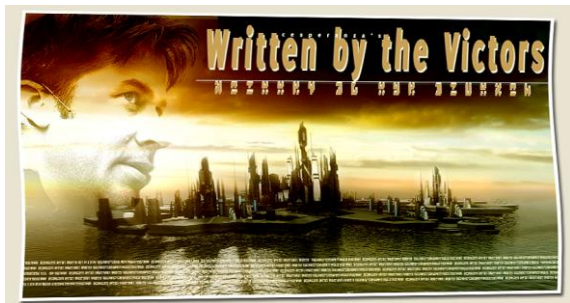


WRITTEN BY THE VICTORS



by Speranza

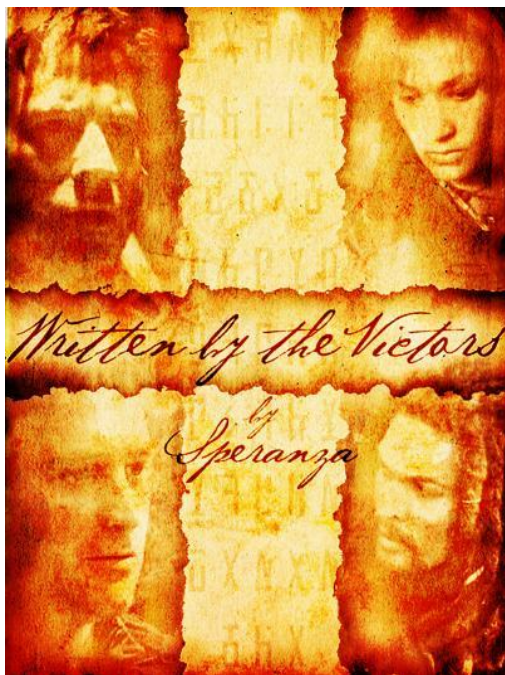


Table of Contents

VOLUME ONE.Error! Bookmark not defined.

VOLUME TWO.Error! Bookmark not defined.

VOLUME THREE....Error! Bookmark not defined.

VOLUME FOUR.Error! Bookmark not defined.

VOLUME FIVE.Error! Bookmark not defined.

EPILOGUE.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....Error! Bookmark not defined.

INDEX.Error! Bookmark not defined.

Volume One

1.

Sheppard, John: birth in Austin, Texas (5 January 1967), 16; at Portora High School, 21-24; undergraduate at United States Air Force Academy, 26-35; death of Colleen Flynn Sheppard, 37-45, 49-53; visits Ireland with Mahaffy and Sloane, 64-66; assigned to Laredo AFB, 68-78; takes Master's Degree in Applied

Mathematics, M.I.T, 79-85, 87-89; meets and marries Julia Kaye, 85-87, 90-93; assigned to Pease AFB, NH, 95-98; promoted to 1st Lieutenant, 99; assigned to Indian Springs Air Force Base, NV, 103-105; separates from Julia Kaye, 105-106; requests transfer to Geilenkirchen Air Base, Germany, 109; assigned to 319th Air Expeditionary Group, Masirah, Oman, 111-123; leads series of rescue missions in Afghanistan, 125-139; first commendation, 131; second commendation,

134; taken off active duty for disobeying a direct order, 140-143; first disciplinary hearing, 146-148; reinstated, transferred to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, 150; assigned to high-risk special ops against Taliban targets, 152-160; third commendation, promoted to Captain, 161; disobeys direct order in failed attempt to rescue Captain Richard Holland, 164; recalled to U.S.A. for second disciplinary hearing, 166-168; becomes estranged from General Henry M.L. Sheppard, 168-171; formally warned and reassigned to Afghanistan, 168; crash-lands in southeastern Afghanistan, 172; witnesses death of Lieutenants Reilly and Staunton, 173; awarded Distinguished Flying Cross, 174; promoted to Major, 174; divorce from Julia Kaye finalized, 175; disobeys direct order in attempt to rescue trapped ground unit, 178-183; recalled to U.S.A. and removed from active duty, 183; third disciplinary hearing, 184-186; requests transfer to McMurdo AFB, 187; flies non-combat missions between military and scientific outposts, 187-193; flies General Jack O'Neill to Ancient outpost, 194; triggers Ancient

command chair, 195; meets Dr. Rodney McKay, 195.

2.

In hindsight, the ideological break between Elizabeth Weir and John Sheppard seems almost predetermined. Weir's diplomatic successes were based on her ability to coax disagreeing parties to abide by a series of carefully negotiated rules. Sheppard, on the other hand, had a long history of disregarding orders and a tendency to think that rules didn't apply to him. Sheppard's sense of himself as somehow exceptional only deepened once he went to Atlantis, probably because it was more or less true. —Mark Leredo, *The Atlantis Uprising*, p. 45

Those who believe in the inevitability of a schism between Weir and Sheppard have to rewrite the four years prior to the Uprising out of all recognition. In fact, Weir and Sheppard worked closely and effectively from the death of Colonel Sumner through to the Recall of 4 A.T.

(2008 A.D.) They each had the opportunity to have the other replaced, but chose instead to bolster each other's position. Weir famously insisted on Sheppard's promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and his continuing appointment as military commander of Atlantis; less well known are the letters the otherwise taciturn Sheppard wrote in support of Weir's decisions as expedition leader (now part of the Elizabeth Weir collection at American University in Washington, D.C.). Moreover, there is evidence that the two frequently socialized, both in Colorado Springs and in Atlantis. In fact, the widespread but unproven belief in a continuing correspondence

between Weir and Sheppard in the post-Uprising years indicates that, despite the often-evoked 'inevitable schism', most scholars believe that the two leaders were not simply friendly, but friends. —Franklin R. Carroll, *Atlantis Revisited*, p. 63 Much recent scholarship has been intent on recovering the so-called 'golden age' of the Atlantis expedition: the early years before the Recall, the Uprising,

