



Chapter 24: Rise

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Part of 10,000 Dawns

Graelyn found herself in a supply closet, it was too small for the orb to fit in, so she must have landed somewhere away from it. Her face felt raw and ached, like someone had been rubbing it with a metal file. Her legs were sorer than they had ever been, her lungs were still short of breath. Her belly throbbed with pain, and she suspected she might have broken ribs. She sort of hoped the blast had disabled her uterus permanently so she could live easier every month, but she suspected this wouldn't be case. Life was full of disappointments. She wanted to get up and run after Arch, but she couldn't, and she didn't even know where he was anyways. Not to mention this pile of cleaning supplies was really quite comfortable, she should stock up when she gets home. Yes, quite comfortable. Yes, quite.

The ceiling was incredibly white. She sat up, and felt the blood shift in her body suddenly, felt the IV's pull on her arm. She wasn't wearing her spacesuit—she was wearing a hospital gown. She held back any panic, and sat calmly, flexing her joints to guess how long she'd been asleep. It wasn't a hard science, but it had to at least have been a few days.

“Miss Scythes?”

A man entered her room wearing a period Doctor's outfit- excuse me- it was probably totally at home in this era, she was the anachronism wasn't she? He was holding a tablet pc, and scrolling through some things on it. “I'm glad to see you're up. We kept you sedated to keep you from pulling out any of the stitches, you had quite a bit of internal bleeding.

“Is everything... Fine?” She said, still groggy.

“Yes, thanks to modern medicine,” ha, “everything is working properly now. There was some extensive damage to your Uterus, Bladder, and Liver but they're all back to normal, nothing to worry about.” She let her jaw slip in disappointment—she wasn't going to do it herself or anything, but not having periods would have been great. “Don't worry,” he said, totally misreading her, “You can still have children.”

“Fantastic.” She muttered, and looked around the room, “Where exactly am I Doctor...” ah, a nametag! “Miles.”

“You're in St. Andrew's Hospital, connected to St. Andrew's University in Maryland.”

“Okay. Second query: you knew my name, but I don't think I was carrying any sort of identification.”

The Doctor scrolled through some files on his tablet.

“It says here the estate of your great Uncle Heirum J. Whitehead took care of it.” Graelyn had no uncle named that, let alone a great one.

“Did he leave me a message? He usually does when he does things like this.” She lied briskly. The Doctor scrolled and tapped a few times. “It should be on the tablet by your bedside.” She picked it up, and read the just transferred note. She'd never met Heirum, but the guy sure could get things done.

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She slept, and awoke. The window was open, and instinctively Graelyn slid out of bed, trying to ignore the pain, and walked over to it. On the sill was a butterfly, slowly moving its wings up and down. Graelyn peered down at it, there was something odd about it. Reaching down, she felt like she should pull its wings off, but held back, and put a finger down next to the creature. To her surprise, it climbed on. Raising it to her face, she looked at it. The wings were an ethereal blue, and their patterns and shapes were like nothing from nature. It seemed to glow. Her eyes shifted from the mesmerizing creature, which seemed to unfurl a new mystery with each beat of its wings, to the window: hospital windows didn't open. The butterfly took off, and Graelyn turned to see the walls and ceiling were coated with them. On the bed was a cat, but not a nice cat. Its eyes were malicious. It hissed, and she felt a songbird die somewhere. As its tail swished, the butterflies moved their wings in unison. Graelyn raised her arms, and the first notes of Mozarts 5th symphony played, like she was conducting it. And as she did so, the butterflies fell off the walls and the ceiling, and splattered into rain on the ground. The cat squealed in terror.

And Graelyn woke up, sheets crumpled, still unable to walk.

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It was another month before Graelyn was ready to leave the hospital, which had been in the note, so she didn't fight it. It was pretty clear what was going on anyways, and if she could time travel from here it didn't matter how long she lollygagged. She passed the time by eating lots of snacks and watching the video screen in her hospital room, or trying out socialization. Across the barrier in the same room was a girl named Alondra who had broken her leg on a school Ski-trip, and liked keeping a constant stream of words coming from her mouth like she was afraid if she left part of a conversation silent something would slip into her soul. She didn't talk to Graelyn at first though, "I'd thought you weren't going to wake up." She said when they finally got to talking. "You were really beat up, there were weird burns on your face in stripes like you'd been lashed by a Balrog or something."

