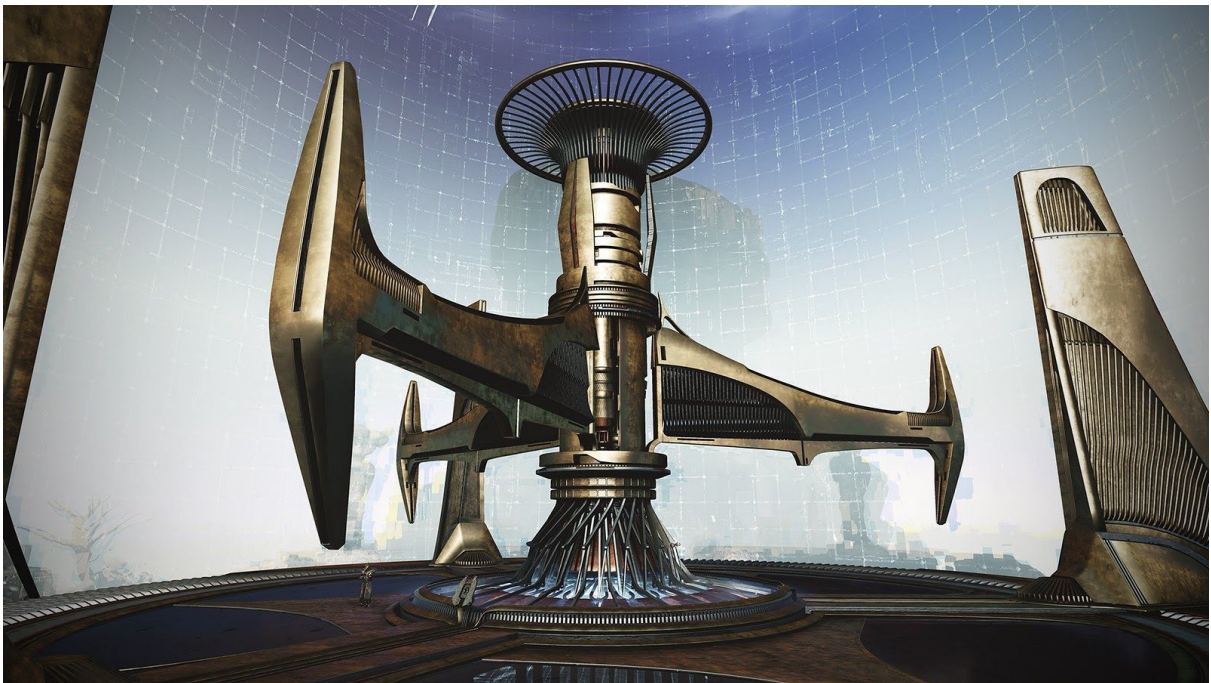

Dawn

The Whispering Core

Osiris stepped back to look upon his work. It towered stories above him.

[The Sundial was complete, a shining beacon in Mercury's sky.](#) He needed only to seal the chronometric core, which lay bare at the center of the spire, and activate the Arc conduits that ran for miles under the planet's surface.

The Vex used their transformers to generate barriers, manipulate matter, and power their chronometric technology. The Sundial leveraged the latter. Vex radiolarian fluid (especially strains that drove Vex Minds) were particularly rich in chronometric nutriment.



Sagira circled the superstructure, scanning every inch of it.

“I don’t know about this,” she said.

“I have full confidence. It’s your design.”

“That work was theoretical! If the Vanguard find out what you did to build it-“

“If this works, the Vanguard will find out either way.”

Sagira darted down as if to dive bomb her chosen, but stopped just short and met him eye to eye.

“I know you feel guilty, but there’s no telling what will happen if you turn this thing on.”

“He’s dead because of me. I’ve made every precaution. I’ve had my Echoes check against trillions of disaster scenarios.” He turned to look at the fluctuating glow of the exposed chronometric core. “Mercury is the only planet that will be affected. Because that’s where he died.”

“Where will this stop? Who else will you decide deserves a second chance?”

“You know I can’t make another bargain like this one.”

“I just want to make sure you know that.”

Osiris blinked. She rarely spoke this bluntly, and without irony.

“Hey, hey, hey!” came a far-off, echoing shout. “No! That ain’t right!”

The Drifter came into view from behind one of the Sundial’s auxiliary pylons, pointing a jabbing finger at Osiris’s machine.

Sagira narrowed her eye at the rogue Lightbearer and lowered herself to Osiris’s shoulder. “Why’s he here?” she asked quietly.

“I asked him to consult on the engineering work,” Osiris replied, crossing his arms.

“You sicko,” the other man declared, walking a circle around the Warlock, his eyes darting along every surface of the Sundial around them. As the Drifter rapped his knuckles on the north pylon, he mumbled, “Ghost, do the numbers.”

An armoured Ghost with a red eye unfolded out of transmat and began a scan pattern on each Sundial spire.

Drifter walked to the central spire and put his ear up against it. “This core...” he said, leaning close. His eyes darted back to Osiris. “It’s whispering.”



Osiris' expression didn't change; his arms didn't uncross. "We'll seal the core away. I understand the ramifications."

"Good luck keeping that contained. Not something I would bargain with, hotshot." Drifter stood up and beckoned his Ghost with two fingers. It floated earthward and unleashed a holographic array of statistics along the Sundial deck.

The red light reflected off the Drifter's eyes as he drank the numbers in.

"Your math checks out," he said, finally, as his Ghost folded away. "It'll work. But will you find him? At the exact moment that you need? No guarantees."

"Let me worry about that," Osiris said.

"Just one more question, then. Why all the fuss?"

"I owe him."

"I owe a lotta people, Warlock. You're opening the gates of hell with a Vex key."

"When the Traveler brought me back, I had no friends. No family—"

"No one had anything in the Dark Age."

"But Saint was always there. And I saw him grow from neophyte to demigod."

Drifter shrugged. "We've all had to flex a little. Win a gun fight or two. It's why we're still here."

“We all gain strength. But some Lightbearers never grasp a wider view of the world. They’re happy to stick to their ways...languish. When they could be so much more.”

Drifter chuckled and spat, saluting Osiris with a single finger. “I get by.”

“Of course you do. I’m like you.”

Drifter smirked.

“But Saint faced his fears and failure better than any of us, and never strayed from his path. He should get a chance to walk to the end.”

“He already did. But I’ll leave you to your devices. You lunatic.” The Drifter turned, hands in his pockets, to leave. “If you short-circuit the universe, you’re on your own.”

“If I make a mistake here, you might cease to exist,” Osiris replied.

“Maybe that wouldn’t be so bad.”

“We haven’t talked about payment.”

“If you live through this little experiment, you can be sure I’ll be back to collect.”

Echoes

A dozen Echoes flanked Osiris.

The Sundial spun and sparked above them, around them.

His Echoes vanished in staccato bursts of chronometric Arc, stepping not elsewhere, but elsewhere, as the Sundial fell silent.

Osiris could still see and feel through them as twelve of him walked the corridors of time.

Where those halls were intersected by the Vex network, his Echoes hacked Hobgoblins and Minotaurs apart using Solar Swords powered by sheer will. They hid their shadows and stood still, unblinking, to avoid the Network Minds. Together, they pushed to corners that gave way to the Mercurian Dark Age.

From there, they separated, entering myriad moments of Saint’s visits to Mercury.



An Echo encountered a battle-hardened Saint at the mouth of Caloris Basin. Saint was a member of the Pilgrim Guard, and he and his fireteam descended on batteries of Vex Goblins, the bloom of heavy gunfire leading their way. This Saint was too early. The Echo did not approach.

Neither did the Echo who watched in a dark corner as Saint's jumpship landed at a Lighthouse at the Caloris Spires. Its interior was cloaked in shadow. The Cult of Osiris' retrofit of the structure wasn't due for another age. Saint came here to keep it clear of Vex attempting to reclaim it. He lit the darkness as he tore Minotaurs apart with Solar fists.

An Echo crouched on a cliffside out of sight as, far below, Saint used his Solar Light to cut through the armour-plated Mercurian soil. Solitary stones lined a series of holes that stretched for a dozen meters to either side.



