. Uh, he’s telling Daniel that this is a huge violation of half a dozen treaties. Maybe it was someone acting on their own, but the Ambassador doesn't think so. Whoever it was they crossed a big line. It could also mean that, wait” O’Neill pauses. “That whoever it was may have decided the threat we pose is too great to ignore.”

“Lorenzo hasn’t seen anyone else. Maybe that was it.”

“Maybe. We’re still twenty minutes out. Stay down and stay alert. If it gets too hot, dial up Earth and get the hell out.”

“We’ll be here waiting for you. When you get close let us know. We’ll dial the gate and have it ready for when you get here.”

“Thanks Al, we’ll see you in a few. O’Neill out.”

The Captain kneels behind the column. He scans the buildings and the sky, looking for any activity. For the next ten minutes nothing happens. Lorenzo reports no signs of movement at the sniper location. Bundy begins to hear a faint “thump thump thump” sound.

“Lorenzo, what is that sound?”

“I don’t know, Sir. I can hear it but I don't see anything.”

The sound becomes louder. It echoes off the buildings and the plaza walls, making it impossible to determine the source’s location. After several minutes of listening to the noise Lorenzo radios.

“Captain, Lorenzo here. We’ve got a visitor.”

The Captain looks toward the top of the ramp. The “thump thump” sounds like it is almost on top of him, but other than the mounds of garbage there’s nothing to see. “Where, I don’t see anything.”

“Not on the ramp, it’s coming in from your 2 o’clock.”

“Two o’clock. But there aren’t any openings there. The only way that something could come in that way would be for it to...oh hell!!!”

“Fixed wing or rotary?”

“Rotary. Moving slowly. It’s skimming the rooftops. I heard it before I could see it. It popped up a few streets away. It must have been staying low. It’s approaching the rim now.”

The Captain looks toward the end of the plaza, scanning the tops of the buildings ahead and to the right of the ramp. He can feel the vibrations as the sound bounces off the plaza walls and floor.

The nose of the mysterious helicopter appears above the top edge of the building immediately to the right of the ramp. Slowly the helicopter inches past the building’s rim and out over the plaza. Once past the edge of the building the helicopter stops. Seen from the side it resembles a pregnant guppy, but with an ominous-looking gun turret just under the nose. The front of the helicopter dips slightly to give the pilot a better view of the plaza.

Bundy can barely hear someone yelling over the radio. “What the hell is it, Captain? Where’s the tail rotor?”

Focused on the helicopter's gun turret, Bundy had not noticed the missing tail rotor. He sees a blur of twin rotors on top of the chopper, one above the other.

“I think they are coaxial props, one above the other. They spin in opposite directions to eliminate the torque that the tail rotor has to counteract. First time I’ve seen one.”

Bundy takes a closer look at the helicopter. As it turns to face him he gets a sinking feeling in his stomach. If a chopper can look mean this one does. It is thick and heavy looking, not built for speed but for taking and giving punishment.

The chopper slowly drifts across the far end of the plaza, continuing over the tops of the buildings that stand just beyond the ramp. It pauses for a moment and then slides to the other side of the plaza. It must be looking for something, but he doesn’t know what. It pauses over the position where the sniper team was hiding.

“Captain?”

“Yeah, I see, it’s hovering over the dead sniper team.” Bundy thinks, *“this can’t be good.”*

Whatever the pilot was looking for he found. The helicopter moves forward. Once past the edge of the buildings and the rim of the plaza it drops until it is only a few meters above the plaza floor. The engine noise reverberates throughout the plaza, causing the floor beneath his feet to vibrate. The helicopter’s downwash scatters trash as it rushes across the plaza floor. Bundy charges his weapon and moves the selector switch to full automatic. He puts his finger on the safety.

“Lock and load gentlemen, I think it’s going to get hot,” Bundy yells into the radio.

The chopper continues its approach toward the gate. As it nears he can see the cockpit and the two men inside, one behind the other. *“Gunner in the front, the pilot behind,”* he thinks.

The helicopter reaches the middle of the plaza and then swings to Bundy’s right. Bright flashes suddenly appear at the end of the gun and high caliber bullets begin to tear into the front of the gate platform. The helicopter slides a dozen meters further to Bundy’s right and rises slightly. Bullets rip toward the men behind the platform. He can hear the men behind him yelling.

The Captain stands, aims at the cockpit window and fires several bursts. The bullets strike the fuselage and cockpit window but have no effect.