She raised her eyebrow, "Balrog?"

"You know, flaming whip, big leathery wings, fights Gandalf—'YOU SHALL NOT PASS!'" she said, slamming her tray with one hand while she pulled her long black hair into a fake beard. "Lord of the Rings?"

"Oh. I see. I've never read it." Alondra's eyes went wide, "You've never ever read the Lord of the Rings? The Hobbit, at least?" Graelyn shook her head, and Alondra made a point of making the nurse bring her all four books. Graelyn was a bit grateful, Arch was older than her after all, more mature and yet totally sheltered due to his isolated upbringing. Graelyn had lived a solitary life, she wasn't a social butterfly, she wasn't even social or a butterfly. She liked her cocoon. Alondra was almost the same age as her, a little younger and treated her like it. She hobbled over and did Graelyn's hair, though she was rubbish at returning the favor. Graelyn read through the four books quickly, and took on the Silmarillion ("Oh that's a tough read you might not want to-") and easily sped through that too. They were good books. Tolkien's attempt to create a new mythology for England was a noble one, and Graelyn was struck how long it was since she had been to Russia at this point, outside of fifteen minutes of her own childhood of course. Those fifteen minutes had been the only time she'd spoken Russian for more than a few moments in the last year as well. She felt something welling up inside her she couldn't put a label on. She remembered how she'd seen Arch as an experiment when she'd found him, something to explore rather than a person. If the accident hadn't happened that had sent them spiraling through time, would she have taken him apart piece by piece like the roadkill in the woods? She hadn't ever killed an animal, just taken apart dead ones, not that many people would understand the difference. What if she had killed Arch? She felt her home beating in her chest, and the guilt at losing Arch and almost betraying him.

No, I wouldn't have betrayed him. Surely. I'm not that person.

"Do you dream Graelyn?"

"Most of the time, usually." Alondra's nimble fingers were trying something complex and slightly poofy she seemed delighted with, "why do you ask?"

"You were unconscious so long, I always wondered; If I were asleep that long maybe I'd go to another place, like I slipped through a hole in the world and my mind fell through."

"I'm not sure I'd go that far in believing something."

"Just hear me out—I mean, when I'm skiing I sometimes feel like as I go down the slope I'm not actually on the slope, like I'm just driving my body, my skis as much my limbs as my arms or legs. I lose track of what is and isn't me. Which makes me wonder if my body is me—if there was a version of me with the same number of cells, the same genome, the same voice, but who didn't feel the same way I did, would it really be me, or would it just like a black and white copy of a color picture—it shows the same thing but you know its different."

"This is awful hypothetical."

"Sorry to unload it all on you, my girlfriend usually gets the brunt of it, but she's off at this teen space

camp.”

“You have a girlfriend?”

“I didn’t mention her? Oh my God I didn’t mention her! She wanted to come visit but I told her she sure as hell wasn’t ruining her chance at space just to cheer me up. I usually call her when you’re asleep, you sleep a lot no offense, so we have some privacy. I can’t believe that I forgot to mention her!”

Graelyn shrugged, which surprised Alondra and she had to start over at whatever she was doing with her hair.

“Its alright. I haven’t mentioned a lot of people.”

“Well tell me, where does Graelyn Scythes come from? That’s an unusual name.”

“Russia. I was born in Moscow, but I grew up in a small farming town where my parents owned a house for a few years, before we moved back. There's not much to tell about it.” Her fingers weaved the shiny black strands of her hair again into a new shape.

“Siblings?”

“Curious aren't we?”

“That's a pretty normal question.” Graelyn felt like shrugging, but refrained for the sake of Alondra's work. “I'm a very private person, and not a particularly normal one. I do have siblings. More than you'd expect, actually. But I keep in touch with none of them, and even less with my parents.” There was silence for a bit as she braided. Graelyn could faintly see in the small reflection on a monitor that her lips were pursed.