and the War. These scholars (c.f. Carroll, Fritz, Henderson) often have a concomitant desire to demonstrate the good relations that existed between the various factions. I myself consider the point stipulated, but what of it? Weir and Sheppard may well have come to consider themselves 'friends,' but it is truer to say that they were both cagey political operatives who, upon realizing their careers were now linked, threw in together against the SGC. Weir was wise to insist on Sheppard's promotion and continued leadership; for all Sheppard's so-called 'exceptionalism,' (see Leredo, 45-47), he had already proven himself willing to close ranks behind her, at least where the SGC brass was concerned. The flip side of Sheppard's occasional insubordination was that he was the least military of military men; any replacement would have been much more likely to challenge Weir's civilian authority. Similarly, Sheppard's support of Weir was not, or not only, an act of friendship; Weir's removal as head of the Atlantis expedition would almost certainly have resulted in the re-establishment of precisely the kind of traditional military hierarchy Sheppard

most disliked and within which he would likely have been marginalized. —Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 34 Still, the seeds of discord were sown early on. Historians have pointed to the Atlantis Nanovirus Crisis of 1 A.T. (2005 A.D.), in which Sheppard not only disobeyed Weir's direct order but also forced the marines into making a direct choice between his commands and hers. Predictably, they obeyed him, thereby gutting Weir's authority among the military contingent. Weir papered over the incident in her reports, perhaps out of embarrassment, perhaps out of gratitude for Sheppard's high-risk detonation of a nuclear device over the city. Sheppard's near-suicidal maneuver saved many lives, but was only 'authorized' in the most nominal sense, with Weir agreeing to the plan only after it was clear that Sheppard was going ahead with it in any case. So even by this early date, Weir and Sheppard had come to an accommodation whose subtext was that he would only obey what orders he wanted. Arguably, from this point onward, John Sheppard was the actual, if not the official, leader of the Atlantis expedition.

—Tina Eber, *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 1.*, p. 56

Most political scientists point to the Nanovirus Crisis as a foreshadowing of the Weir-Sheppard schism and Sheppard's eventual rise to power. But I believe that the incipient conflict between Sheppard and Weir can be seen even earlier, in their

radically different attitudes toward the native Athosian population. For all that Elizabeth Weir was a culturally-sensitive diplomat, she initially confronted the Athosians with a suspicion bordering on discrimination; for all that John Sheppard was an Air Force pilot steeped in a cliquish military culture, he immediately invited the Athosians into the city and treated them as allies, going so far as to choose Athosian leader Teyla Emmagan as a member of his team. Emmagan came to play a key role as Sheppard's second in command, and to exert significant influence in Atlantis more generally. As a result, Sheppard's team developed a strong loyalty to and affinity for Athosian culture

(so much so that after Sheppard's capture and torture by the Genii in the winter of 3 A.T. [2007 A.D.], McKay resisted Weir's order to have Sheppard examined by the psychiatrist Dr. Heightmeyer and instead brought Sheppard to the Athosian settlement to be treated by the healer known as Leylana). Anyone tracing the roots of the Atlantean Uprising need look no further than the early bond between the Air Force pilot and the Daughter of Athos, an alliance which was formalized by their marriage in the winter of 4 A.T. (2008 A.D.) —April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 114

3.

"Five," McKay said with the dreamy reverence he reserved for particularly good coffee, certain exceptionally beautiful theorems, and Samantha Carter's breasts. "That's—my God, it's *Christmas*, it's just—it's everything I ever wanted. It's three plus *two more*." Sheppard slouched deeper in his chair, slung one arm over the back, and stifled a smile. "And people

say *I'm* a math whiz." Teyla lightly smacked his arm with the back of her hand. "Do not begrudge Rodney his joy in this moment. It is a great day for Atlantis. It is a great day for all of us—" "Five ZPMs! Five, five, five!" McKay sat up straight, looking like a kid who'd just gotten more cake than he could stand. He made an elaborate, popping gesture with both hands and then pointed at Sheppard, who hastily covered his mouth to hide his smile. "Five is my new favorite number," McKay declared. "We're taking a leave, all of us, and going to Vegas and betting everything on five." "Vegas?" Ronon asked skeptically. "What's—" "It's all gambling and hookers and, I don't know, Dean Martin," McKay explained, waving his hand. "Believe me, you'll love it. And we are not—" he added, jerking around to look at Elizabeth, who was just coming into the briefing with a sheaf of papers in her hand, "—not, not," McKay yelled, with maniacal glee, "giving any of them away to anybody! I *want* them! I want them for the *goddamned city*—"

Elizabeth showed him a quick, fond smile as she sat down. "Yes, well," she began. "Rodney's got a point," Sheppard said, as offhandedly as he could manage. "We should keep at least a couple for the city. For—you know, weapons systems. Powering the shields." He shrugged. "Maybe flight—" McKay called him out in two seconds flat. "Ha, yes, like you haven't been lying awake at night, just *orgasming* over the prospect of flying the—" "Gentlemen!" Elizabeth said, and Sheppard wondered if the high spirits of the day were contagious enough to allow her to say, *I don't think Colonel Sheppard's orgasms have any place at this briefing*. He began to work up a shocked expression, just in case. But instead, Elizabeth turned to McKay. "We can keep three ZPMs," she said, and then, turning to Sheppard, "And you can fly Atlantis." And then, she lifted her head and said, to nobody in particular at the table, "They're recalling us back to Earth. We're leaving the Pegasus galaxy. And we're taking the city." They all sat there, thunderstruck. And Sheppard heard a voice, his own voice. "No," he said.

Weir informed Sheppard, McKay, Emmagan, and Dex of the plan to recall Atlantis to the Milky Way at a meeting on 31 April 4 A.T. (May 12, 2008 A.D.) Both Weir and the SGC later admitted that the announcement was badly timed; Sheppard's team was still giddy over their discovery of five zero-point-modules on M8C-2300, and were unaware that the news of this discovery had prompted a series of hastily-convened meetings in the highest reaches of both the SGC and the Pentagon. Like the Lanteans, the SGC had been overjoyed at the thought of so much power. But their joy faded once military strategists realized that Earth lacked the technologies to use them. As General Gary Stanhope, head of the Pentagon's SGC subcommittee, recalled: "We just stared at each other across the table, because what the hell were we gonna do with five ZPMs? We already had one in Antarctica, we had one powering the *Odyssey*, and now we had five more and no way to use them to protect our people. The only thing that could

use that kind of power was Atlantis itself, and maybe that's when the idea hit us, that Atlantis was portable. It had been on Earth before, and we could bring it back here. Fully powered, Atlantis could have been the most powerful military base on the planet, and mighty enough to defend the homeworld against any alien threat."