Bundy pauses to yell into his radio, “THE DAMN THING’S ARMORED! AIM FOR THE SOFT SPOTS! ROTORS AND ENGINES!”

He shifts his fire. From his position he can only aim for the rotors and the intakes of the engines. He knows that Lorenzo and Davis have a much better chance of hitting something vital. Bundy empties his magazine. He reaches to grab another.

The helicopter continues firing. Moving toward the gate it swings even further to Bundy’s right, trying to improve its angle of fire. The three men run to the far side of the platform to avoid the hail of bullets.

Bullets from Davis and Lorenzo strike the upper fuselage of the helicopter, drawing the attention of the pilot. The pilot rapidly scans the buildings for the source of the bullets. The two men are well hidden, firing from inside the building and away from the window. The pilot angles the nose toward the upper levels, directing its fire to the buildings above the plaza rim.

The helicopter fires, the turret slowly rotating. Bullets tear into the buildings, ripping through the metal walls like they were tissue paper. Captain Bundy stands, firing directly at the side of the cockpit window, emptying his magazine. Though the glass may be bullet proof, he hopes to weaken it enough for the bullets to penetrate. The striking bullets draw the attention of the pilot who looks for the source. As their eyes meet, Bundy pauses reloading long enough to use his left hand to provide an appropriate salute to the pilot. Even though they are from different worlds, the meaning is obvious. The pilot taps the gunner on the shoulder and points at the Captain. The Captain inserts the magazine and pops it into place. He releases the bolt and begins firing. The pilot swings the nose down and spins the helicopter toward the Captain. The helicopter slides forward a few meters. Bundy is able to squeeze off a few short bursts before the helicopter gunner opens fire, forcing Bundy to drop behind the column. The column shudders as the heavy caliber bullets slam into it. Stone chips fly past his head and chunks of the column rain down on him. He drops down as far as he can, knowing that the bullets will soon shatter the rest of his protective barrier.

Over the noise of the helicopter and the slamming of the bullets into the column he hears someone shout “CLEAR!” A loud swoosh comes from the direction of the platform, followed almost immediately by an explosion on the other side of the Captain’s rapidly disappearing column. Looking up he sees the Sergeant standing to the side of the gate platform, a smoking metallic tube on one shoulder. Rolling over and peering over the shattered remnants of the wall Bundy looks for the helicopter. Dense, black smoke billows through the shattered cockpit canopy. The helicopter hangs suspended for a moment then slams to the ground. The metal plates vibrate from the shock. The helicopter rolls onto its side and bursts into flames. No one escapes from the inferno.

“Jeez, that was close,” the Captain mutters as he stands.

The Captain watches the helicopter burn. The Sergeant appears next to the Captain. “Cap, you all right?”

“Yeah. Yeah, Sully, just fine. I wish I’d brought a second pair of underwear though.”

The Sergeant laughs. “Damn, I thought you were a gonner for a sec.”

“Me too. Where the hell did you get that?” He says, pointing to the still smoking tube the Sergeant holds.

The Sergeant looks at the tube then lets it fall.

“Martinez thought it would be a good idea to bring the LAW. Don’t know what possessed him to do that, but I’m glad he did.”

“Yeah, me too. Tell him I owe him a beer. How are he and Randall doing? They okay?”

“Yeah, they’re fine, though I think we all could use new pairs ourselves.”

The Captain speaks into his radio, “Davis, Lorenzo, report!”

“We’re fine Captain. He hadn’t reached our hiding spot yet. Good thing something distracted him. What happened?”

“Sully took it out with a LAW anti-tank missile.”

“Yeah? Sweet. Nice shot, Sergeant.”

“You guys set back up. Where there was one there may be more.” Bundy turns to the Sergeant. “I don’t suppose he has another?” The Sergeant shakes his head. “No? Okay, get back to the platform. I’ll radio the Colonel to let them know what happened.” He pauses for a second, thinking about what will happen if a second helicopter shows up. “You think you can get up those stairs over there?” Bundy points to the partially buried stairs behind the gate, leading up to the plaza’s rim.

“We can try. It doesn’t look very stable. I’d hate to be caught while we were trying to climb all that crap. You think we’ll need to?”

“If there’s another chopper we won’t have much choice. There isn’t enough cover here. If we can get behind the buildings up there we might be able to lose it.”

“Ok.” The Sergeant moves back toward the platform.

“SG-4 to SG-1, come in!”

“O’Neill here. What’s going on?” Radio static makes it difficult for Bundy to hear.