An Echo hid in burning light as Saint worked shoulder to shoulder with the Sunbreakers to construct the Burning Forge. Their hammering and soldering with Solar knuckles and sledges drew a silent parade of Vex to the building site. The Sunbreakers took turns stepping away from construction to dismantle the intruders using the same Solar implements.

An Echo spied Saint from a vantage point on the high plains of the Fields of Glass. The Titan fought for his life against purple-bannered Fallen, bearing the same symbol as modern Dusk soldiers. They were the House of Rain, the lowest House.

The burning camp around them was curiously absent of bodies - but Osiris had heard Saint tell this story before. One of Saint's first missions for the Speaker brought him to Mercury in a failed attempt to "re-take" that planet for humanity. They had not known at the time that the Vex had already started to transform the "garden world" into a machine.



House Rain followed Saint's jumpship and waited 'til the expedition had made camp. Then the Fallen annihilated the colonists Saint was charged to protect and beat him to within an inch of his life. The Echo lived that story first-hand now, and found himself looking away at the terraformed vegetation at his feet instead. It was already half machine - grass and metal blades growing beside each other under his boots.

A Ketch roared down from the sky and rained heavy munitions on the battlefield, and the Echo's vantage point filled with rolling clouds of dust. The Echo took his leave. He'd seen enough.

Osiris' Echoes scoured Saint-14's timeline on Mercury. But the corridors of time refused to give way to the moment they needed: Saint and the Martyr Mind in the depths of the Infinite Forest. The Echoes worked tirelessly for weeks, then months in the space between moments. In desperation, he split the dozen copies into many thousands more as the work continued fruitlessly.

One Echo stayed for years against Osiris' orders. He has never lost control of one before; he didn't think that was even possible. He and the Echoes were the same. He felt an aberrant copy lose his sense of self. Another few years in, he felt this Echo press the touch of cold metal to his head.

And then he felt nothing.

Two Echoes wandered into the corridors of time with orders not to stop. Brute force had worked for Osiris before. To this day, he could still feel them. Their search continued.

The rest eventually succumbed to Vex security measures where the network intersected with the corridors of time. Even Osiris' Light had limits.

None of the Echoes ever approached a Saint. They never found the right one.



[Kasimova](#)

Osiris sat quietly at the base of the Sundial. No time had passed since the machine's activation, but he had just lived a multitude of lives.

Sagira hovered over his shoulder and asked, hopefully, "Did it work?"

The Warlock stood, and made his way to the southern border of the Sundial. "Shut it down. Wrap everything in a stealth skin. Let nothing, no one, find it."

Osiris disappeared into an incandescent flame.

Sagira stared at the Sundial's central spire.

"Damnit," she whispered.



Sisters

The [three sisters arrived on Mercury](#).

They searched for the Infinite Forest, and through it, a path to their people's salvation: a simulated future where they were free from the Cabal.

Instead, they found something else.

"Small disturbances," said oldest Ozletc, the wisest. "Little currents in this timeline. Can you see them, sister?"

"I can taste them," said second-born Tazaroc, the hungriest of her sisters. "I can feel the edges."

Third-born Niruul, the quietest among them, reached her hand out to test the air. "As can I," said she. "And something else. The source is disguised. The technology is Human, but refined. Surprisingly so."

"Disable it," said Tazaroc, who was impatient. "It is leaking. I wish to see the leak."

Niruul fluttered her fingers across the sleeve of her suit. She worked for one day and one night, though the passage of time was hidden by Mercury's perpetual blinding light. All the while, she could feel the restless impatience of her sisters.



A strange device shimmered into existence around them. They looked up the length of an enormous, golden spire.

“It whispers,” said Tazaroc.

“Then block your ears,” said Ozletc. “Do you see the potential in this?”

“Chaos,” said Niruul.

“No,” said Ozletc. “Opportunity. See how it tugs at the fabric of our time? Can you see the seams?”

The seams were sewn tightly shut, but a skilled hand could find them. A skilled hand could rip every stitch. All three sisters could feel it.

“It will take time to activate,” said Niruul. “Someone has protected it from meddling.”

“We will have time,” said Ozletc. “We will open the past and change the course of Ghaul’s fate. Anticipate his mistakes. Undercut his advisors.”

“Why?” said Tazaroc.

“Because he could be swayed to our purposes,” said Ozletc. “He was a fool, but he could be puppeteered. Led to a more advantageous downfall.”

“But why not go back further?” said Tazaroc, eager. “To dash the whelp’s skull in the pit, before he crawls out onto a throne?”

“Risky,” said Niruul, shaking her head. “Why not tear into the future instead, and make our attack where the Guardians cannot predict it?”

“Predictions are not their strength,” said Tazaroc.

“And yet they have built this,” snapped Niruul.

“Sisters,” Ozlelc said. “We needn’t argue. This device will let us walk through future and past both. And so we will cut the most advantageous path, whatever it may be.”

For hours and days and weeks, the sisters laboured over the machine. While her sisters defended her from the Vex, Niruul bent the device to their purposes and, with the force of their combined will, made it whirl to life.

Around them, time split along its seams. Windows into other worlds, Mercury’s true past and future, opened before them. The device stood at the center of all of it, an anchor point. And all along the fault lines of time, where the past and present and future met, Vex were ripped in half, sliced through by a knife of pure temporal energy.

They surveyed their new kingdom: a past, present, and future open to their manipulation.

“It is so clear,” said Niruul, reverent. “An unobstructed glimpse into what was and what will be.”

“Not the troubled ramblings of a mad thing, like the OXA,” said Tazaroc.

They shared the feeling of unbounded possibility, and tasted the potential for success, and then for failure. Together, they drank the feelings in and steeled themselves against them.

“The past and future are at our fingertips, sisters,” said Ozlelc. “Let us see what prospects they hold.”

Actions of a Mutual Friend

Osiris stood before a gate into the Infinite Forest.

Two years ago, news had reached him that one of his oldest friends was dead. Saint had been missing for ages, but the Warlock had always assumed the Titan would turn up someday. He was wrong.



Alfheimr

He realised he was staring through a dormant gate frame and keyed a cubical device that hung at his belt to pry the doorway open.

He couldn't save Saint from the Vex. But every day he stood vigil in the Infinite Forest to monitor simulations of the future based on their activity.

Beyond the gate, a shimmering sea of data beckoned him.

He stepped through, into the white maw of an Infinite Forest debug chamber.

"Start it up, Sagira," he said.

"Sure you don't want to take a break today?" she asked, unfolding above him like a crown.

"The Vex won't."

She considered it a moment, then the Forest shimmered around them and the white maw dimmed to half-darkness.

Then pitch black.

The floor fell away, and Osiris's Light held him aloft, sheathed him in a thin veneer of armor.



[Brian Moncus](#)

Nothing moved. The Warlock frowned, lit a Solar spark and held it up. It illuminated nothing around him. "Did something go wrong with the sequence?"

“I just triple-checked. No,” she replied. “This is it. This is the simulation.”

He keyed his radio.

“Go ahead, Osiris,” Ikora said.

“What’s happening out there?” he replied.

“Take your pick. We’re at war on the Moon again. The Vex attacked.”

“And?”

“We retaliated. The Undying Mind is dead.”

“How?”

“A plan. And mutual friends.”

“Our mutual friends just changed all projected futures in the Infinite Forest.”

“You don’t sound happy about that.”

“I’ll be in touch.” He cut the transmission. “Where are we?” he asked Sagira.

“Where we always are. Simulated Mercury.”

He couldn’t even see stars.

“How far does this void reach?”

“All the way to the Traveler, for all I know.”

“Take us there.”

Osiris knew the simulation moved around him, but the typical shimmer of the Forest was gone. There was nothing to see.

“We’re here,” she confirmed, as he found gravelly purchase under his boots. He had never heard her sound so unsure of herself.

It was brighter here at the top of a windswept dune, but barely. He couldn’t see the sun in the purple twilight that hung above him. The breeze roared in his ears.