But it was not to be. As Elizabeth Weir hastily wrote in her report, 'Colonel Sheppard not pleased with SGC directive, asks me to lodge formal protest.' Weir later gave a more in-depth account of the meeting to historian Lisa Ellis: "John immediately came out against it: the policy, the order. I remember groaning inside, because when John got it in his head to object to things, he could be very stubborn. I remember thinking: 'well, now there are going to be arguments.' Arguments!" But Weir could hardly have anticipated the events that followed; nobody imagined this moment as a trigger for revolution. As Franklin Carroll argues in *Atlantis Revisited*: "The entire expedition had been pulled out of Atlantis two years earlier,

when the city was briefly re-occupied by Ancients. Sheppard was unhappy about that, but he registered no formal protest, and the evacuation proceeded without incident." (Caroll, 90) As far as the SGC was concerned, Sheppard had already accepted the idea of total withdrawal from Atlantis. No one expected him to resist taking the city back to Earth. — Alfred Walson, *Atlantis: Year One*, p.70 Caroll and Walson argue that no one could have anticipated that John Sheppard would resist the Recall when he had not resisted the evacuation of 41 August 2 A.T. (September 22, 2006). But this argument fails to take into account Sheppard's intensely proprietary—and highly illegal—retaking of the city in December of 2 A.T. (January, 2007) once he learned that it had been invaded by Human Form Replicators. A mere three months after his redeployment back to Earth and reassignment within the SGC, Sheppard reassembled the dispersed senior civilian staff of Atlantis—Drs. Elizabeth Weir, Carson Beckett, and Rodney McKay—and, disobeying yet another direct order, organized a successful black-ops military infiltration of

Atlantis. The incident was swept under the rug, largely due to the influence of General Jack O'Neill, who had been rescued by Sheppard and was presumably grateful to him. Sheppard was not brought up on charges, nor was he even formally reprimanded. But Sheppard's actions were plainly mutinous. Moreover, they demonstrated that Sheppard thought Atlantis was *his*, and that he already had a stronger allegiance to Atlantis than to the U.S. military. This should have set off warning bells within the SGC, and the fact that it didn't was possibly the greatest policy failure in the history of the Stargate program. —Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 194

In *A Political History of Atlantis*, Paul Dugan argues that the Uprising technically began two years earlier, with what he describes as Sheppard's "plainly mutinous" actions during the evacuation of 41 August 2 A.T. (September 22, 2006). Certainly,

Sheppard regretted the evacuation, which probably hardened his resolve to act swiftly

where Atlantis was concerned. But we cannot draw too tight a connection between this event and the Uprising. As Dugan himself notes, *all* the senior staff of Atlantis regretted the evacuation, and *all* went along with Sheppard's plan to retake the city. This includes Elizabeth Weir, who broke with Sheppard over the SGC plan to bring Atlantis to Earth. "I thought it the best of both worlds," Weir confessed to Lisa Ellis in a 2011 interview: "We had been under near-constant siege in Pegasus, and the SGC's directive—to pull back and solidify our defensive forces—made sense to me. And we'd have the city; we'd have *Atlantis*, and we'd have *Earth*, and we'd be *safe*. I thought John would love that idea; honestly, I did. And then I saw his face and thought, 'Oh, my God: he's extended his whole 'Leave no man behind,' ethos to the *entire Pegasus galaxy*." —Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.82 There have been many attempts to reconstruct the first days of the Uprising, the time between Weir's announcement of the Recall and Sheppard's response, the Declaration of Galactic Sovereignty and the first round of

arrests and deportations. We have only Weir's account of that fateful meeting, but we have no reason to question it: "John said no. Teyla and Ronon didn't say anything, but that wasn't unusual. Rodney didn't say anything, and that *was* unusual." In fact, McKay was the only genuine wildcard at the meeting; Sheppard's break with Weir, and with the SGC, was practically fated. But Rodney McKay's personal and professional history was more complex. Consequently, his decisions were much less predictable. They turned out to be crucial; it is not an overstatement to suggest that McKay's actions over the first few days of the Uprising may well have been *the* decisive events of the war. — Mark Leredo, *The Atlantis Uprising*, p. 60

5.

McKay, [Meredith] Rodney Ingram: birth in Toronto, Canada (18 April, 1968) 8; enters Regina Montessori School, 13-15; early aptitude for mathematics and music, 17; studies piano with Madame Guyon, 20; begins St.

George's School, 21-23; skips grade two, 25; studies piano with Vladimir Shokin, 28-30; skips grade four, 32; birth of sister, Jeanne, 35; increasingly fractured home life, 36-49; comes in second, Bosendorfer Piano Concerto Competition, Toronto, 50; comes in fourth, North American Piano Finals, 52; Fiona Ingram files to divorce George McKay, 55; interview with court-appointed child psychologist, 57-61; forced to testify in custody battle, 65-69; fails to place in St. Petersburg International Piano Competition, 71; informed by Shokin that he has no chance of a performing career, 73-75; builds atomic bomb for grade six science fair, 78-80; taken into custody by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 81-86;

abandons the piano, 87; wins NSTC grant, 89; wins top prize, National Science Competition, 91; Ingram-McKay divorce finalized, 92; selected for International Physics seminar, 96-98; meets Dr. Richard Faraday, California Institute of Technology, 98; first Canadian to win Tesla Science and Technology Prize (\$25,000 U.S.), 103; accepted early to CalTech,

105; sues to have Dr. Faraday appointed his legal guardian, 108-115; formally breaks with Fiona Ingram, 116; co-authors first paper, 118; takes B.S. in Physics, 124; wins first NSF grant, 127; takes M.S. in Astrophysics, 133; pursues double Ph.D in Astrophysics and Applied Engineering, 134-140, 146-152; dissertation research confiscated by SGC, 160; sues for degree status, 162; granted doctorates by CalTech on the basis of affidavits submitted by SGC research review team, 166; hired by the U.S. Air Force, 166; assigned to Area 51, Nellis AFB, 173-187; becomes premier expert in wormhole physics, 182; called to consult with the SGC, 189; meets Lieutenant Colonel Samantha Carter, 190; reassigned to Russia, 196; oversees development of naquadah generator technology, 199-203; recalled to Cheyenne Mountain, 204; oversees development of databurst technology, 207-214; assigned to Ancient outpost, Antarctica, as chief scientific advisor, 218-228; chosen for Atlantis expedition, 228; meets Major John Sheppard, 229.