“Colonel, we just repelled a chopper attack!”

“What? Sorry, static is pretty bad, I thought you said chopper attack.”

“Yes, Sir, Colonel, that’s what I said. We were just attacked by one. The damn thing is armored like a Soviet Hind. Our gunfire didn’t even scratch its armor. Fortunately Martinez had an M72. It made short work of it.”

“Damn, you guys okay?”

“Yes, Sir, though someone owes me a new pair of underwear.”

“I’ll be sure Hammond requisitions you one. We are almost there. Move your team away from the gate. We can worry about dialing it when we” The Colonel is interrupted by Lorenzo.

“CAPTAIN! INCOMING! ONE O’CLOCK, YOUR POSITION!”

Bundy turns to face the far end of the plaza. Above the buildings next to the opening he can see a helicopter identical to the one lying on its side, smoke and flames still spewing from it. The new helicopter passes over the buildings, banking sharply as it does. Dropping toward the plaza floor it speeds toward the gate.

“CRAP!! Incoming chopper, Bundy out!!”

Bundy runs to the other column and crouches. He turns and yells at the Sergeant to get the men behind the wall. He can see the heads of the three men running away from the platform and toward the wall. He looks again at the advancing helicopter. This one looks like the first, but has two pods mounted on either side of the fuselage. “ROCKETS!!” He instantly knows they’re screwed. The helicopter turns, moving to Bundy’s left. It looks like it is trying to get past the platform to get a clear shot at his team.

He stands and fires, trying to divert the pilot’s attention away from his men. The helicopter stops and spins to face him. He dives toward the remains of the other column as smoke appears at the left rocket pod. The column and wall where he stood erupt in flames as the rockets strike and detonate. Shards of the column and wall fly over his head. He slides to a stop. Turning over he looks to see where the helicopter is. The helicopter rotates until its nose points directly at him. He jumps up and sprints toward the DHD as the helicopter fires another salvo. He dives as the second column and wall shatter. The sound of the explosions is deafening. He slides behind the dialing device. Over the loud “thump thump thump” he can hear

the team's frantic firing.

He crouches behind the DHD and looks for the helicopter. He can't see it. He hears his men yell a warning. He quickly scans the area and sees that the helicopter has moved closer and swung to his right. The nose points directly at him. He can clearly see the faces of the gunner and the pilot. The helicopter rises a few meters. As smoke appears from the right pod Bundy sprints toward the platform. He runs up the steps and dives over the side as the DHD behind him disintegrates. He hits the plaza floor and rolls a few meters before coming to a stop. He quickly slides up against the platform for protection. The front corner of the platform and part of the plaza floor disappear in another explosion. He turns his head and raises his arm to shield his face from the blast. He feels a strong vibration beneath him as the platform shakes. He scrambles around the corner, now hiding at the back of the platform.

Bundy turns to his left. His three team members are still firing, desperately trying to distract the pilot. Bundy senses that the helicopter has moved again. He looks to his right, where the helicopter last fired. It's not there. He turns to his left again. The helicopter has swung to the opposite side of the plaza. It is to the side of the gate and slightly behind. He is completely exposed. *"God, not again!"*

He doesn't want to expose his men to the rockets. Instead of running toward them he jumps up and runs away from the platform and his men, toward the wall that surrounds the gate. The shock wave from another explosion slams into him as the back of the platform shatters. He is thrown forward, landing hard and sliding across the floor and into the wall. Without thinking he scrambles over the wall and drops to the other side as bullets strike the wall.

The floor vibrates under him and he hears a loud shriek of tearing metal. His head throbs and his body is racked with pain. *"Keep moving!"* he yells at himself. Rolling onto his stomach he crawls as fast as he can away from where he crossed the wall. The wall behind him disappears as another brace of rockets strikes, his instinct to move saving his life.

He struggles to rise, to see what the helicopter is doing. Looking over the wall he can see that the helicopter has swung back toward the middle of the plaza. Slowly and with effort Bundy lifts his weapon. It seems to have become several pounds heavier. He pulls the trigger but nothing happens. The magazine is empty. He struggles to remove it and insert a new one. He hears the almost frantic firing by the rest of the team. Rising, the Captain sees that the helicopter has directed its attention back to his men behind the wall. Their bullets strike the front of the fuselage but with no effect. The helicopter pilot realizes they can't hurt him, but he still hesitates to move too close. The burning helicopter acts as a reminder of what could happen to him.