[Kaelov](#)

The sphere of the Traveler was gone. In its place, an obsidian monolith at least twice the size dominated the sky. In the Last City's place was a swirling dust storm, tinged purple by the dying light.

The course of history had been changed. Inside the Infinite Forest, the Vex future that Osiris had long sought to prevent was no more. Instead, he had met an emptiness. This new future dwarfed the Vex apocalypse: It was annihilation at the subatomic level, reaching out forever. It was an expanse of nothingness so vast that it terrified him.

“When does this happen?”

“The Forest predictions give a window of two or three decades, depending on a multitude of variables. With a not-insignificant chance for acceleration based on specific elements.”

“What elements?”

“[Actions of mutual friends.](#)”

“Kill the simulation. Get me to Mercury.”

Rewriting History

Osiris emerged from the Forest, burdened with his revelation, only to find that the Red Legion had stolen one of his old experiments: The Sundial Prototype. They had co-opted the

Sundial for their own purposes, and they had fractured time on Mercury in hopes of changing the past.

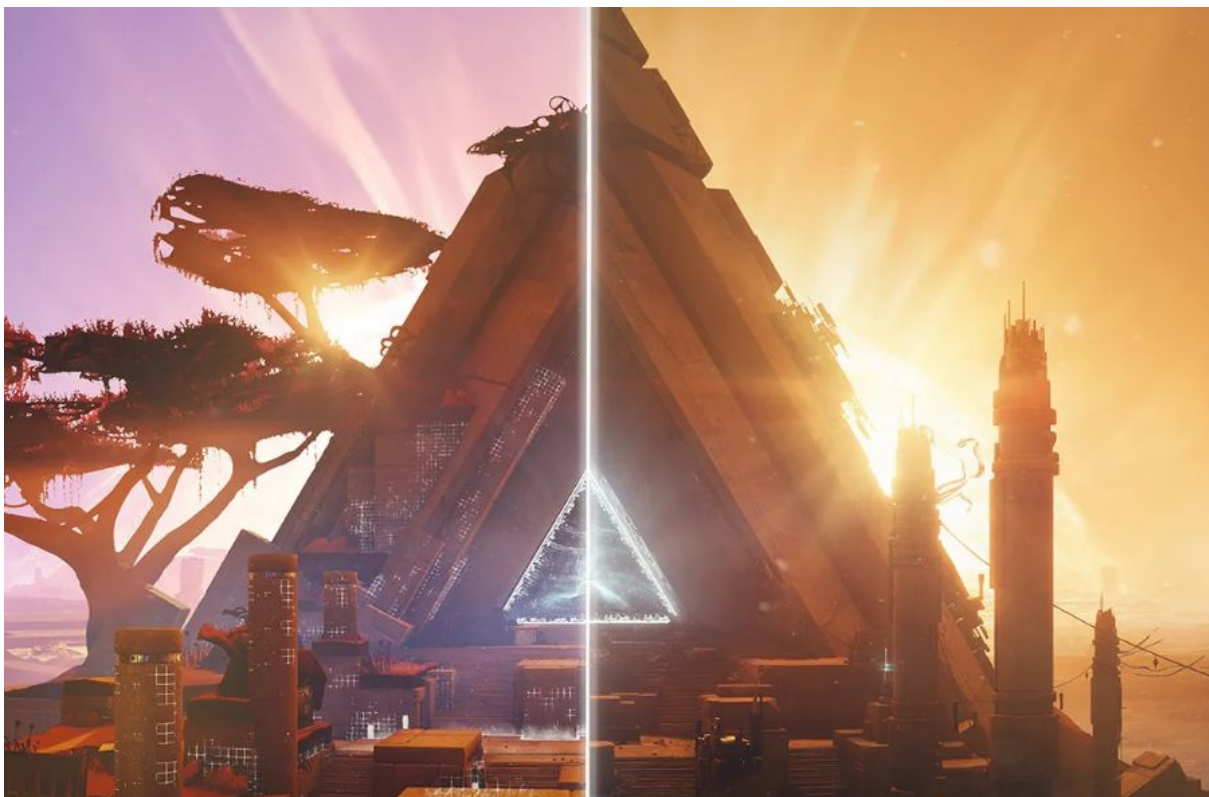
Chronometric emissions cut across Mercury's surface, and radiolaria steamed from fissures that erupted like open wounds in the machine soil. White-blue streams of Arc energy carved borders around a circular sector about a hundred miles wide. Walls of chronometric flame tore through Vex spires that came tumbling down in halves and sheared Minotaurs in two along the boundaries of the region.

The Red Legion had stood and watched as these eruptions flared around every Cabal machine, structure, and soldier inside the sector. They showed no sign of panic as ethereal fire burned over the world and their Vex opponents. Instead, they waited, watched, and mobilised purposefully around the phenomenon.

The circular shape that these walls cut were further segmented into three sections: Red Legion soldiers found themselves staring across the chronometric walls at each other from inside Mercury's past, present, and distant future.

Under three different skies, three different suns, and on three different elevations of Mercury's gradually descending surface, the Red Legion went to work.

"Perhaps this time they'll win the Red War." Osiris joked dryly to Sagira.



He cursed their attempts to bend time to their whims; to wish alternate realities into existence. The mechanisms of his Sundial were precise. Intricate. But in altering the past

and the future - brute forcing a solution - the Cabal had used it like a bludgeon. They pulled time apart with no consideration for the damage they caused. For all they knew, they could undo themselves. It took a subtle hand to rewrite the paths of history, and there was nothing subtle about the Cabal.

He walked through alternate realities that had not come to pass, and saw that the Cabal were working to solidify these realities. They jealously guarded them, desperately holding on to hope. He saw that though they were fractured and leaderless, they appeared to be united in their goal.

Who was it that truly manned the helm of this Red Legion's ship. Was it a new Cabal leader? No. The Cabal don't have the tools to unstitch the Sundial from the various passages of time that he had hidden it in. Unless...Psions? Or...perhaps the deposed Emperor Calus had slipped his followers into their ranks. He was unsure.

As he stepped into the past, he looked up to the sky and he saw that the Traveler had run from the Cabal - from humanity. What had it seen in the ugly intentions of the Cabal? Its own demise, perhaps. And humanity along with it. If the Traveler left Mercury, then there stood the possibility that it would never cross paths with humanity. Osiris had long since considered the prospect that it would one day abandon Earth.

For years, in the Forest, Osiris had chased the horizons of Mercury. He had hoped to touch the ancient wisdom of the Traveler, but it did not know him. As he approached, it drifted ever farther from his grasp. But here...to look up and see nothing - he now understood how the Fallen felt.

He couldn't help but ponder, if the Traveler had fled the system, was there a chance that the Darkness would've ignored this region of the galaxy entirely? Humanity would've had to sacrifice their second awakening - their ability to wield the Light - and yet...it would have potentially continued their Golden Age. There were too many variables at risk, but it was a variant path worth investigating in the Infinite Forest.

He noted that the Cabal had spent their resources searching for the missing Traveler. They would stop at nothing to find it. Though, he also detected that the Psions pursued something beyond simply changing the course of the war. The Flayers had tapped into the Vex network, forging a backchannel, searching for a universal access protocol. The Legion's goals were multi-faceted: The Psions sought one thing, and the Cabal another.

Petabytes of encrypted data were streamed out towards a multitude of distant star clusters. They called out to other Legions, offering Vex technology. They would use it as a pathway to their ideal future: The Traveler in pieces; humanity doomed. Endless war, brutal technology; perversion of the Light.

He drifted over to the Infinite Forest - A million branches had been cast out, and yet the Cabal had chosen to see each branch split into a million more. With the Infinite Forest under

Cabal control, they would create more realities. It would continue, on and on until one connects to the end they desire.

And yet, he saw that they ultimately wished to destroy the Forest. Its many realities were a threat to their ideal future. Osiris had overseen too many useful experiments in the Infinite Forest to lose such an important testing ground. He could not let them destroy it. He chuckled to himself about how much he found himself caring for its protection. It was a dangerous place, and yet for him, it had been a...a space of learning. A library. He had not been prepared to feel so protective of such a vicious place.