“Did I say something dis-pleasurable?”

“No, no no no, I just can't imagine growing up like that, you know? Or I guess you don't.”

“Tell me about your girlfriend.”

“Well,” she said with an aire of wispy longing in her tone, “June is-”

“June?!?” Graelyn ejaculated.

“Er, yeah.”

“June Barker?”

“Do you know her?” Graelyn thought how best to answer that question. It wasn't an easy one to really start.

“Yeah, sort of. I doubt she remembers me. I've met her though, just once. I'm surprised I remember her to be honest. I was just so surprised, it seems like an awful big co-incidence.” Graelyn reached into her pocket and pulled out the cat pin, looking on it fondly, “Its hard to forget, we had the same pin.”

Alondra looked at her hand, “you can't have the same pin. That's impossible, it's a family heirloom.”

“Is it? I didn't ask I just noticed.”

“Could I see it.” Graelyn saw no reason why not, so she placed it gently in Alondra's palm, and then felt the urge to push down on it slightly so she could feel the shape of its nature, so she followed her own urges and pushed. It was an insignificant action, but it didn't feel like it, it felt like she'd pressed the button on a payload of bombs.

Alondra looked on the backside of the pin and nodded, “It says here, ' DB to KL, corporeal tangent' and then a little heart symbol. “Corporeal tangent?”

“It’s something one of her ancestors made for their fiancé when they went off to fight in the second world war. It’s made of copper, that's why the metal part is green, it patinaed and they decided they liked the way it looked green better than copper colored so they placed a sealant over it so it wouldn't rub off. They've passed it on over and over to the oldest sibling. Its handmade. There's no way you'd have it unless you stole it from her or she gave it to you.”

“Call her. Ask her if she still has the pin.” Alondra bit her lip, “If you took it you're giving it back or I'm taking it from you.” Graelyn shrugged, Alondra having forgotten about the hair appointment. “Maybe he made a prototype, I don't know. I got it in a thrift shop.”

“You're lying.”

“Ask June.”

Alondra didn't talk to Graelyn till she made the call, and seemed to treat her as though she wasn't even present in the same room as her till that time came. June appeared on the Holoprojector, clearly tired, “Can we keep it short tonight? They ran us through this machine that simulated a ton of G's and we all puked. I'm totally spent.”

“June, do you still have your pin? The green one, with the cat on it?” She adjusted her camera so you could see her breast, it was clearly there, and her face showed the puzzlement of someone who had just been asked if she still had her hand.

“Yeah? I only take it off if I have to.” Alondra looked over at Graelyn, who was trying to not have an “I knew I was right” expression plastered all over her face. She did a very good job.

“That's... Weird.”

“Not.... Really?”

“I mean, the girl I'm rooming with here, Graelyn?”

“Yeah?”

“She has a pin just like that. It even has the same inscription.”

“The exact same one?”

“Yeah.” June paused, she nodded.

“You need to call my mom.”

Mrs. Barker arrived at 4:30, right as Graelyn was hitting chapter 19. She came bearing an old photo album, one of the ones made of paper bound with metal rings. The thing was an antique, and had been coated with some sort of transparent layer that strengthened and preserved it, but made it look funny to the eye, like it was a bad computer graphic. She first greeted Alondra; she seemed to get along with her daughter's girlfriend swimmingly, like she was already a favored daughter in law. “Hello Graelyn.” She said after a time, coming over to her bed. She looked at her, the gaze of someone looking at someone you'd heard of, or seen in photographs, but never seen before in person. She motioned towards the edge of the bed, and Graelyn gave a slight nod. Sitting down, her hips bumping Graelyn's feet, she spread the photo album on her lap. The pages had already begun aging before it had been sealed, and it looked like the kind of old document you might see in drama, with yellow cracking pages that somehow held together perfectly. Thanks to the sealant, it also looked strangely inauthentic. The photographs were of a man in an army air core outfit, and a woman in a decidedly 1940's haircut, and... Graelyn. The other two were smiling, Graelyn had the expression of a person who doesn't want to be in a picture but is doing so for the sake and happiness of other people, possibly in this case herself. She felt like saying, “That's me!” but held back as it was neither necessary or frugal, and would probably just make her look like an idiot.