"Rodney left the meeting first, almost hastily; he just grabbed his things and bolted. That surprised me, because—well, you have to understand, Rodney and Teyla and Ronon and John were a team, with a strong team dynamic. I suppose I assumed that the four of them would go off somewhere and talk over what had just happened. But then Rodney left on his own, and I was relieved by that. I remember thinking, 'Oh good, Rodney will bring him to his senses'—John, I mean. I still thought this was just an argument; I didn't know this was the start of the Uprising. But John looked really worried and tense when Rodney walked out, and now that I know what he was thinking—well, no wonder. He really needed Rodney on board; there was no way he was going to be able to do this without Rodney. Rodney McKay quite literally controlled all the power in Atlantis." —Dr. Elizabeth Weir, 26 Nov 2010

"Dr. McKay always insisted upon being recognized as a civilian. He wouldn't obey anything that even sounded like an order,

despite being employed by the Air Force. He maintained that Atlantis was a civilian expedition and not a military base, and vehemently stood against what he saw as further military incursions into the city. He desperately wanted scientific discoveries and new technologies to filter back to the scientific community on Earth and, from there, back to the civilian population. Most of all, he repeatedly backed Dr. Elizabeth Weir as the civilian commander of Atlantis. So, no, I don't understand what happened. I don't understand it at all."

—General Stephen H. Caldwell, 12 Dec 2010
"McKay was, in his way, more comfortable in the military context than Sheppard was. He was the classic military scientist; certainly, he'd absorbed their style and ethos to a very large degree. I think he even had a t-shirt that said, 'I've been in therapy for years; I've got a military-industrial complex.' He was recruited by the American C.I.A., you know, when he was only eleven. And CalTech didn't want him just because he was brilliant. They had military

contracts; they were hoping that his research would result in patents. By the time he was made head scientist of Atlantis, McKay had been working for or with the military for the best part of twenty years. Then he was invited onto Sheppard's away team, and he became even *more* military: he was given firearms training and combat training and *dogtags*, my God! He came to the lab one morning in civilian clothes, an opened-neck shirt, and these bits of metal were hanging round his neck. 'What's that?' we asked. 'What?' he asked. Then he flushed, touched his throat, and mumbled, 'nothing, nothing,' as he tucked the tags in. But he had them; we saw them. Sometimes you could still see a bit of metal chain, like a dog leash." —Dr. Hans Bender, 15 Jan 2011 "I was disappointed, you know, when I first found out my brother was working for the SGC, though I can't say I was surprised; he was practically raised by the C.I.A. We're nearly eight years apart, Meredith and me, and he went off to CalTech when I was seven. So I don't remember that much of him from back then. But I do remember that those years were pretty miserable. My parents were

going through a really bitter divorce, and he bore the brunt of it; I was the baby, you see, so I was protected. But sometimes Meredith would say these terrible, cutting things to me and make me cry, and it's taken me years to realize that that's how they must have talked to *him*. They never talked to me that way, my parents, maybe because I was the baby, and a girl. And later, see, I was the extra special golden child, because Meredith had run away by then. Or that's how my mother saw it—though it was true, I think; he really did run away. Science was his way out; I think he wanted music to be his way out, but it wasn't. I remember once, when they were fighting about something, Meredith yelled that when the C.I.A. took him into custody, he didn't want to come back. And it was meant to be cruel, but the thing is; I really don't think he was joking. I think he was absolutely serious about that." —Jeanne McKay Miller, 9 Oct 2011

"He was a theoretician, first and foremost, when I met him. He spent years working out the mathematics behind energy physics, and he

was brilliant at it: better than anyone, sincerely. But it was abstract to him: he knew about wormholes on *paper*, naquadah was a fascinating atomic*pattern*, the Stargate was something made of *numbers*. He didn't think of the Stargate as a real thing that you *traveled* through to *get* to places and *discover* things and sometimes get *shot at*. I think it was all just

some complicated and gorgeous tune that he had in his head. But that was before Atlantis; he changed so much in Atlantis. I think for Rodney, Atlantis was where the rubber finally hit the road. John Sheppard was where the rubber finally hit the road." —General Samantha Carter, 30 Sept 2011

7.

The days between the Recall and Sheppard's Declaration of Galactic Sovereignty were rife with tension and uncertainty. Expedition members were highly sensitive to tremors in the power structure, and this was more than a tremor: this was an earthquake. Word quickly

spread: Weir and Sheppard had fallen out. Sheppard and McKay had not spoken for days. All off-world missions had been cancelled. Sheppard had closed ranks with Ronon and Teyla. McKay had gathered a small coterie of scientists around him for a series of closed meetings. Weir had been on the comm with the SGC for four hours. That much was true, but gossip soon began to spread like wildfire: Weir was demanding Sheppard be replaced as military head of Atlantis. (In truth, she was arguing that replacing Sheppard would only push McKay off the fence and onto his side.) Sheppard had written to the SGC to express his lack of confidence in Weir. (Sheppard had emailed the SGC, but only to register his objection to the planned recall.) Sheppard had taken control of the armory. (Not formally, though Sheppard visited the armory several times and had taken some provisional steps toward securing it.) McKay had refused to execute one of Sheppard's military plans. (In fact, Sheppard hadn't given any direct orders because McKay hadn't yet indicated how he would play his hand.) The city was awash with