As he headed to the Cabal future, he realised he'd already witnessed this scenario play out before. He watched as they ground the Traveler into pulp and froth; guzzled it down in a vain attempt to gain power. They bled the Traveler of its Light, and repurposed it as a weapon, as they did with all things. There was no safe City in the future. Nothing to revive, nothing to rebuild. This battered Mercury was a blueprint. Lightless, bowed, and nothing more than fuel for an endless war.

The Traveler was mutilated. Mercury was a desolate warzone. This was the bleak future the Cabal wished for humanity. Did they not realise this timeline would lead to pure nothingness? Calus did, surely. But he welcomed it with open arms.



Osiris then realised that the Light the Red Legion had farmed from the Traveler was but a remnant of the whole. Information was scattered throughout various signals...but...Osiris saw that they had offered the bulk of their prize to Calus. It appeared that the Legion were attempting to buy their way back into the Empire. Interesting. Where would this have led? The reinstatement of their exiled emperor? Would they destroy humanity? Or conquer and keep them, as they did to the Psions so long ago?

Despite the preservation of their forces within this reality, Osiris had heard no mention of Ghoul within their communication channels. The Flayers had sought to win the Red War, sure; but also to usurp the Legion's leadership. To what end? He then found himself

wondering where the Flayers were during the Red War. Imprisoned? Hiding? It was worth investigating.

Psions were adept at overcoming the restraints of linear time. They did not perceive time in the same way humans do. It was not linear to them. This was their strength, and the Cabal's limitation. They did not act through brute strength, but rather through intricate plans, guided by their clairvoyant interpretations of future events.

As he delved deeper, in the far future, he saw a Psion at its center. It was a bleak place. If these Psions were not pulled out at the root, he thought, they would sprout up elsewhere and poison everything in reach. He had witnessed Emperor Calus' "nightmare realms", the Psion mind prisons. All of humanity in this timeline had been enslaved under the Psion's own banner.

The people of this system would not realise the extent of what had happened, but that was the bittersweet nature of his duty: His success was often invisible. His failure was catastrophic.

As Osiris headed for his ship, and his present reality, he looked around Mercury once more. The Cabal intended to write a new history, a new ending to the Red War. And yet, he found himself letting out a wry smirk...

"History is written by the victors."

Desperate Times

Somewhere deep inside the Vanguard halls in a secure meditation chamber, a trio of Warlocks surrounded Osiris: one Praxic, one Thanatonaut, and one Vanguard.

"Did the Vex corrupt him?" Aunor wondered.

"My Order just wants to know if he's real. Or some kind of Vex simulation. An Echo?" Harper said, paging through a datapad in his hands.

"You haven't left the Forest in years," Ikora said to Osiris, the only one to address him directly.

"I need help," Osiris replied.

"I know," Ikora responded, hands clasped behind her back. She stared intently at her former mentor. Back in her Crucible days, that uncompromising gaze was often the last thing her opponents saw. Aunor glanced sidelong at her superior. Harper coughed and looked down at his datapad.

“Two years ago, Guardians entered the Infinite Forest,” Osiris continued. “They aided me in defeating the Axis Mind Panoptes, preventing a Vex apocalypse from befalling this system.

“In the process,” he looked between each of them in turn, “Some Guardians reported a body they found in the Forest depths.”

Ikora sighed.

“Saint-14 never came back from that last mission to Mercury. We finally knew why. I reacted to it the only way I knew how.”

“By turning Mercury into a temporal weapon for the Cabal?” Aunor asked.

“You are awfully tranquil for a man who just doomed this system,” Harper said.

“You should rethink your career in Thanatonautics, Warlock Harper, if death frightens you so,” the exile replied. He nodded at Aunor. “I’ve made mistakes. I will continue to make them. The nature of my work requires it.”

“We should lock you away,” the Praxic replied. But there was no fire in it.

“There are others you’ve allowed to roam free. These are desperate times, Aunor,” Osiris said. “I think you know that.”

Harper opened his mouth to ask another question, but Ikora cut him off. “Give us a minute.”

Aunor ducked her head and Harper bristled, but both left without question. Alone with Osiris, Ikora said, “The Speaker was right to exile you.”

“We all make our own choices,” Osiris replied. “Like the Vex gateway you built to the Undying Mind. A strategy like that is exactly what the machines would not expect. And you knew the Guardians would deliver.”

“What’s your point?”

“You think like I do. But you’ve done what I never could. Found a way to coexist with the Vanguard while keeping their fool necks above the water,” said Osiris.

“If you think you’re helping your case, you’re not.”

“Time is broken on Mercury. I need help from our mutual friends.”

“I know that. My Hidden have scouted your Sundial. The Red Legion are loose in a time rift that’s localised to the past, present, and future of Mercury.” She took a step closer to him,

shoulders tense. "If we don't contain it, it's not going to stay that way for long. The rift will expand across the system."

"I've created a mitigation network across Guardian space. I'm in control."

"You are anything but-!"

"Saint deserved another chance."

"So did Caydel! So did everyone we lost in the Red War."

"We'll hunt the Cabal across every timeline they create within the Sundial. They'll never be able to exploit it."

"You're damn right. Because you're going to mobilise the Guardians. You're going to fix this. And then you and I are going to have a long talk."

"Mercury should be the least of your worries."

"Excuse me?"

"Let's save it for the long talk."

A Matter of Time

Osiris greeted the Guardians in the center of a grand structure. "Welcome to my Sundial," he said with a flourish, spreading his arms wide. "It is a means to walk the corridors of time," he continued, making a bit of a show of it all.

"But time is broken here on Mercury. I need your help." Now came the serious part. "The Red Legion have run amok in timelines across the past, present, and future of this planet. If you're willing to help, I'll arm you to smash the Legion and collapse the timelines they've created." He paused for a moment, allowing them to take it all in. "And you'll need my Sundial to do it."



Once he'd grabbed their attention, he asked the Guardians to travel the system in search of his obelisks: another of his inventions. They had been designed to stabilise time while the Sundial was active. Attuning the obelisks and linking them to the Sundial would help to contain the temporal disturbances on Mercury and prevent the Cabal from causing too much disruption.

Of course, this was simply a formality, and Osiris welcomed them back upon their return, standing in front of the Sundial's massive spire. "Well done, Guardians", he said. "This will buy us valuable time - time that we must use to push back the Red Legion."

He turned to look out past the translucent barriers that enclosed the Sundial's center. Beyond them, battles raged across Mercury's past and future.



“Enter the Sundial. We must clear the Cabal from this place if we hope to stabilise Mercury’s timeline. Your first run through the Sundial will allow me to calibrate it correctly so you can weave in and out of Mercury’s timelines again and again.”

The Guardians split up into teams of six, as if performing raids into time itself.

In one timeline, they entered Mercury’s past, reenvisioned. The Cabal sought to destroy the Infinite Forest and seal its passages shut. As tempting as it would be to watch the Infinite Forest burn, Osiris informed the Guardians that this would breed far more harm than good. It was too monumental a shift for their timeline to withstand. The Forest itself may be a threat - but allowing the Cabal to destroy it would alter the future in ways even Osiris was unable to predict.

The Guardians utilised the Cabal Arc charges to overload the Cabal containment systems. Though the Red Legion put up a fight, their shields could not keep the Guardians away. These would not be the last barricades to impede them, but nor would they be the last to shatter against their advance. The Legion’s tampering would’ve left this timeline fraught with inconsistencies. If they hadn’t forced its collapse, the Cabal would have caused permanent damage.

Osiris was thankful. There were secrets still to be uncovered in the Forest, and he couldn’t allow it to be sealed - he had not yet reached the end of its usefulness. And anyway, he had wished to decide the fate of the Forest’s endless passages himself.

In another timeline, they witnessed the Traveler flee. Psion Councillors had taken a great interest in the Vex plates here - a link to the Vex network. They had used Osiris’ bypass

signatures to do so; using the Sundial to access the Forest. They had hoped to try to obtain the secrets within.



Osiris had broken many various Vex systems and subroutines throughout his lives, but the invasive program he was reading within the network here was different, erratic. It was a shifting code rooted directly in the minds of the Councillors.

