

Chapter 18

Everyone looked at Jackson. Finally O'Neill spoke. "Ah, Daniel, I think you're going to need to explain that a bit." He paused a moment. "Slowly, so everyone can follow your Gould accent. Hell, I can't follow your Gould accent."

"Wait," said Tigh, "you want us to go back to Kobol? We almost didn't get out of there the last time!" He then started muttering about Cylons and people who didn't want to see the Cylons right in front of their eyes. *Man looks like he needs a drink*, thought O'Neill.

Jackson ignored the muttering. "We don't need to take everyone back to Kobol. If I'm right, we can go back by the Stargate."

"Stargate?" Adama had never heard the term.

"That's part of the explanation," replied Jackson. "But you need to hear the whole story."

Adama considered. Until he figured out how to get the Tel'tak and its ring system off of the *Galactica*, the ship wasn't going anywhere. He worried a bit about missing the rendezvous with the Fleet, but thought that Roslin could keep them together for a few days. Three more rendezvous were scheduled, which should allow the Fleet to stay ahead of the Cylons, assuming the Cylons were even looking anymore. OK, let's hear this story. He nodded to Jackson.

"Very well." Jackson paused, and looked carefully at the Colonial contingent. "I'm going to speak of matters which may involve your religion." He turned to Starbuck. "I don't think what I'm going to say really contradicts the *facts* behind what you said about the Lords of Kobol. However, I'm going to give you alternative *reasons* as to why these things happened."

Great, though O'Neill. Like that hasn't gotten us into trouble before. I wonder if they burn people at the stake here, or they go straight to disemboweling, drawing, and quartering. But Starbuck and Adama merely nodded. Apollo and his father looked impassive. Apparently not everyone was a religious fanatic here, so we might make it through. In any case, there was no hope of blasting their way back to the Tel'tak, so they might as well stay here. Hell, if they waited long enough, reinforcements *would* arrive, through the Stargate or, if they waited long enough, via Ha'tak or even the *Prometheus*.

Jackson started his story. "First, you should know that I'm an archaeologist." Blank looks from across the table. "That is, I study vanished civilizations."

"How can civilization vanish?" asked Starbuck.

A stable society since they settled the colonies, thought Jackson, or at least there were no major upheavals. Wars, probably, but nothing like what had happened to Earth. Until now.

“Many civilizations were wiped out by external invaders, much like yours.” Jackson winced. That was a crude way of putting it, all things considered. “Others were wiped out by plagues,” blank looks again, apparently the Goa’uld that settled the planet had taken care not to bring in anything too bad. (Mental note: try to boost these people’s immunity to our diseases before they visit Earth.) “And others disintegrated from within. Earth has many, many stories like this, I’ll be glad to let you study some of them—” O’Neill coughed, “uh, subject to what our authorities will let us release,” Daniel continued.

“Where was I? Oh yes, I’m an archaeologist, which means I research the history of peoples who lived in various places but who have now vanished. One of those places is this planet, Massilia. I’ve found various records of the Goa’uld who terraformed this world – that means make the planet Earth-like – and the people he brought in to settle it. Given what I’ve learned here and what I heard Starbuck say, I think I have a good idea of what happened to your civilization. But I think you need to here the whole story.”

“Who are these Goa’uld you’ve mentioned?” asked Adama.

“That’s part of the story.” Jackson settled back in his chair and put his hands together, fingers occasionally touching his chin. He started speaking as if he was lecturing a class of college students.

“Tens of thousands – maybe even millions – of years ago, there was a race of beings that we call the Ancients. It appears that they evolved on Earth.”

“Evolved?” broke in Lee Adama. “What does that mean?”

Jackson had used the standard Ancient word. Apparently it wasn’t the right one here. “Mutated from other species – you know, starting from single-cell organisms to multicellular creatures to vertebrates to primates to us.” God that was way to simple.

“But man and animals were created by the Lords of Kobol.”

Jackson considered. Kobol and the colonies were probably totally terraformed from bare rock. There wouldn’t be the slightest trace of a fossil record, and of course the thousands of years since the migration to Kobol wouldn’t be enough time for any new species to appear. He sighed. Another thing to gloss over.

“That turns out not to be the case.” Tigh snorted, having recognized the standard polite way to say “You’re Wrong!” Jackson continued, “in any

case, the Ancients looked much like us. They originally traveled through the Galaxy in spaceships such as this one, but eventually they built a faster transportation system which we call Stargates. There may be one or more on Kobol or the Colonies – big rings with strange markings on the side? No? Well, the Kobol gate was probably hidden, as you’ll see.”