gossip and rumors. —Alfred Walson, *Atlantis: Year One*, p.92 While McKay consulted his scientific inner circle—Simpson, Locke, Takaro, and of course, Zelenka—Sheppard did what he could to solidify his position. At the same time, the normally laconic Sheppard broke with protocol and ordered a databurst to Earth in order to contact his superiors directly and protest the announced policy. Sheppard, who much preferred action to words, nonetheless made a desperate and heart-felt attempt to get the SGC to rethink the proposed Recall: "Those ZPMs were found in Pegasus," he wrote. "They belong to Pegasus. *Atlantis* belongs to Pegasus." When the SGC disagreed, Sheppard shot back, "Do you understand that you're condemning an entire galaxy of human beings to be herded and culled?" The SGC replied that, of course, if Colonel Sheppard wished to remain in Pegasus defending the native populace, he was certainly free to do so. Sheppard's reply was immediate and eloquent: "Fuck you."

"That was when the penny dropped," General Alan Merriman recollected. "We all of a sudden realized that we'd left Atlantis in the control of this madman, an officer who'd already had three disciplinary hearings and who had left a trail of disobeyed

orders a mile wide. That suddenly didn't seem very smart." The SGC quickly called together a series of high-level meetings to discuss contingency plans in case the Atlantis Expedition resisted the policy. But by then it was too late. —April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 114 On the morning of 35 April 4 A.T. (May 16, 2008 A.D.), Colonel John Sheppard walked into the Gateroom and climbed the stairs to Elizabeth Weir's office. He was flanked by Dr. Rodney McKay and Teyla Emmagan. Ronon Dex walked protectively behind him, and following him were Doctors Radek Zelenka, Rebecca Simpson, Tetsu Takaro, and Christopher Locke, and Marine Lieutenants Stackhouse, Yamoto, Cadman, and Jefferson. Any rift between Atlantis's scientific and military contingents had been healed;

McKay and Sheppard were standing shoulder to shoulder. History does not record their meeting; we do not know precisely when or how or under what terms the pact between them was sealed. But some sort of *rapprochement* had evidently been achieved between them the previous night, because thereafter, they presented their interests as synonymous. — Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.132

8.

John had been hunched over his laptop for hours, slowly typing out his thoughts. He had struggled over every word: changing, deleting, undeleting. He'd tried to find polite ways of saying, "Look, you don't *get* it. These bastards *eat* people," and "I can't go. Don't you see? I *started* it," and then he had given up on being polite. It had gone a lot faster then. It was the middle of the night by the time he pushed the laptop's cover down and switched off the desk light. He stood up; his muscles were aching, and he pressed his hands to his back, arched,

and stretched before unbuckling his belt and roughly yanking it out of its loops. Sleep. God. He had to. He was just tugging the hem of his shirt up when the door chimed. John's eyes immediately moved to his gun, lying holstered on the bureau—and Jesus, what the fuck was *that* about? He wasn't there yet; they *couldn't* be there yet. John took a deep breath, left the gun where it was, and went to open the door. It was McKay, standing in the dim hallway in his blue uniform shirt. John forced his clenched shoulders to relax. He hadn't seen McKay since the meeting, hadn't looked for him. McKay had been there. McKay had been there from the first, on every away mission and through every crisis. There was nothing he could tell Rodney McKay that he didn't already know. Rodney would side with him or he wouldn't. John tried to look like it didn't matter.

Rodney, on the other hand, was visibly nervous. "Hi," he said. "Can I...?"

"Sure," John said, and stepped back to let him inside. The door slid shut behind Rodney,

leaving them standing together in the dim light of John's room. "So," Rodney said, finally meeting his eyes. John nodded slowly. "Yeah," he said, and meant: Yeah, he was serious. Yeah, this was for real. *Come on, Rodney*, he thought. *Jump one way or the other*. Rodney stared at him, and then he was sliding toward him through the darkness and his hot hands were cupping John's face, pulling their mouths together. Kissing Rodney reminded him weirdly of bending to drink from the stream after days in the Afghanistan heat and dust, the way you lost your dignity entirely when the cool water ran over your chin and your lips and your tongue and you just pushed your face into it and scooped for water with your hand. He pressed his mouth to Rodney's even as his conscious mind frantically wondered if this was yes, if Rodney was throwing in with him or just throwing everything away. Rodney pulled back, panting and gasping, his hands still hot on John's face. John blinked and tried to kick-start his brain, but then Rodney was leaning in and kissing him even more intently, his tongue slick and possessive. Christ, it was so good to let

someone else take charge for a change, and John let his mouth go slack for Rodney and debated sliding to his knees and rubbing his face against Rodney's hard-on. He suddenly really wanted to do that. But Rodney slowly broke off the kiss and let his hands drop. He stepped away from John and said, in his normal voice, *like they hadn't just kissed, like they hadn't just been this close to fucking*, "Do you have a minute? I want to show you something." It took four transporters and three flights of stairs to get to where Rodney wanted to take him, which turned out to be a door at the end of a corridor of one of Atlantis's more nondescript skyscrapers. John seemed to remember that the building had been swept and adjudged safe, but he couldn't remember anything else about it. Most of Atlantis was asleep, the occasional security patrol or nightshift worker aside, and they hadn't met anyone on the walk over. Nonetheless, Rodney had tightened his mouth and shaken his head in a quick, violent negative when John had asked him what they were going to see. Now, Rodney punched an elaborate Ancient code into the box before

running his hand over the key reader, which flashed orange instead of the usual blue. John's eyebrows shot up: whatever was in here, Rodney had triple-protected it by not only locking and coding it, but keying it to his own, individualized genetic fingerprint.