The Guardians took control of the plates, denying hordes of Cabal forces the chance to retake them. They refused to lose an inch to the Cabal, for fear that all they'd worked for would cease to exist. To cull the Legion here and to force the Councillors out of the system was to force another reality shut in which the Legion might succeed.

This history was erased, and with it, the Red Legion were denied a pathway to their ideal future. Their hopes were dashed of reshaping this past. If the Guardians continued to navigate these timelines correctly, they would preserve the present, and keep the Traveler in the skies.

Elsewhen, in a future in which the Cabal won the Red War, they sought to harness the Traveler. Sagira and Osiris had met every Red Legion simulation devised by the Vex - but even the Vex had never considered Ghaul's forces would advance without opposition. And yet here, that was the case. These Guardians witnessed the wake of Red Legion dominance.

By the time Osiris had left the City, many believed his practices to be sacrilege. But his methods had prevented countless futures not unlike this one that these Guardians walked. As they looked upon the Cabal, wielding a bastardised version of their own Light, it was hard not to justify sacrificing anything to see this future shut. No cost was too great to avert this end.

The Traveler had been mutilated. Mercury was a desolate warzone. This was the bleak future the Cabal wished for them. It was enough to infuriate any Guardian, and they turned that fury into fire. Sagira rooted these Guardians into the Cabal target acquisition and guidance frameworks. These Guardians would bring the sky down upon the Red Legion.

Though this reality was only one path among infinities; these Guardians, and Osiris himself, could not help but feel a sense of justice to see it erased. The wounds of the Red War were still fresh, and the scars still visible for all to see every time they looked up from the Tower and stared upon their shattered God.

Deeper still within the timelines were the Psion sisters. Each one residing in a far future in which they were conquerors. It was here, at the root of Psion victory, that the sisters must be stopped.

Osiris asked the Guardians to steel themselves, and reminded them what was at stake here: Everything. If these Psions succeeded in their endeavours, the Traveler as humanity knew it would be nothing but a myth.

These Flayers were not ordinary Psions. Every one was a formidable enemy. The Guardians had to bring all their guile, across every possible timeline the Psions resided in. But soon enough, the plans of Ozletc, Tazaroc, and Niruul would be thwarted. The sisters would need a new strategy.

Phased Through Time

As each Guardian team returned from their run (some ran two, three, or more), Osiris addressed them once more.

“I have walked through many timelines, in reality and in meditation”, Osiris said gravely, “but it is never something I do lightly. One mistake can put everything in jeopardy.” He looked out over the chaos beyond the Sundial. “As you see here...”

He thanked the Guardians for their help with the Sundial; for strengthening the Sundial’s connection to the obelisks. They would need to continue to guard that connection if they hoped to keep the timelines stable across the system.

As each Guardian left - some to try their hand in the Crucible, others to run strikes - the Hero of the Red War stayed behind at the Sundial. They’d found a strange object that seemed to materialise from nowhere. It was unidentifiable, but seemed the phase between timelines, flickering in their hands.

They offered the object to Osiris to study, and the old Warlock readily accepted it and began immediate examination. In his hands, it flickered in and out of existence, an ever-fluctuating presence.

“Strange”, he said, looking up to meet the Guardian’s eyes. “An object like this has never emerged from the Sundial before.” His brow crinkled with concern. “I fear this is evidence of how drastically the Red Legion has corrupted time on Mercury.”

He set the object aside. “Give me some time to study this. I may be able to determine what it is or where it came from. Meanwhile, the obelisk network could still use your help.” He reached for something and then presented it to them: [A strange lantern](#). It glowed faintly. “This will help you in the battles to come.” The Guardian happily accepted the gift. “To light your way from time to time. May it serve you better than it served me.”

Once the Guardian had left, Osiris continued his study of the object. Sagira scanned the object for data as Osiris creased his brow, his mind flowing through passages of thought as he explored the significance of it all. Nothing, aside from the Guardians and his echoes, was supposed to come out of the Sundial. He worried that this was a malfunction that would have cascading consequences.

He held the phased object. It continued to flicker in his hands, both material and immaterial at once. Over the next few hours...days? Time had lost its meaning to him...The most he’d been able to determine about this object was that it had been pulled out of a different timeline. Right now, it was existing in two places at once, making it extremely unstable.

With the Guardian’s help, he believed he could stabilise it, at least temporarily. That way, he might be able to determine exactly what it was and why it was here. There must have been some reason that the Guardian was able to take this object from the Sundial. Some reason it came to them, at this particular time, in this particular place. He just ...didn’t understand why. Not yet. Or perhaps...No. He removed that thought entirely.

Upon the Guardian’s return, he sent them away to gather the data and materials required. Using these materials, the phased object, previously unstable and unrecognisable, was transformed into an incomplete weapon frame.

“Strangely enough”, said Osiris, explaining the situation to the Guardian, “it appears that the object you found is some kind of weapon. A shotgun, I believe.”

He set the strange frame aside and turned back to face them. “There is a Light signature associated with the weapon, but it’s...erratic. I can’t identify it, as if it’s still shifting between timelines. I believe I can anchor it in the present, but I’ll need data.”

“No.” the Guardian replied. “I know what it is. I believe you know what it is, too.”

Osiris let out a deep sigh. He didn't want to believe, but he said it anyway. "It's the Perfect Paradox" he said. There was a note of both reverence and confusion in his voice. He held the frame in his hands as if it was very delicate, and ancient relic. "Saint-14's gun."

He looked up to meet the Guardian's eyes. "You created a version of this weapon at the Infinite Forge, didn't you? The one in my hands is a different version entirely, marked with an altered form of your Light that dates back to the Dark Age. Long before you were resurrected."

After a brief pause, Osiris shook his head. "I don't understand it. Why would you find this now? What timeline exists that I have yet to see, that places you in the Dark Age?" His gaze went distant, contemplative. "Perhaps..." But he cut himself off. "No. Saint-14 is lost. This is just another anomaly created by the Cabal's misuse of the Sundial. All the more reason to stay focused on our task." He met their eyes again, and his expression was steely. "We can't allow ourselves to become distracted chasing the dead."

"This is it." the Guardian said, ignoring the Warlock's musings. "The moment, isn't it?"

Still Osiris refused to allow himself to believe. "I told you before - I tried to save Saint-14. I bent the rules of time using the Sundial Prototype. It allowed me to walk the corridors of time here on Mercury. But I failed. I never found Saint's final moment against the Vex. I encountered younger versions from his first mission to Mercury, among others. But none were the right Saint. The prototype Sundial still exists, accessible off the main deck. And it can still travel through Saint's personal timeline on this planet. But venture there at your own peril. He cannot be saved. I have walked every permutation of those corridors with a hundred thousand of my echoes and found nothing. Saint-14 is lost."

"Not to me."

"You're attempting an impossible task, Guardian", said Osiris. "But if you insist on walking the same excruciating path that I did..." He shook his head, and chuckled ruefully. "I won't deny you the chance. When the Red Legion hijacked my Sundial, they shattered its components. You must repair them if you're to use it again."

"Just point me in the right direction."

When they returned a few hours later, Osiris nodded with approval. "With the new Emyrean slate you've constructed, you'll be able to access a fully operational Sundial. Activate the terminal and launch the start up sequence. Perhaps you'll succeed where I failed." He nodded again, but his eyes were downcast.

Perfect Paradox

"This is new..." came the voice from the Ghost. "Topographical scan confirms this is Mercury circa the Dark Age."

Fractal trees dotted the surface. Grass and metal blades grew besides each other. The planet was already half machine, converted by the Vex that had infected this world. A Ketch roared down from the sky and rained heavy munitions below.

"Incoming signal on an old emergency band...Hold on..."

"I repeat, this is Saint-14. The Fallen have overrun Zephyr Station. If you can hear this, turn back!"

"Saint, hold your position." replied the Ghost "You have an armed Guardian incoming!"

"Who is this?"

"Just stay alive, Titan."

"All is lost, Guardian." There was defeat in his tone. "Get out of here. I'll hold them off for as long as I can."