The Captain inserts the magazine and prepares to fire. As he brings the weapon up, the helicopter fires another missile salvo. Instinctively he ducks, but he quickly realizes the target is the men behind the wall. As the missiles explode he hears screams. He curses. With a burst of energy he stands and empties his magazine at the helicopter. This attracts the attention of the pilot. The helicopter spins, bringing its gun to bear on the target that just will not die.

The Captain drops to the ground and crawls along the wall toward his men. The wall behind him begins to shatter as the bullets strike. He struggles to continue even though the throbbing in his head becomes stronger. The thought to just lie down and stop delaying the inevitable arises, but his training and will to reach his men keeps him moving.

There is a lull in the firing. The engine noise of the helicopter is still there, though it seems to lessen as his vision dims. Voices come from the radio but he can't make out what is being said and can't seem to bring himself to answer. He forces himself to his knees, to peek over the top of the wall. The helicopter has moved to the middle of the plaza, hovering just beyond the shattered columns. What it is waiting for he doesn't know. As he looks he sees the gunner in the front look toward him. As their eyes meet the gunner smiles. The gun barrel swivels toward him. He collapses behind the wall. The wall shudders as bullets strike the other side. As he struggles to move his vision narrows. This time he can't bring himself to move.

Over the noise of the cannon fire and the helicopter's engines he hears two new sounds. One is of an energy discharge that reminds him of something but he can't remember what. The other is the sound of a heavy caliber gun. Whatever the sounds are, bullets no longer strike the wall.

Bundy struggles to his knees. Grabbing the wall with his free hand he pulls himself up and looks for the helicopter. It hovers in the middle of the plaza, having spun around to face new foes. The Captain turns his head, looking past the helicopter, trying to focus on the new arrivals. A medium-sized truck sits at the bottom of the ramp. A man in uniform stands on the back of the vehicle, firing a heavy machine gun at the helicopter. Several figures stand or kneel on either side of the truck, also firing at the helicopter. A single man, tall in stature, runs toward the helicopter, firing blast after blast from a staff weapon.

Bullets from the heavy machine gun slam into the front of the helicopter, jarring the aircraft. Some bullets have struck the rocket pods, causing them to begin smoking. The frontal armor begins to fail and cracks appear in the cockpit canopy. The energy blasts strike the upper fuselage near the rotors. A thin trail of dense, black smoke begins to stream from the top of the helicopter.

The pilot realizes his aircraft cannot handle this type of punishment and decides to make a hasty retreat. The helicopter slides backward and rises. There is a flash and an explosion at the top of the helicopter. The rotors disintegrate, spraying the plaza floor with fragments. The helicopter drops like a rock and slams into the plaza floor. Another explosion causes the cockpit and upper part of the fuselage to fly apart. The men near the truck jump back to avoid the flaming debris. The new arrivals climb onto the truck and drive toward the SG-4 team, slowing to pick up Teal'c. The truck swerves off the path and onto mounds of garbage to give the burning helicopter a wide berth. The ammunition and rockets cook off as the helicopter continues to burn.

Bundy tries standing but almost blacks out. He slides to the ground, turning so his back is against the wall. He tries to get up again, to go help his men, but his body just won't cooperate. His vision dims as a buzzing noise gets progressively louder just before he blacks out.

Slowly, Bundy regains consciousness. He feels a hand on his shoulder, gently shaking him. Someone speaks but he can't understand what is being said. The person removes his hand and kneels in front of him.

"Captain, can you hear me? Al, it's Jack. Say something."

The Captain looks up to see Colonel O'Neill. The Colonel has a worried look on his face. The Captain smiles. As he speaks his words are slightly slurred.

"Jack? Hey, where did you come from? Where's Carter, Teelc and uh, Doc-tuuur Jackson?"

"They're checking out the rest of your team."

"What?" Bundy blinks hard and shakes his head to focus. Intense pain causes him to stop moving his head. "Oh crap." Bundy struggles to get up. "They're hurt, I heard screaming, I need to get over there."

The Colonel stands and puts his hand back on the Captain's shoulder and presses. Bundy slides back to the ground. "That's okay, Al. They're in good hands. How are you doing? You've been pretty out of it since I got here."

"Man, I don't know. I got slammed into the wall pretty hard. Must have hit my head. Felt a little dizzy there for a bit. But I'm okay now. You got the chopper, right?"

"Yeah, we got it all right." O'Neill kneels in front of the Captain.

"Al, I've got a question for you."

"Um, sure, Jack, anything you want to know."

"Al, what happened to the star gate?"