“That's you!” Mrs. Barker said.

“Yes it is. Well, that's revealing.” Mrs. Baker got up and closed the door. She held the handle behind her back for a moment as though someone might try to barge their way in. “You have no idea how long our family has been waiting to meet you. Honestly, until I got my daughter's message I thought you were just an insane person who saved my great great... well, a lot of greats grandfather's life, I didn't actually believe what you told them.”

“What exactly did I tell them, because I haven't told them anything yet?” Alondra's eyes were wide, she was totally erect in bed, watching and listening as closely as she could manage.”

“That you were from an alternate reality and the future.”

“I was that upfront about that? Huh.”

“Would you mind if I saw the pin?” Mrs. Barker asked. Graelyn nodded and slipped it into her palm. She ran her thumb along it, smiling faintly. “Its all true then.”

“I suppose?” Mrs. Barker looked over at Alondra, placing her hand reassuringly on Graelyn's calf.

“Alondra, you have to keep all of this secret. No one can know what we talked about in here today.”

“Mrs. Barker...”

“Sandy.” She cut in.

“Sandy, uh, you don't really believe she is from an alternate reality in the future do you? I mean...”

Sandy cut her off.

“Alondra, when my many-greats-grandfather was fighting in the second World War II, this young woman stopped his plane from falling out of the air. She wore a cat pin, just like the one he had made for his fiance, only it was old.”

“Wait I stopped a plane from crashing?!?! How!?!?”

“He actually wrote you a guide, he said you'd need to study it.” She apparently would.

“This is crazy.” Alondra said.

“Honestly, its getting pretty normal for me.” Graelyn murmured.

“Graelyn, sweetie, you're going to do great, and you can stay with us as long as you need.”

“Stay with you? I mean, how will fit into society, I haven't been born yet.”

“So weird....” Alondra whispered.

“Actually,” the man at the door, who had quietly opened it, said, “Mr. Heirum J. Whitehead's estate has taken care of all of that.”

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Graelyn was for some reason attending class at a High School. This wasn't particularly how she'd seen jumping through a portal through time going. How old was she now even? She'd lost track. Was she even still a teenager? She tried to count the days but she had by all accounts lost track. There had been too many leaps and jumps and crossed time streams. She remembered the look on her own face—or was it her own face? Did another reality's version of herself count as her? As Songbird Kicked her out the window. She had no idea who she was anymore. That Graelyn had broken the promise though—maybe she'd lost the right to the name.

Is that all I am now—a promise of a little girl throwing herself out a window?

She sat down at her desk and looked over at June and her girlfriend who were clearly flirting. In a few years June would be in the academy for space travel, in a few more she'd be with Graelyn on Triton starting the loop that got Graelyn here in the first place. It hardly seemed to make sense, it hardly seemed to fit together at all. But here she was, studying things in the past.

“Good morning class” the teacher said, “now today we're going to learning about—Ryan, sit down. Trinity you to! – okay, uh, we're going to be learning about igneous rocks...”

Graelyn already knew all about Igneous rocks. She could probably teach a class on Igneous rocks. But this, she supposed, was the downside of time traveling. You could get stuck in history taking a class that was hyper advanced for your own age group at the time but that you easily passed years ago.. .Still, it wasn't a bad review. Graelyn didn't usually study geology, so the lessons on Igneous rocks were really a handy refresher, and she didn't feel like she was wasting that much of her time. English courses puzzled her a bit, she was enjoying them but the classes were really slow at reading, and since she had focused on the sciences she was actually learning an incredible amount in them. Math courses were however basically a rote action for her—she was in the school's most advanced courses, and she was far beyond them in ways they couldn't imagine. She had gotten her internship by being able to calculate the probable locations of other dimensions through a hypothetical time space rift at 16, or at least that was what she figured in hindsight now that she knew John Aril's real intentions. Advanced Calculus was essentially spelling “C-A-T” to her at this point in her life. Luckily the teacher had given them the whole syllabus so she'd been able to complete every single assignment for the year in the first

week. She now spent her math classes being a student assistant and running errands, or doing her own math work.