These Fallen bore the symbol of the House of Rain - an old Fallen House of prophecy, believed to have been extinct. The Exo had come to this world in an attempt to retake Mercury. He had not known at the time that the Vex had already started transforming the garden world.

House Rain had followed Saint's jumpship and waited until the expedition had made camp. Then the Fallen annihilated the colonists that Saint had been charged to protect and beat him to within an inch of his life.

"The Fallen cannot be stopped. They do not negotiate. Their bargains are lies." There was venom in his words. Hatred. "I've watched them burn and pillage whole villages in the Cosmodrome. I've watched Dregs eat children. They envy us. Their legends say the Traveler chose them before us. And they will kill. They will torture. They will maim to earn their Machine God's favour."

The Guardian crested the hill above Saint. Fallen surrounded his position. The Exo looked up towards the Guardian. There was no communication. No discussion of plans. But they both understand the situation.



Saint tore open the Void. He would become the immovable anchor from which they would mount their defence. Armed with unflinching conviction, he had been trained to absorb punishment and control the flow of battle. His shield would allow his fellow Guardian to strike back.

Hundreds...Thousands of Fallen converged on their position. Fallen Walkers pounded the shield from above. But the Void walls held. The Guardian danced in and out of the Titan's shield, picking off the Fallen one by one. The alien scavengers tried to overwhelm the Guardians through sheer numbers, but they found the wall to be impenetrable. Any who entered the bubble were blinded by the intense brightness of Saint's Light, easily picked off and added to the number of the dead.

They say that one Guardian, reasonably armed, could annihilate an army. Two Guardians, assuming adequate cover for Ghost support, could fight infinite armies indefinitely.

The House of Rain fell. The remnants scattered to the clockwork underbelly of Mercury. Saint-14 and the Guardian stood. The Void bubble shattered and the Titan collapsed to his knees, exhausted.

"The Light the Traveler gave to us - it only brings more violence", said the Exo. Dead colonists and dead Fallen surrounded him. "Your strength is a sight to behold. But what has all your strength come to? Our people are dying on Earth. They died here, on Zephyr station. I arrived here with a dozen human colonists: Mercury was supposed to be a garden world...But the Vex were here first. They have murdered this planet. And these Fallen, of the House of Rain, tracked us here all the way from the Cosmodrome. They destroyed us. We never should've come. Another minute and they would have eaten my Ghost. The Fallen are monsters."

“Some are.” the Ghost interjected. Though not all of them. “Are you fit to fight, Titan?”

He barely acknowledged the Ghost’s question. He was a man who had been defeated by the injustice of the world he had been risen into. “I was supposed to protect these people. I should be dead.”

“You’re stronger than you think.” Ghost reassured him.

“Not strong enough.”



The Ghost transmatted out for a second, then returned with a weapon. Saint looked upon the Ghost, his curiosity outweighing his anger. “What is this?”

“The Perfect Paradox. Built by my Guardian out of spare parts and Light and sheer will to aid you.”

Saint plucked the gun from out the air and tested its weight. His eyes traced all of its curves and intricacies.

“It’s beautiful.”

The Ghost bobbed around before Saint-14. It shone a beam of light on the ground and produced a holoprojection.



“I probably shouldn’t be showing you this, but when has that ever stopped us? This is the Last Safe City of humanity. Hundreds of years from now. During the day, there are children laughing in the streets. When night falls, the people sleep in their homes. Not against the walls - weapon in hand - like the early days.”

“Like my people.”

“These *are* your people, Saint. Their descendants. If you quit the fight, maybe you’ll live forever. Your Ghost will protect you no matter what. But this Last City might never happen.”

Saint-14 walked through the streets of the holo-City. It was a thriving place. So different from his own.

“Everything I’ve ever built has died. I’ve buried most of the people I’ve met. I - I can’t do this. Not anymore.”

The Ghost nodded understandingly.

“We all make our own choices. Good luck, Titan.”

When he turned back to reply, the Ghost and his Guardian were gone.

Saint stood, staring upon the perfect alabaster sphere in the sky. He looked down to the City once more, taking in every small detail.

From that day, he swore he would make it his duty to follow their example.

As the Guardian returned from their mission, Osiris greeted them with a fire in his eyes. “You met Saint-14 on Mercury? That was his first off world mission for the Speaker. Those Fallen were House of Rain, the lowest of their clans. House Dusk took their colours during the Red War. I-” he spoke quickly. Nervously. He shook his head. “You mentioned two coordinates broadcast from the Perfect Paradox?” he nodded eagerly, but his mind was elsewhere. “The Sundial is spent, but it only needs time to recharge. I’ll alert you when it’s ready for another jump.”

Recovering the Past

Osiris greeted the Guardian with a curt nod. He tried to hide his excitement. “I’m still calculating the effects your trip to the distant past had on the timeline. Unlike the changes the Red Legion were attempting to make, which were contained to Mercury by my obelisks, I believe your actions had a lasting impact on the Solar System at large.” He gestured to Sagira as she orbited above his head. “I’ve picked up a distress signal inside the Vex network that was not there until recently - a signal that originated from Saint-14’s Ghost. I need you to find it.”

The Guardian needed quick access to the Vex network. Ghost tracked down a gateway on Nessus that was a perfect low traffic entry point. Armed with Vex transponders, they could force the gateway open with a call-and-respond sequence.

After delving through the deep Vex ruins of the centaur planet, they tracked down a small entryway, leading to a pile of Vex corpses. Within the hand of one particularly valiant Vex and thousands, they saw it: A Ghost. Saint’s Ghost. As they retrieved it, the Ghost played a recording:

“I’ve killed enough of you to end a war. And you took my Light. I guess that makes us even. What are you waiting for? Last words? Finish it, you cowards.”

They returned to Osiris once more. His eyes narrowed as he took the Ghost shell. “The words you heard when you found this were Saint’s last”, the Warlock said. “I’ve looked everywhere in the network for this Ghost. There was never a distress signal. There was nothing. Your trip to the past must have changed an element I never took into account.” He shook his head. “The Sundial is nearly ready for another jump, but it’s hungry for Light.”

“Hungry for Light?” Ghost asked, with a hint of confusion.

“The Sundial is my greatest creation and my greatest regret. What I had to do to forge it, I...I can never take it back. As a result, it has components that consume Light. And if you’re serious about operating it again, you’ll need to feed it. Nothing is free. Ever.”

As the Guardian explored once more through the corridors of time, they found themselves in a timeline reminiscent of the Vex's dark future.

“Now where are we? Let's see...” Ghost scanned around for data. “Topographical readouts match near-present Mercury. This is before I found you. And after Saint-14 launched his last mission to find Osiris...”



[Jessica Germey](#)

“Guardian, you're back!” came the booming sound from behind them. “Just in time, I was about to send my Ghost away! I'm afraid that the Martyr Mind has taken my Light. But now that you're here, these Vex are doo-”

Saint was cut off mid-sentence as the Martyr Mind approached, securing the Titan's body in a type of Vex cage. Vex swarmed in from all timelines, desperate to end them. Had this been a trap?

“Save some Vex for me, my friend!” Saint joked as he watched the Guardian mow them down. They unleashed their fury and Light upon the Vex, destroying the Martyr Mind and all those who supported it.

“I can feel the Light in my bones!” Saint said with delight, as the husk of the Martyr Mind's body lay before him. “It's been a long time, my friends. I've chased your memory for centuries. You should go now. Those who could kill me are dead. You've made sure of that.”

“And what if the Vex take your Light again?”

“Impossible. It cost them everything to build the Martyr Mind. When you crushed it, they were doomed.”

“You want us to leave you? You’ll be stuck here for years.”

“You’ve both done plenty. Just open the Infinite Forest gate for me. I’ll meet you the long way around, at the entrance.” As the Vex flooded in once more, eager to prove their worth against the Titan, he turned to face them, void shield in hand. “What’s a few more years of fighting Vex?” He turned to salute the Guardian just as they were ripped from the timeline, back to their present.

The Guardian and their Ghost rushed to the entrance of the Infinite Forest. “If we did this right, Saint should be waiting for us in the Forest.” said Ghost. “Let’s hope he’s still alive.”