“Approximately ten thousand years ago – we’ll have look at your calendar so that we can find out when events happened on your end – the Ancients were wiped out by a plague.” Uncomprehending looks again. “There are diseases for which a population has no immunity. If this disease can spread easily, most of the people died. That happened to most of the Ancients, though some – escaped elsewhere.” Atlantis, Ascension – better stay away from ascension. “Their Stargate system was left behind, though. It still operates. Thousands of worlds in this galaxy have a Stargate.”

“Also about ten thousand years ago – and we don’t know if there was any connection or not – a race of creatures called the Goa’uld appeared. A Goa’uld is a snake-like parasite. A mature parasite will burrow into its host body and take complete control of it. The host body gains great strength, resistance to disease, and a very long life, but its intelligence is complete enslaved, forced to watch as the Goa’uld does whatever it desires. On Earth one branch of our major religion is called Calvinism. One of its tenants is the innate depravity of man. I don’t know about that, and though men often commit terrible acts I don’t think that everyone is evil, but I *know* that most Goa’uld are totally evil. They only want power for themselves, and have great difficulty even in allying with other Goa’uld to achieve there ends.

“The Goa’uld originally enslaved a species called the Unas. Unas look something like us but are genetically completely different. Their mutual home planet had a Stargate, which the Goa’uld learned how to use and so were able to colonize the Galaxy. They acquired space ships from some races and were able to spread out even further. The Unas-Goa’uld were fierce creatures, but they were rather easily destroyed. The race would have died out, had not one of them – known as Ra – found Earth. He learned that humans made better hosts than the Unas – for one thing, our bodies respond better to the Goa’uld’s regeneration capabilities than the Unas did. It’s a fascinating subject in its own right. Ra had to learn how to manipulate the genes of humans so that they could accommodate the Goa’uld symbiote, and he had to be able to do it as he was entering the host – ”

O’Neil coughed.

“Oh, sorry, sometimes I get carried away.” Jackson paused for a second, then resumed his tale. “The Goa’uld, led by Ra, took over much of the Galaxy. Several races, including the last remaining Ancients, were able to fight back to a limited extent. Their help enable Earth to drive Ra off planet. The Stargate on Earth was buried.”

“In the meantime, however, other Goa’uld took humans as hosts. Even after Ra was driven off Earth, they would bring spaceships to Earth and kidnap entire towns of people. These humans eventually filled the Galaxy. The Goa’uld even did some genetic engineering on a group of humans, turning them into the Jaffa. The Jaffa carried Goa’uld symbiotes until they matured, and furnished troops for their Goa’uld masters.”

All Colonial eyes turned toward Teal’c. He nodded to them, then spoke. “Indeed, I did serve the Goa’uld Apophis as his First Prime. However, when I met General O’Neill, Colonel Carter, and Daniel Jackson I was able to renounce my allegiance to Apophis and the Goa’uld. With the help of the Tau’ri” (“people who were born on Earth,” said O’Neill in the background) “we were able to overthrow the rule of the Goa’uld throughout the entire Galaxy.”

“Yes,” said Jackson, “now what you should know is that the Goa’uld had great technology. At some point in time, they learned to incorporate naquadah – what you call tyllium – into their bodies. This gives them greater strength, and enables them to power some Ancient devices.”

“This technology was unknown among the primitive peoples that they abducted from Earth. They called the Goa’uld gods, and the Goa’uld accepted the worship of humans and Jaffa as gods.”

Starbuck was starting to get upset by this, but Adama said, “some of us have wondered if the Lords of Kobol derived their power from their technology. If so, it was far in advance of ours, even today.”

Bingo, got it in one, thought O’Neill. He’s not a fanatic about his religion, at least. He looked around at Jackson’s audience. Those from Earth had all heard most of the story before, except for the parts about Saturn. Most of them were surreptitiously studying the reactions of the Colonial team. Teal’c remained impassive, taking in everything but showing no change in expression.

The colonial side was more interesting. Starbuck looked anxious and threatened. Well, her religious beliefs were going to get a real shakeup today, if Daniel was correct. Both Adamas were attentive. Baltar – Baltar seemed to be staring straight at Jackson.

Baltar was in fact staring just above Jackson's head, where Six stood. Her hands caressed Jackson's face. Her clothing, well, he had seen here in less clothing on Caprica, but this, this was amazing. He couldn't take his eyes off of her to save his soul.

"Listen to the man, Gaius," purred Six. "He's telling you all our secrets." Her hands went lower on Jackson's body.