“So what is ‘456R-25K’?”

“Well, if you're mapping dimensions, most of them are hypothetically going to be nearly identical. Many of them have differences so slight it's impossible to tell where exactly they diverge. For example, there is a whole other reality for every different speed it takes to press a single key down on a keyboard, for every slight position it would hit, and that's just for every reality you hit that same key.” Graelyn explained to the math teacher.

“I've given each identical reality a designation, usually a number and letter to distinguish them.

However, what's notable is when there is a convergence- a link between two dimensions for whatever reason. Those are labeled with a two letter-number combinations. If you start to track dimensions, you can figure out where these holes are supposed to be, because they're sort of... fixed points. Dimensions can continually branch off and make new ones to infinity, but there is something special about two that are linked, they begin to take on a certain... stability. Not in the sense that they are more socially stable or anything, the universe isn't concerned with that, er, universes, but rather that they are more real than other universes, to put it in layman's terms. They're... anchored. As soon as a person moves from one universe to the other, it creates a bond between them.” She paused, “Hypothetically of course.”

The teacher looked at her wide eyed.

“Where did you say you transferred from?”

“I was homeschooled.” She lied, “By the lead programmers of Talinata Softworks.” He nodded slowly, “The AI developers.”

“Yes, though they've clearly moved beyond that.”

“Clearly.”

The truth was that Graelyn didn't solve all of her troubles with an epiphany, and that even though she hit the ground she felt like she hadn't stopped falling ever since. The epiphany, that moment of pure clarity that changed Graelyn Scythes from one person into another, didn't do so by force. In reality, it simply opened up a question inside her: who is this woman I don't want to fall? She didn't know. She had no idea, and as time went on she settled on two versions of herself, standing on opposite sides of a scale. One was an altruist, but a pragmatic one. Every breath she took served a greater good, but she would be taken in by no one. She would be volcano, erupting to protect the weak, and stoking a fire in her heart. The other was a fortress. She would cut out the things that could cause her pain, build up walls, and freeze her blood to ice. She would be impervious, and impartial. The ultimate scientist, only using her facts and not her heart. But even these simple ideals proved elusive—try as she might she never ended up one or the other, and a third woman came to being—a woman who was a bulldozer. She could run over her enemies, she could harness the power of the volcano and the pragmatism of the scientist and crush anyone who could cut through her walls. She had no idea who she wanted to be, only that she didn't want to fall.

Graelyn had had a boyfriend, and a girlfriend. She hadn't loved either of them, she'd simply wondered if she could get one. She succeeded, and when they left her or she left them she made sure to note their emotional reactions. She felt nothing, at least, she tried to convince herself she felt nothing, and she took copious notes. She felt the fortress inside her, and fire and ice at war in her heart.

But not everything went according to plan.

Of course it did at first—Graelyn got the job at project Atlantis, despite her parent's protests, and felt a jolt of pleasure at their anger at her when they couldn't control her. But then Arch came floating down, and she felt like she couldn't have done anything different, as though from that moment as he fell there wasn't a choice anymore. She wasn't sure what was inside her now, it wasn't fire, ice, or steel, she couldn't name it, like a figure in a dark room of a stranger.

June yelled, cheering on Alondra as she dribbled her way down the court. The crowd was fairly small, not many people showed up for a high school basketball game on the same Saturday as a big 7-Shuck match at the stadium, which was also being broadcast around the world. But June, now back from space camp, loved her girlfriend, and Graelyn was well practiced at keeping up appearances. The crowd yelled and jeered something, and Graelyn's text scrolled down automatically as it's camera sensed her eyes had finished reading the words at the bottom of the tablet's screen. Learning how to forge a letter was hard, but it would apparently be necessary. She was lucky people in the 1940's didn't know how to spot modern advances in replicating Franklin Dellano Roosevelt's signature.

"I can't believe this Ref! Can you?" Graelyn shrugged.

"I'm sure it was extremely unfair. They'll be doing an expose of it on the news tonight."