They waited in anticipation, staring at the triangular gateway. Then, suddenly, a Vex frame emerged, tossed through by an anonymous entity on the other side. As it climbed to its feet once more, it dutifully walked towards the door, seeking out its foe.

Just before it could reenter once more, a fist emerged through, connecting perfectly with the Goblin’s chest, sending it flying down the stairs as its eye flickered out.

“My name is Saint-14.” said the Titan who appeared behind the gateway, dragging a Goblin behind him. “They call me the greatest Titan who ever lived.” He pulled the Perfect Paradox from his back, nonchalantly, shooting the Goblin with even as much as a look in its direction. “But I would be dead if not for you.”

A Minotaur emerged through the gateway. He turned, summoning a shield of void, leading with his shoulder into the Minotaur to knock it to its knees. With his iconic helmet, he rammed his forehead into the radiolarian weak point of the colossal Vex unit, and repeated to do so until the milky substance leaked from its container. The Minotaur collapsed, and he turned to the Guardian once more.

“Since the day I met you, I swore I would make it my duty to follow your example. I’m still trying.”



He headed straight for his ship. "It will be good to see the City - as you've made it - for the first time." He turned back to them and nodded, then flew off, eager to see the future he had worked his whole lives to achieve.

Osiris approached the Guardian and looked upon them with a warmth few have ever seen. "You've saved him. Of course it was you. It always is." A rare smile beamed upon his face. "Saint believed you were the best of us. Today you proved it.

"I didn't think it was possible. I had given up. I spent lifetimes looking for Saint. A dozen of my echoes lost their minds before I retired them. Part of me wishes you were there to see it. To feel what I felt when I surrendered. But then where would we be? What you've done today...this is amazing. Saint will need your help. The world has changed since he last walked free. In his youth, he talked often about the Guardian who inspired him. I should have guessed it would be you."

The old Warlock paused for a moment, taking it all in. And then he simply said "Thank you. You saved a legend of the City today. And a friend of mine." His eyes hardened. "But I'm afraid I still need your help. Saint will want to speak with you. There's more work to do - in the Sundial and beyond." He nodded. "Whenever you're ready."

A Hero's Welcome

"Look at this place!" Saint said as he greeted the Guardian. He'd already set up a makeshift spot in the Tower hangar, and was looking down from the Wall upon a thriving City.

"I cannot believe what the City has become. To be home again. To hear of the Red War and see the scars. So much has changed. I was not here when the City needed me most." He looked solemn, for but a moment. "But regret does not serve us. We must look to the future. We must find hope again. There is no more time to waste. On my journey here, I wondered how the City could best use me. Now I think I know. Together, we will shine brighter. We will build a beacon to call all who are lost home. You will fight, and I will build. But for now...my skull needs rest."

Saint was overwhelmed by how much the City had changed, but he was happy to be home. His beacon would help guide Guardians and Lightless alike to the Last City.

Once satisfied and settled, Saint headed down from the Tower. He walked the streets of the City. He spoke to the people - safe and happy. He sat beneath the Traveler and listened; its scars were still healing. He witnessed some old faces, but many new ones, too. When they looked upon him, they saw a myth. They were in awe of this Titan of legend, whose stories had passed down through generations. He would be lying if he didn't admit that it made him feel old - and humbled.

As he walked, he felt a sense of happiness. Of pride. He saw smiles. He heard music. People were safe here. It was good to be reminded why he fought. He would walk the streets again tomorrow. Maybe, he would sing.

"Excuse me, ma'am", he said as he approached a secluded little bench that overlooked the City. "Would you mind if I sit here?"

The woman smiled and shifted over to make room. "Please", she said. Saint sat. His shoulders were so broad that the woman had to shift over a little more.

He had a bag of birdseed with him, and the woman watched as he spread a little of it on the ground. The pigeons came quickly - in fact, she'd noticed a few more than usual the instant Saint had sat down. She wondered to herself how often he came here and how they'd managed to miss each other thus far. He was not an easy man to miss.

The cooing of the pigeons and the bustle of the City were soothing, and seeing as the gentleman seemed to have no trouble with companionable silence, she closed her eyes. After a moment, though, she was aware of footsteps and whispering behind them. A young woman, another Titan, came up to the bench and said to the gentleman, smiling nervously, "It's such an honour to meet you. You're an inspiration to Titans everywhere."

He nodded humbly. "Thank you," he said. They spoke briefly. He asked her name. They talked about how she'd just come back from being stationed on Io for patrol duty. He commended her commitment to keeping the people of the system safe, and then she and her friends left.

Then, he went back to feeding the pigeons. After a moment, the woman asked him, mostly joking, "Are you famous?"

He glanced at her and inclined his head, hesitantly. "A little bit."

"I see," she said, smiling. After a moment, she added, "My name is Eva."

"Saint."

Eva sat with that answer for a moment and then asked, "Saint-14?" She'd heard the story of how he fought for the City during the Battle of Six Fronts, so long ago, and another more fantastical story about how he'd defeated a powerful Fallen fellow by headbutting him. Anytime she heard that story, she always found herself hoping he had a good, sturdy helmet.

"That's right," he said, spreading a little more birdseed. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Eva."

They sat a little longer together, watching the pigeons and the clouds, before Eva finally had to excuse herself to go back to her work.

As she made her way back, she remarked on how many legends of remarkable Guardians made them seem almost like mythical figures, so far removed from anything the civilians of the City would ever see or experience. The legendary Saint-14 did not seem that way to her at all.

In fact, she thought that he was [a very nice young man](#).

In Memoriam

Saint stood before a crowd of Guardians, and citizens of the Last City. The mood was somber; the memories of the people gathered in memoriam were still far too fresh. Ghosts had gathered from across the system in respect for the one who had guided their journeys; the one who spoke for the Traveler.

["My name is Saint-14."](#)

The Speaker was my father. Guardians do not have true fathers. Some might say Guardians do not have true family. We are born with no one but our Ghosts, and we find our way to something more. I was lucky to find my way to a family. A family I chose for myself.

I was drawn to the Speaker because of the vision he had for this City. He helped me understand that we fight not for the sake of fighting, but for the sake of the people. He taught me to imagine a day where we might put down our weapons and that reaching that day would be our greatest victory yet. I have worked for that day all my life.

The Speaker was a leader in this City. He was here at its formation. He helped establish the Consensus. Most importantly, he was a figure that people could recognise and trust. Because of him, that is what I aspire to be as well: a familiar face who reminds people that they are safe. That they are taken care of.

It is painful for me - and for all of us - that we could not be there during the Speaker's last moments. As Guardians, it is the nature of our long lives that we see many people die. We hope that, through our service, we can give them peaceful deaths. At the very least, we know that the Speaker died bravely. We know that he died with the City, the people, and the Traveler in his mind. We know that his last moments were a testament to everything this City stands for: bravery in the face of adversity and dedication to our principles when faced with those who would do us harm.

We cannot reclaim what we have lost. There will always be a void that the Speaker once filled. We cannot replace him.

But I hope, someday, we may find someone to continue his work.

Father, I will miss you. I am sorry for the times that I failed you. I have been given a second chance, and I will use it to live up to the ideals you thought you saw in me. I will not let you down.

Thank you.”

Pharos Link

The Vanguard wished to keep a closer eye on the timeline disturbances, and so Osiris sent a “gift” to help them monitor the situation. Saint-14 welcomed the Guardian wholeheartedly. He gestured to an odd-looking object. “A gift from Osiris; one not unlike the obelisks you’ve uncovered”, he chuckled excitedly. “This will be a beacon to guide the lost back home.”

He looked the obelisk over for a moment before consulting Osiris’ notes. “But first...it would appear that we are missing pieces.” Saint tore off a piece of Osiris’ notes. “Here, this will help you remember what we need.”

When the Guardian returned with the missing pieces, Saint took inventory of the materials they brought back. “Good. Not one of these pieces has a bullet lodged in it. This is very good!” he said, commending their marksmanship before turning his attention to Osiris’ instructions.

