

Most of what they could see was random light colours, no coherent shapes or outlines. They were ascending through a psychedelic tunnel. Looking up it was possible to make out a kaleidoscope of golden rings swivelling around at the top of the vertical passage. However they did not look with eyes as one might think of them. It was more their consciousnesses that perceived the experiences. Their bodies had been demolecularised, each separate molecule spiralling upwards in a tempest of merged personas, and racing past these dispersed figures were trails of slithering symbols, data streams carrying constant updates within the Tower network. Gryal would not be aware of their presence, so for the moment there was no risk of discovery. Above the opening of shimmering rings was fast approaching. As Noah had been in the Towers before he knew the best place in the local area to *transit* to the moment they materialised. The two Mancynns had to brace for a split-second reaction. They only had one shot at this.

The embarkation room of the Tower was a wide cylinder of black surfaces, littered with large containers and other materials scheduled for transportation. In the middle of the room was a raised ovoid platform. Through a heptagonal hole in the plinth the trio rose, their individual atoms coming back into their original configuration. As soon as enough of the Mancynns' matter was solid again Noah took them up to the rafters.

Above the bustling workplace the Mancynns secured the crate with discarded chains which looked like they were left over from some construction at this ceiling level, the American especially busying himself so as to not get lost in taking in these once familiar surroundings. Once certain the bomb wasn't about to fall to the floor far below they got carefully to their feet. Philip was about to ask Noah what their next move was going to be when he saw something moving over the man's shoulder. Seeing Philip's face, Noah whirled around and in one swift movement released an energy ball square into the face of an advancing minion, a squat red creature with both eyes on one side of its head and two tusks forcing themselves through the skin on its chin. The minion stumbled backwards, toppling off the rafters and crashing onto the floor below.

"Stupid Braknagh," Noah muttered.

The Gneimtei Braknagh, the one tasked with operating the embarkation control console, took no notice of its fellow hitting the floor next to it, rather focusing on stabilising its Lord's form. There had been something peculiar in the read-outs for the beam, so it had attempted to fiddle with the settings to try to clear the issue out. Possibly as a result however Gryal stood in a nebulous state, presumably that of his original Entity energy, a shining silhouette upon the platform. Then the bones and cloak rushed in all at once, snapping into place around the eternal consciousness, looking as if they had never left. Underneath the figure metal plates at last rapidly unfolded to seal up the heptagonal hole.

From above Gryal looked like a white pinprick on the black canvas. Philip knelt on the metal rafters so as to get a marginally better look at him. The Brethren Lord stepped off the platform and strolled past his gaggle of minions, stepping over the splattered body. As

he passed over it the darkness of his cloak fed away at the mutilated flesh of the fallen minion, corroding the corpse. Gryal was set on a route march, weaving between the piles of export materials, when he paused. Philip could not have possibly known that the skeleton was inhaling, searching out the source of the scent which he'd detected upon materialisation, but he could definitely tell Gryal was turning his luminescent eyes up to the heights of the towering room. Philip's heart was beating a quickstep against his ribcage. Surely Gryal wasn't going to discover them this early on in their operation? But he was not. Having found no evident source, Gryal continued on his way towards a hidden door in the curved wall, which (having anticipated his arrival) melted away to allow him access before sealing up again once he'd passed through. Once again Philip felt something he didn't understand, an urge to go down to Gryal, to be by his side.

The teen jumped as Noah placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Come on. If you want to find your friend, he'll probably be this way."

Philip stood back up beside Noah.

"You're sure he will be in that direction?" Philip asked, questioning the way Noah was pointing.

"Though it has been many years since I have been in a Tower, I'm sure they wouldn't have changed the layout too dramatically."