The door opened. It was a lab, obviously, but kind of a cool one, with a big pentagonal console at the center like the TARDIS. The room was spare and uncluttered, like most Ancient spaces; there was no sign of the Earth science team

with their lab equipment and their endless snake of cables. John slowly circled the room, stopping to glance out each of the windows at the night-lit city, before turning to Rodney, at the console. "So?" Rodney didn't look up; he was pressing some sequence of buttons with intense concentration. John felt a sudden flash-fire of emotions: Rodney was such an *asshole*. Where the hell had he *been*? And what the fuck was with the *kissing*? And what if Rodney wasn't *with him*? And why the hell were they

here? And why weren't they *fucking?* *Fuck* him, just—and then Rodney looked up and said, "So. Yes. Well. I had a theory." "Really?" John asked, because maybe he was teetering on the edge of intergalactic war and an affair with Rodney McKay, but there was always time for sarcasm. "What, you?" Rodney didn't rise to the bait, which meant that whatever he had to say was probably pretty important. It had better be, anyway; they could be fucking right now. "Yes. About the ZPMs. I was going to tell you at the meeting, but under the circumstances—" John had steadied himself against the wall with one hand at the mention of the ZPMs, and Atlantis obligingly slid a slab of bench out of the wall for him to sit on. He sat down, hard. He was such a fucking idiot. He had secured the armory but he hadn't thought to lock down the ZPMs. "Rodney," John said in a voice like broken glass. "Tell me you—" "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. First thing I did, straight out of the meeting. But *listen* to me," and behind him, the console had started to glow pale orange and yellow and pink, like the beginning of sunrise. "There's *five* of them. *Five*, and the city only needs three to

run at full capacity. But I had this *theory*, so I went looking through the database for devices that run on ZPMs, and this one—" Rodney turned and gestured broadly at it with both arms: an impresario announcing an elephant, "—takes two." The console's colors had deepened into those of an Atlantis sunset, deep pink and orange and gold. "Though really, it requires all five to work," Rodney added abruptly, letting his arms drop. "Three ZPMs in the city and two plugged in here—" John stood up and peered suspiciously at the machine; he couldn't see the ZPMs. "I thought you said they were *secure*."

"They are. They *are*, I promise you, I've locked down the whole sublevel, and nobody knows about—oh God, wait, *wait*," Rodney said, and grabbed his forearm tight enough to hurt. "Here we go!—oh, shit, look *away*, it's *bright*, I should have brought goggles for you," and John turned away and threw an arm up to block his eyes just as a thick column of brilliant yellow-orange light shot up toward the ceiling. A moment later,

the light went out, leaving them in the normal, almost-fluorescent lab light.

John looked back at the console, which seemed to have finished whatever it was doing and turned itself off. Rodney was staring at it in a kind of rapture. "I don't know how it works," he murmured reverently, "not *exactly*, not *yet*. I mean, okay, it's working on a microcosmic scale that I can't even comprehend, but it's somehow tearing the fabric of space-time in order to tap into *all* the residual background energy left by *all* the big bangs of *all* universes simultaneously, though that's not even the incredible part! The *incredible* part is—" "Rodney," John said as patiently as he could manage. "What did it *do*?" Rodney grinned wider than John had ever seen him grin in four years of finding eleventh hour solutions and throwing Hail Mary passes. "Touch it," he said. John swallowed his response to that—Christ, his *nipples* were hard—and went to touch the device. He put his hand on the touchpad, but the machine merely whirred and ejected its ZPMs. They came revolving up from their

cylindrical slots, reminding John of a three-CD changer he'd once owned; it had seemed pretty high-tech at the time. Rodney had come up beside him, so John turned to him and said, "Okay, I give up. What—" except now he *knew* what, because *three-CD changer*. He jerked around to stare at the three yellow-orange cylinders. "I thought you said it takes..." "Yeah," Rodney said softly, staring at the new baby ZPM with lovesick eyes, and then he turned to John and said, "Don't you see? We can do anything now." That was when John had to fuck him. He shoved Rodney up against the wall and started undoing his pants. He had a million questions, but whatever; he could multitask. "Who else," John murmured, his mouth mashed up against Rodney's ear, "knows about this?" Rodney let out a strangled-sounding moan; John was sliding a hand into his underwear. "No one. Zelenka. I needed him for—" Rodney's cock was long and thick and silky hot in John's hand. John gently ran his palm over the smooth, leaking head, gathering the wetness, slicking it down. John kissed him as hard and as deep as he could. "Oh God, oh my

God, Jesus," Rodney said when John broke off the kiss; he was moaning more or less continuously now, and panting like he couldn't catch his breath. "Sheppard, I—" "How many have we got?" John asked, breathless too. "How many can we have?"

"As many as—that was four, we've got nine, now," Rodney said incoherently, head lolling, "but we can have as many as you—anything you—tell me what you want and I'll—" and John slid to his knees and began to suck Rodney off. It had been a long time since he'd given a blowjob, and he hadn't remembered liking it much. But Rodney's cock was pleasantly heavy on his tongue, and Rodney wasn't pulling his hair or suffocating him or muttering bad porn dialogue. Instead, Rodney was letting out soft, desperate-sounding sex noises that he obviously would have preferred to suppress, sweet and damn near addictive. He let Rodney's cock slide out of his mouth and caressed it with his face, turning his head so that the wet cockhead stroked along his cheek, and Rodney made a mangled sound and said,

"Sheppard. *John*—" John sucked Rodney's cock back in just as Rodney shuddered and began to shove into John's mouth with short, sharp jerks; and that was it, he was coming. Rodney's knees buckled as John swallowed and John took advantage, tugging Rodney down to the floor and crawling on top of him. John managed to open his own pants one-handed, and then he was pushing up Rodney's shirt and blindly rubbing himself against the soft strip of Rodney's belly. He groaned at the sweet drag of skin against his cock and strained to kiss Rodney's mouth because he was going to come any second, and he couldn't even land the kiss because Jesus, he was going to *come right now*. He closed his eyes tight and came on Rodney's stomach, which, okay, wasn't exactly suave, but Rodney pulled him down and kissed him anyway. Rodney could still land a kiss, at least. Rodney was a damned good kisser, it turned out. Afterwards, they collected themselves as best they could, John shivering at the itchy-sticky feel of semen drying on his skin, mostly on Rodney's skin, Jesus. Rodney was reprogramming the door, reaching for

John's hand, pressing it to the keypad, adding his genetic key to the lock. Around them, the city was silvery and silent, and John stood in the hallway with Rodney's hand curled round his wrist and tried to keep breathing. This was the last real moment of calm. The SGC had to be planning to take him out; Elizabeth either had already been or would imminently be ordered to use force against him. He took a deep breath; he was ready, he had— Rodney let go of his hand and turned to him, his forehead creased with concern. "Let's go somewhere with a bed," he said. "I think you should lie down."