"Be serious." June said.

"I am wild." Graelyn said drolly as she opened another book.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"It's from a book, forget about it." Alondra had made her way to the net, and with a rousing leap, dunked the ball into the hoop. Graelyn politely clapped as the small crowd erupted.

"Now that was amazing!" June yelled.

"It was pretty good, yeah."

"If you're so moderate about being here, why did you come." Graelyn looked up at June.

"An honest answer there would be something akin to a speech." A whistle blew, and the fans cheered for their respective teams as they went to the locker rooms.

"Well, it's halftime, so I have time to listen." The dance team came out, and Graelyn was actually interested in watching them intently and listening to what song they picked, so she tried to get her speech done quickly.

"I'm here because you're people who aren't mean to me, and haven't left me yet. I don't even know if I like either of you, to be honest, but in my experience it matters more if a person treats you well than if you have anything in common. I'd take a friend who I can't have a conversation with but is there for me over one who is only there when the weather is fair and the sky is clear. I'd take a friend who I can't relate to but respects my existence over one who can joke with me but treats me as less than I'm worth any day." And I'm not worth much, she left off.

"What the hell kind of world is waiting for us in the future?" The dance team got in their positions.

"One where they make girl's named Graelyn who like watching well done entwinements of music and dance, shh." They watched the performance in silence. It was okay.

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Alondra and June were cuddling on the couch while Graelyn sat on the floor. They were eating pizza rolls, a dish that Graelyn had admittedly never tried before. They were okay. On the screen in front of them was the extended cut of "The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" an ancient movie to be sure, but Graelyn was enjoying it. Alondra and June made some frantic flailing motions as one of June's other mom Emily walked in front of the screen.

"She hasn't seen this yet mom!" June pleaded.

"Did someone call for mom?" Sandy said from the other room.

"The other one!" June yelled. Fred, one of June's dads, who had come in to bring them drinks, laughed.

"Oh come on Fred, like they haven't done that with you and Devon." He handed Graelyn a bubbly glass of ginger ale, and smiled at her.

"Yeah, but we make bad joke about it." Emily rolled her eyes.

"Seriously, mom, dad, we're watching a movie."

"Did someone call for dad?" Devon yelled from the other room."

“Hi dad, I'm dad.” Fred yelled. The dad's laughed.

“Jesus.” Alondra said, rewinding the movie. The Fellowship of the Ring from the movie's title was approaching a bridge in an underground city that had been overrun by creatures called Orcs, and a wizard called Gandalf was facing off with a big winged demon called a Balrog.

“You shall not pass!” The wizard said, and split the bridge with his staff. They both fell into the void. Graelyn dropped her pizza roll.

Of course.

Before Graelyn's eyes stood a map of the universes. They were anchored to each other through gashes, and the same gashes could slip you into different places in that universe's time, as well as a physical location in it.

There was a chasm between each of those spots, and they had latched onto the other side. The fellowship had crossed the chasm, and then broken the road. Here Graelyn was, trapped on one side of a divide in time, while Arch was somewhere else.

And the more she thought about it, the more she knew it had to be in World War II. So she had to get to World War II. But she had no way to guide the journey. The bag Kinan had given her when she'd left had some of Kinan's dust, but there was no way she could use the Labyrinth to get around, even if there was a Labyrinth in this world it would be cut off to her since she had no one to take her through the locked gates. But she didn't have to just drop into the void. She had something she knew had to be on the otherside: Her ring of power. The cat pin. She had no idea if it would work: maybe she would just drown in the sea of murky nothing between the universes. Maybe she would go mad. But she would not condemn Arch to death by inaction. This was her best and only shot. She knew exactly what she had to do.

The next morning, at breakfast, Graelyn had laid out a tablet for June with a document pre-loaded on it. June came downstairs, and didn't notice the tablet for fifteen minutes as she made herself toast, and then sat down, looking at it.

“Whats this?”

“That, is everything you need to know about how we meet in the future. I had to exclude a few things you didn't know, because well, you didn't know them, but it should be mostly complete.” June picked it up and began to read it, then bit her lip and set it down, looking Graelyn straight in the eyes.