He carefully pored over multi-layered diagrams and compared them to the unfinished obelisk. “Yes...okay...” He turned a piece over in his hand and held it up to Osiris’ notes. He nodded, then turned back to the Guardian. “Thank you, Guardian. I will...uh...put this

together.” He gave a shaky thumbs up, then quickly plugged in the component. As the Guardian waited in anticipation, Saint glanced at them over his shoulder before punching an unruly piece into place. “No problem! Ready to deploy!”

The nexus point was set up to allow the Vanguard to monitor such temporal events from the Tower, while generating energy for some yet-unknown purpose. It hummed as energy passed through it. Individual sections whired to life. It was functioning smoothly, but multiple indicators appeared, showing weak signals coming in from all across the system. The other obelisks were not putting out a strong enough signal. There was more to do before the Tower obelisk could shine.

“Guardian, hello!” Saint-14 pointed to a cluttered overlay of schematics on a page of indecipherable nonsense. “As you can see here, we are missing a key component of Osiris’ obelisk device.”

Saint studied Osiris’ notes for a moment. “It would appear the core powering the Sundial is needed, but it is still anchored to one of the timelines within.” After a moment of consideration, he looked to the Guardian. “I will prepare the device while you retrieve the core.”

The Guardian nodded.

“Shine bright, friend. Your deeds will light the road ahead, and many will see to follow you.”

Joining

The three oldest sisters - Ozletc, Tazaroc, and Niruul - gathered around Amtec, the youngest. They spoke in harmonising tones, each voice the pluck of a different string on the same instrument.

“You know our purpose,” said Ozletc. “This crumbled timeline...”

“Will let us right the wrongs of Ghoul the Abdicated,” said Tazaroc. “And thus see our people...”

“Reborn,” said Niruul. “Loosed from our fetters.”

“I know your purpose,” said Amtec, who was the most beloved. She trembled in their massive presence. [The three oldest sisters had begun the process of joining](#), known only to them through ancient texts of the mind, never accomplished in recent memory. It was a permanent metaconcert; an unbreakable bond of self-dissolution. Already their minds had begun to merge, and Amtec could see them being drawn closer, as if by some magnetic force in their bones.

"Then you know," said Ozletc.

"The consequences of our failure," said Niruul.

Amtec nodded. Her eye darted from sister to sister, now both more foreign and more familiar, as each sister was each other sister, somehow, combined.

"Together, we are stronger," said Tazaroc.

"Than any threat that may challenge us," said Ozletc. "But should we fail..."

"Unlikely though it is," said Tazaroc.

"You must succeed where we could not," said Ozletc. "And so, you will join with us..."

"In mind," said Niruul.

"But not in body," said Tazaroc.

Already, Amtec could feel the power of their minds - their mind - settle against the edges of her own like a heavy, flat stone.

"And so our failure," said Niruul.

"Will be your failure," said Ozletc.

"And our revenge," said Tazaroc.

"Will be your revenge," said Ozletc.

Amtec had hoped since the beginning to join her sister in mind and body on the battlefield of time. She had thought, today, they would ask. But she knew that if she felt it too keenly, they would taste her disappointment, and she craved their love.

"I understand," she said, and she vowed to see that any threat that would harm her sisters would be annihilated so thoroughly that it would be wiped from living memory.



[Gammatrap](#)

Lantern in the Dark

Sagira darted around the machinery, scanning it for faults. As she did so, she noticed that her Chosen was distracted, staring out at the Sun upon Mercury's horizon. He was alone in his thoughts, in the void. It was something she'd grown accustomed to over the centuries.

After such a great length of time, she'd learnt when it was necessary to interrupt, and when it was necessary to let the man delve deeper into his thoughts. In the past few months or so, there had only been one thing on his mind, playing over and over. She moved towards him, playfully flittering about his shoulders. This was a thought that served her Chosen best if she interrupted.

"You know, you should thank them." The sound of her voice rushed him back to the physical. Her words lingered in the space around him, a warmth among darker thoughts.

"For what?" he replied. Throughout his lives, one thing Osiris had never needed was applause or thanks. He lived for the truth, and for humanity. His work was invisible, yet necessary. His faults were glaring, and he bore the burden of the City for each one.

"For cleaning up another one of your messes." Sagira joked.

"All that happened with the Sundial was necessary to achieve this outcome."

"Including the return of Saint?"

He smiled. "Yes, Little Light."

It was almost formulaic the way she could draw his mind to happier thoughts. None could challenge him like she could, but none understood him like she did either. Under that hardened outer layer of his was a man who deeply cared for the people around him. He often struggled to show it; perhaps hid it, even...but she knew it was the truth, and that's what mattered.

The sound of a ship on the horizon drew their attention. The Guardian was approaching. What they had achieved on Mercury, Osiris could hardly believe. The future he had seen in the Infinite Forest when all this began - the subatomic annihilation of this reality - perhaps they had prevented it. He prayed that they had. Because no hero or weapon could defeat the emptiness that he'd seen.

He met their approach with a warm acknowledgement. "It would seem that our paths are entwined, Guardian. Impeccable work, as always." He offered a rare smile. "I always wrote off Saint's hopeful speeches as rhetoric or inspiration, but you...you have given credence to his message."

He took a breath and gave them his full attention. "For the first time I believe we have hope. Saint-14 will need your assistance maintaining the Tower Obelisk. Trust that it is worth the effort." He looked past the Guardian, to the horizon. "With cooler tempers, and with the core secure, perhaps it is time to visit the City again."

The Guardian simply nodded to the exiled Warlock and they were off again, duty bound elsewhere. A fleeting moment, but a cherished one.

Lonely

For the last three weeks, [the Guardian had been camping in a rusted-out shipping container](#), far off the main pathways that were always buzzing with Sparrows. He stayed out of the way of other Guardians, and if he couldn't do that, he kept his helmet on. Always.

All he had to his name was some beat up gear, a ring, and a silk sheet. Those were the things he woke up with. He wore the ring on a chain and kept the sheet as a comforting reminder of something he couldn't remember. Sometimes he wore it draped over his shoulder. The fabric was so fine that it made him think about the place he must've come from before this life, and how much nicer it was than where he was now.



[Gammatrap](#)

He spent his days alone. Other Guardians were an unpredictable source of pain and confusion, and they saw him the same way. Some reacted to him with outright hostility. Others were overcome by some personal and unexplained grief. He didn't know why. That was the most painful lesson of being reborn: It was better to be alone. So he was always alone now, except for his Ghost.

One night, he sat with his head against his knees and listened to the distant snaps of gunfire. He hadn't seen anyone in about a week, but he could hear them. Somehow that made the loneliness worse. More potent.

"Did you know," his Ghost said, bright but gentle. The purple glint of his shell reflected the half-light outside the crate. "That in the Last City, they are celebrating? They call it the Dawning. It is a celebration of friendship and hope and warmth."

The Guardian kept his eyes closed and forced down his bitterness. The silence lingered between them, heavy and filled with unsaid things, until his Ghost gently bumped his shoulder. "To feel good, they say to each other: Happy Dawning."

Still, the Guardian said nothing, and his own silence made him sick with himself. His Ghost had never doubted him. Never doubted anyone, really. He was a well of relentless optimism. And as infuriating as that was, it was also heartbreaking, and comforting, and a relief. The Guardian was not going to be the one to disappoint him.

There'd been too much disappointment in this life already.

"Happy Dawning," he said.

Reunion

Saint-14 watched vessels dip in and out of the hangar. The cadence of docking and disembarking ships found rhythm in the busy city. It was routine. Practiced. Peaceful.

[A visitor stepped aboard the Gray Pigeon.](#)

Geppetto turned to welcome them. "Greetings, Brother Osiris. You are a welcome sight. Is Sagira with you?"

"Hello Geppetto. Sagira visits Ikora." Osiris sat on the gangway of the Gray Pigeon. He ran a ribbon through his fingers. "Hello Saint."

"Osiris? I wondered if this meeting would be with one of your projections."

"I would not..."

...

"Quite the shrine they've made for you. Are you dying?"

Saint-14 laughed.

"It is good to see you again, Brother."