"Yes," continued Jackson, blissfully unaware that he was engaging in foreplay with a nearly naked sex fiend, "until a few years ago, when we were able to obtain Goa'uld and other higher technology, our abilities were behind yours – we didn't have spaceflight, beyond a primitive – OW!" Jackson gave O'Neill an accusatory glare. "In any case, the Goa'uld were very much in advance of us, and without the help of the Jaffa," Teal'c nodded in response, "and other races we would never have been able to defeat them."

"That's the background," concluded Jackson. He paused to take a drink of water. Adama eyed the water speculatively. They still needed supplies. If O'Neill couldn't be persuaded to let the Fleet go directly to Earth, perhaps they could get resupplied before carrying on.

"Now," Jackson began again, "we come the world below us, which we designated P7M-3527 but which Dr. Burkemeier, for reasons of her own, calls Massilia."

"It's a place where exiles hang out," O'Neill stage-whispered across the table to Adama. "OW!" O'Neill glared at Burkemeier, who gave him what she imagined was a demure smile.

"As I was saying," continued Jackson, speaking a little louder, "we now come to Massilia. Massilia has a lot of advantages for a Goa'uld. There is easily mined naquadah or tyllium, which powers Goa'uld space ships, as well as the Goa'uld themselves. It is also far away from main regions of the Galaxy. It took months for Goa'uld ships to get here from the main Goa'uld controlled worlds, so the only access was by Stargate, which can be easily controlled by a watchful community."

"A Goa'uld named Saturn," he stopped, because the Colonials look surprised. "I thought you might be familiar with that name," he continued, "In any case Saturn was on the run from Ra for reasons I don't need to go into." *Because if I tell you about naquadria Jack will shoot me.* "He came here, along with several of what he called his 'children,' other, subservient Goa'uld who went my names like Apollo, Artemis, Zeus, Athena – "

"No!" shouted Starbuck. Lee Adama grabbed her hand, comforting her.

"As I said," Jackson looked her in the eye, "I don't think I'm going to

contradict the facts of your religion. And I don't think the motives of Saturn's servants were entirely malevolent. Let me continue the story."

"Saturn and his children," he went on, "settled on this world, along with their human and Jaffa slaves. Each of the 'children' had abducted people from different parts of Earth, which explains why you come from a variety of races – you aren't all from Europe, say, or China." ("Where?" asked Tigh. Jackson ignored him.) "The humans and Jaffa worshiped their Lords, and the Lords worshiped Saturn. It all seems to have worked very nicely, much nicer than is usual on a Goa'uld-held world. This world was beautifully terraformed, with many plants and animals native to Earth. The only problem was that there were a large number of snakes in this particular Eden – oh, that's a place where mankind was supposed to live happily ever after, but then we had to go start getting curious – anyway, there were the Goa'uld. There was a natural competitiveness among the Goa'uld. The records left here suggest that several of the children of Saturn were killed in fights among themselves, and at least one was killed by Saturn himself."

"In addition, Saturn was experimenting on his human subjects, trying to breed an improved human to serve as his host. This caused some resentment in the children, because Saturn would take the humans he wanted, no matter if that human 'belonged' to one of his children or not."

"And the the Tok'ra came. The Tok'ra – it means 'against Ra', were Goa'uld who came to believe that hold their host enslaved was beneath them – in a way, it's part of the never-ending competition for one Goa'uld to appear better than another. A true Tok'ra will only enter a host if that person agrees, and it will live in true symbiosis. The human gets longer life, and the Tok'ra gets a body, but they work by mutual agreement." ("It works *very* well," O'Neill interjected.) "The Tok'ra fought the Goa'uld for millennia, and were extremely helpful in the final fight." Well, Jacob/Selmak was a big help. Jackson kept that thought to himself, then continued, "Some Tok'ra spent their lives evangelizing among the Goa'uld, trying to convert them to the Tok'ra. Usually this does not work, because the Goa'uld inherit a genetic memory from their mothers which tends to keep them wanting more and more power, but occasionally there is a conversion."

"Here on Massilia the conditions were ripe for conversion. Saturn's 'children' took up the call, and freed their slaves and Jaffa. All of the humans and Goa'uld turned away from Saturn.

Six, or a very good facsimile thereof, stopped caressing Jackson long enough to address Baltar. "And so your people turned away from God,

Gaius.” She playfully put a finger to her lips, indicating that he shouldn’t respond. His mind started working, furiously. So this – Gould? – known as Saturn was the god of the Cylons? And his “children” were the Lords of Kobol?