“You're leaving today, aren't you?”

“Well, I'm going to try.”

Graelyn had said goodbye so many times now. It seemed like every time she hopped through a portal she met someone she would never forget, who would be a universe away. Alice, Lizette, Manuel.

Kinan, John, Miranda. Now, June, Alondra, and June's four parents.

They hugged each other, and Graelyn listened to their platitudes. Their time together had meant something, surely, but Graelyn wanted to get it over with. She hated saying goodbye, but Arch needed her, and she couldn't stay comfortable for too long.

If she was being honest, it didn't suit her.

She took a cab to Saint Andrew's Hospital, and on the way dialed the number for Talinata Softworks.

“Hello! Talinata Softworks. I'm our answering AI, WeN-D! How can I help you?”

“Hi, WeN-D, my name is Graelyn Scythes. I need to talk to whoever paid my hospital bill.” WeN-D was silent for a moment, “I'll connect you right away.” She did.

“Hello?” A gruff voice replied.

“Hi, I'm Graelyn Scythes, and I need to get back into the supplies room I woke up in in Saint Andrew's Hospital.”

“There is nothing there, we swept it clean.”

“Nothing you can see.” More silence. The sound of something being moved across the floor.

“We'll meet you there right away.”

When she arrived at the hospital, an androgynous person met her at the door, wearing a suit sunglasses, and an earpiece.

“Miss Scythes?”

“Talinata Softworks representative?”

“Yes. Follow me.” Without another word she was lead through the building, and up to the supplies room, which was empty. She looked at the person, “I need to change, and do what I came here to do. Close the door.” They nodded.

“Mister Whitehead sends his regards.”

“If I ever meet him, and he's not dead like he apparently is right now, I'll be sure to return them.” The person nodded, blankfaced, and shut the door. Graelyn quickly disrobed, and put on her spacesuit. She stuffed the rest of her belongings back into the bag, reserving some of the crystal dust, and the cat pin. Carefully, she put on the spacehelmet, and reached her hand out in front of her. She couldn't see anything, but she could feel it, like she had a new sense now that had opened up in her mind. There was a tear here in what was natural, sealed up to the human eye, but not healed. She could tear it open again, like a seam ripper. She pulled out the cat pin, and holding it up to where she felt the sensation in the air, used her other hand to throw the crystal dust at the same spot. At first, she thought it had been an idiotic idea, a foolish notion on her part, but then she was proven wrong.

The air began to swirl around her hand. She reached down and grabbed her bag quickly, and the portal formed around the cat pin. She tried to focus on World War II, on the plane. She hoped she'd grabbed everything she would need from the store for it. She hoped the portal would work. She hoped it wouldn't tear her apart.

It swirled, and her thoughts were cut off as she was sucked inside, spiraling down through the centuries, leaving only memories behind.

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Graelie Scythes woke up to find she had gotten mail. She never got mail, and with her first court ordered meeting with the therapist tomorrow, it was an odd time to start. Her mom read it first, confused, and threw it in the trash, but later that night she snuck out of her room and fished it out.

“Dear Graelie,

You don't know me, but maybe someday you will. I know that written mail is an oddity aside from packages, so I apologize if this freaks you out. I heard you are going through a hard time right now, and I wanted you to have this. If all had gone correctly, my descendants have sent you this cat pin as a token of our affection for you from afar. I can't tell you what your future holds, but I do know that when we meet, we will be friends. Until then, hold onto this pin as a reminder that someone remembers you, even from afar.

Sincerely, June Barker”

Graelyn slid the pin out of the envelope, and looked at it. It was old, but well taken care of. She slid the pin onto her pajama top as an experiment, and looked at herself in the mirror. The letter was clearly a prank, they'd probably write later asking for money or something, but for now having the pin on her breast felt comforting. As he looked at the image of a cat, she began to think about them, how nice it would be to have a companion like this imaginary letter writer. Maybe, she thought. She'd ask for a cat. Yes, that would do. That would do nicely.

*Come back next week to
find where Graelyn has
gone... As her journey
nears its end!*

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