"I'm all right," John said absently, and then added: "Can I show you something?" and that was how they ended up camping on the floor beside his narrow mattress, pillows and blankets dragged down around them, with Rodney propped up against the bed and slowly scrolling through the file on John's laptop. John stretched out on the floor

with a blanket pulled around his shoulders, put his head on Rodney's thigh, and waited. "Hm," Rodney said, and then again, a moment later: "hm." "What?" John said, lifting his head a little, but Rodney barely spared him a glance, just absently shoved him back down again, hand lingering to stroke his hair. "Nothing," Rodney said vaguely. "Just—you can write. I don't know why I'm surprised." John wanted to glare at him, but Rodney's hand was still heavy on his head. It felt good, strong and solid. "So it's okay?" Rodney's voice was strangely hoarse. "Yes. Yes. It's—brilliant, actually," and John closed his eyes against the sudden, panicky pounding of his heart. "Though you could probably combine a couple of these shorter sentences, and—" "*Rodney*. Are we really going to *do* this?" Rodney stroked warmly through his hair. "Yes," he said, hand drifting down to touch his face. "We are. And also, I think we're about to secede from Earth."

9.

"I don't expect you to understand this. You can't love a city where you've never lived. But we are part of Atlantis now. Pegasus is in our blood. I don't expect you to understand that either: you would have to have walked through every gate with us. But I cannot leave these people, because they are my people now. " —John Sheppard, "Declaration of Galactic Sovereignty," 35 April 4 A.T.

10.

The Uprising was an event of strange bedfellows and unforeseeable developments. Weir, the consummate diplomat and peacemaker, found herself turned military advocate; Sheppard, the career soldier, turned deserter for the sake of civilians. But perhaps most surprisingly, Rodney McKay, the defiantly Canadian scientist, abandoned the legal, internationally-recognized governor of Atlantis in favor of her usurper, the rogue American military commander. He also abandoned

science, choosing instead to become the Richelieu—or perhaps, the Rasputin—to John Sheppard's lawless dictatorship. —Tina Eber, *The Atlantis Chronicles*, Vol 1., p. 97

Otherwise sensible historians continue to spill ink debating how Rodney McKay—a scientist, and a Canadian one at that!—could possibly have given control of Atlantis to an American military officer. I shall save these historians any further wear on their quills: Rodney McKay didn't think of John Sheppard as an American military officer. Sheppard was his friend, his team leader for four years, and, if later events are any indication, very likely his lover. To see McKay's decision as pro-military rather than as an expression of the depth of his feelings for Sheppard is to mistake the situation entirely. —Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 105 Paul Dugan's claim that McKay took Sheppard's side over Weir's because they were sleeping together is as offensive and wrongheaded as the argument that he is trying to counter: that McKay somehow betrayed his civilian principles in his support of Sheppard.

What this fails to take into account is that, in this particular contest, *it was John Sheppard who represented the civilian interest*. McKay's siding with Sheppard is therefore not an abandonment of his principles but a demonstration of them: McKay, no less than Sheppard, was ideologically committed to protecting the peoples of Pegasus. It was this that drew them together, not some imagined and unlikely sexual bond. —Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 24

The familiar statistic regarding gays and lesbians is one in ten. Applied to the original 200 members of the expedition, this would mean a gay and lesbian population of twenty. But Atlantis was by no means a typical social order, its members having been carefully screened by the SGC. Because of the high-risk nature of the Atlantis mission, preference was given to those with few or no family ties. Not one of the original 200 expedition members was married; not one had had children. 82 percent had lost at least one parent; 59 percent had lost both. The goal was to select relatively unattached people in case the entire expedition was lost or killed, but there

were unintended consequences. For one thing, the screening process produced a coterie of courageous, stubborn, self-motivated risk-takers who didn't belong anywhere in particular—or, in other words, a group of natural revolutionaries. But it also served as a filter for gays and lesbians, so we should not be surprised to discover that members of the Atlantis expedition swung heavily toward the top half of the Kinsey scale, with some estimates claiming that more than 65 percent of the population were bisexual or demonstrated clear homosexual tendencies. —April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 133

11.

According to Julia Kaye, the petite, dark-haired French beauty John Sheppard met and married in Boston, their brief marriage was frigid, her young husband cold and

distant. "I tried to reach out to him," she explained, "but I didn't know how. We couldn't

manage the simplest things. It would have been funny if it hadn't hurt so much." The couple moved twice during the first year of their marriage, first to New Hampshire and then to Nevada. Kaye found the life of an Air Force pilot's wife isolating, a situation that was only exacerbated by Sheppard's uncommunicative nature and tendency to spend long hours in the air. She began an affair with Captain Charles Bell after only ten months. "It just seemed easier to be with someone else. Anyone else." When Sheppard found out about Bell, he moved out of their small house immediately, transferring two weeks later to Geilenkirchen Air Base, Germany. He never saw her again, though it would be several years until their divorce was finalized. Sheppard pleaded no contest and didn't appear in court. Kaye married Bell in 1993. They have three children.