Jackson was still talking. “However, the Tok’raize children of Saturn did not try to bring the Jaffa in to their plans. The Jaffa, remember, carried Goa’uld larvae. The larvae would not necessarily take the path of the Tok’ra. In fact, they probably would not, but would instead enslave the bodies they inhabited. Since the Jaffa needed the larvae in order to live themselves, they remained aligned with Saturn. A great war ensued with Saturn and the Jaffa on one side, and his ‘children’ and humans on the other. The Jaffa carried the day for Saturn. Many of the children and humans were able to escape through the Stargate to another world.

“Saturn remained on Massilia for another thousand years. His only trips off planet were to find new humans for his experiments to develop a better host, and to find new larvae for his Jaffa, for he had no queen. Jaffa need new symbiote larvae every few years, for a mature Goa’uld will not live in a Jaffa. In fact, Saturn suffered no rivals, so he killed each mature Goa’uld before it could implant in a human. Goa’uld queens measure their success by that of their offspring, so they did not take kindly to Saturn’s efforts to procure larvae. He had to do so in secret, and was so successful that no other Goa’uld ever discovered this planet. Then one day Saturn seems to have made a breakthrough in his research. He told his Jaffa that he was going to find a new home for them, gathered up all of his experimental equipment and his current crop of humans, and left through the Stargate. The Jaffa waited patiently for their god, but he never returned. They died as their symbiotes matured.

“A few years later, humans came through the Stargate. Their records indicate that Saturn had followed his children. His arrival increased tensions that were already coming between the Goa’uld, who weren’t as Tok’raed as they thought, and a war broke out. The planet was rendered uninhabitable. The Goa’uld had begun to terraform several worlds in the region, and many escaped to those worlds. But others, these humans, were able to escape through the Stargate.”

“To board the great ship, or take the high road through the rocky ridge,” quoted Starbuck.

“Yes,” said Daniel Jackson. “You haven’t seen a Stargate, but in many ways it resembles a large polished rock.”

“And those colonists returned to Earth?” asked Adama.

“I don’t know,” replied Jackson. “According to the records they left here, this happened about two thousand years ago. By that time the Earth Stargate was buried and forgotten. It’s possible that they returned to Earth by gating to a world with spaceships and then took the long road to Earth. I just don’t know. We have no records of their arrival on Earth, if they made it. We do have legends of a god named Saturn, or in some cultures, Cronus, who tried to destroy his children and was then destroyed by them. However, that legend is more than two thousand years old, and so might have been a story about the first battle between Saturn and his children.”

“The Scared Scrolls say that they did, that they looked up at the stars and saw their brothers,” interjected Starbuck, “On Kobol we found a map which matched the twelve Colonies to constellations around Earth.”

Oh, oh, thought O’Neill, with that information they can find us. Teal’c, Carter and Wilkes’ faces showed that they had the same thought. Jackson was clueless. He went on, “well, it may be that they did reach Earth, or that the humans originally taken from Earth passed the information about the constellations to their descendants. Constellations wouldn’t change over a few thousand years, would they?”

“Not much,” replied O’Neill, the only observational astronomer in the room.

“OK, then,” Jackson went on, “if you found a map room on Kobol then there are likely other records which we can read.” He turned to O’Neill. “Jack, we’ve got to go there.”

“Whoa, Daniel, slow down,” said O’Neill. “You said that this was all going to tie in with the Cylons. How is going to Kobol going to do that?”

“Oh, didn’t I mention that?” Jackson paused for a moment, then continued. “No, I guess I didn’t. Remember, though, that I said that Saturn was trying to come up with a better host?” He turned to the Colonials. “We had several encounters with the Goa’uld Nirrti before she was killed by one of her experiments. She, too, was trying to breed a better host. She found that it was extremely difficult to do. Apparently when you try to improve the host in some aspect, you decrease its viability as a Goa’uld carrier. So Saturn tried a different method. He tried making mechanical changes in the host. First, by engineering the DNA,”

“What?” said Adama.

“I’m sorry, DNA is short for our name for the very long molecule that controls each cell in your body.”

“Oh, we call it gencode, if it’s what I think it is.”

“Makes sense,” Jackson agreed. “Anyway, Saturn manipulated the DNA-gencode to produce stronger bodies. Some even apparently had armor. None worked to well. Later, he gave that up and tried to come up with a better way for the symbiote to attach itself to the human body. The current method has the symbiote attach itself to the brain and wind itself around the spinal column. This make it very difficult for the parasite to extract itself from the host when there is need. Also, the head is a particularly vulnerable area. Saturn looked around for other ways to attach the symbiote to the host.”

“Then, just before he left this planet, he had a breakthrough. It began when he realized that half of the human population is already equipped to carry a symbiote.

“I’m not sure what he did to take advantage of that fact, but I think the result is in your brig. Commander Adama, I respectfully suggest that we examine the fetus inside Sharon Valerii.”