—Stanley Kairn, *Flyboy: The Biography of John Sheppard*, p. 67 "You know how they say, 'No man is an island?' Well, John Sheppard, he was an island. Completely detached, water on all sides of him. I never saw a guy who was happier to be working alone, in the middle of

Butt Fuck, Nowhere. Sheppard didn't seem to need people; give him a solitary job and he was happy as a clam. But then, you know, he had this other side to him, because he was loyal like a motherfucker; if something happened to you, it wouldn't be your best friend or your co-pilot who came after you, it would be John Fucking Sheppard. He got nailed for it twice, maybe even three times. So, you know, it's really hard to say about Sheppard. On the one hand, he didn't seem to feel anything. On the other hand, he clearly felt too fucking much." —Lt. Colonel Richard M. Porter, 19 July 2013 According to General Carl Wesker, the Air Force had long suspected Sheppard of homosexual proclivities, but hadn't been able to prove anything. As Wesker explained: "He fit the profile: unsuccessful marriage, low-key personality, a loner. But if he was doing anything, he was discreet about it. It would have been an easy way to get rid of him, but there was never any evidence; Sheppard got himself into plenty of trouble, but never about that. People we asked—his friends, commanding officers—seemed to think he was more asexual than

anything else. So if he had those tendencies, he had them pretty well buckled up." It is worth noting that in the years since the Uprising made John Sheppard's name famous, no one has come forward to claim any prior association with him, sexual or otherwise. This may be due to the highly secretive nature of military culture, or it may be an indication of exactly how solitary a personality John Sheppard was.

—Mark Leredo, *The Atlantis Uprising*, p. 78

12.

If John Sheppard struck some as sexless, Rodney McKay could seem almost comically oversexed. "My brother crushed hard on people," Jeanne Miller admitted. "Not many, and not often, but *hard*." McKay frequently claimed to have a penchant for blondes, but his history reflects no such preference. In fact, his taste was spectacularly catholic: if he had any strong predilection, it was for brains. "Rodney had a *thing* for smart people," said Mark Brutto, his lab partner at CalTech. "If he didn't think you

were smart, he wasn't interested in you. But he could get a real hard-on for a high I.Q." This conflation of erotic and intellectual attraction can probably be traced to Dr. Richard Faraday, McKay's legal guardian and first advisor at CalTech. According to historian Lisa Ellis: "It was widely known that Richard Faraday had affairs with his male students. This was an accepted part of campus life, and no one claimed that these relationships were anything but consensual; there were no reports made against Faraday, no claims of rape or harassment. But still, you can imagine the reaction when Faraday went to the International Physics Seminar in Boston and came back to California with a fifteen-year-old physics prodigy named Rodney McKay." The Administration immediately launched an investigation. But the situation was legitimate: McKay really was a genius, and Faraday really had scored a coup by recruiting him. There was no way to protest Faraday's guardianship without referring to rumors and innuendo, so if some suspected that the forty-three-year-old Faraday had more than a strictly scientific interest in the fifteen-

year-old McKay, nobody dared say so. "I can't imagine that Richard wasn't having sex with him," said an unnamed source close to Faraday. "Faraday had done a minor in classics, and he had all these highbrow ideas about the ancient Greek educational-erotic relationship. McKay was his dream-student: young, brilliant, also very beautiful back then, all blond hair and cheekbones and huge eyes. I don't see how Richard could have resisted him." But as Dr. Marcia Faraday-Wilson, Faraday's sister, explains: "They say Richard took Rodney to Oxford with him, took him to CERN, took him everywhere; well, of course he did. He also brought Rodney up to the house in Vermont for Christmas. He was Rodney's legal guardian for almost three years; what was he supposed to do, leave him on his own? All these people are trying to insinuate something, but it was all perfectly respectable." But according to one of Faraday's associates, "Marcia's being naive. Faraday definitely kissed and touched McKay inappropriately."

Whatever the relationship, McKay seemed to suffer no ill effects. "McKay did some of his best work for Faraday," said Dr. Jeffrey Keene, another of Faraday's former colleagues in the physics department. "Faraday gets credit for doing the theoretical groundwork underlying the development of the dark energy map at Princeton, but that was pure McKay." "I never heard Rodney say a negative word about Faraday," Mark Brutto confirms. "I mean, I'd heard the rumors, I tried to ask him about it. He just said that Faraday was a genius." McKay parted amicably from Faraday when he won his first NSF grant, which took him to Princeton for a year. But while the eighteen-year-old was scientifically advanced, he faced serious social difficulties. He was a good ten years younger than his peers, and it didn't help that the arrogant McKay wouldn't even admit them as peers. The youthful good looks that had attracted Faraday were a disadvantage at Princeton, where they made him seem a kid. "Women in particular dismissed him," remembers Cheng-Ji Li, McKay's lab partner during this time. "And of course he wasn't

interested in women his own age; he thought they were stupid." While at Princeton, McKay became enamored of a young math Ph.D. named Lisa Fletcher, whom he pursued with the single-minded intensity he later brought to bear on Christopher Ethan, James Hansel, Anna Verbeck, Rachel Levy, and Samantha Carter. But Fletcher was just the first of many failed courtships. McKay's feelings were rarely returned, and what relationships he managed to forge were brief and ended badly. "At one point, Rodney convinced himself that he was going to marry Anna [Verbeck]," Cheng-Ji Li explained. "They had this affair, you see, during a summer we spent at the Geophysics Division of the University of Iceland. It was 'Anna this' and 'Anna that' and how they were going to elope to St. Tropez and win his and hers Nobel prizes and have 2.5 brilliant children. Rodney was really almost delusional about it, but then again, I don't think he'd had regular sex for a long time. And then when we got back to the States Anna immediately went back to her old boyfriend. He was—well, heartbroken doesn't even begin to cover it. It really changed him. I

don't think he really ever recovered, actually." As McKay got older, as his hairline receded and he settled more comfortably into his frame, he became more hesitant in his sexual pursuits. Still, he continued to have a weakness for brains, and his early attachment to John Sheppard could be taken as a strong indication, had anyone been looking for one, that the understated Air Force major was a man of considerable depth. We cannot conclusively determine that the deep intensity of Sheppard and McKay's relationship indicates a sexual affair, but certainly when we look at Rodney McKay's past history it seems inevitable. — Denise Chapman, *Several Kinds of Genius: The Life of Rodney McKay*, p. 78-81.

13.

"They were together; everyone knew it. From the first week, they were inseparable, always with their heads together, sniggering. It was obvious, and a little disgusting." —Dr. William Kavanagh, 15 August 2013 "I've been asked that a lot: if they were lovers. I suppose it's

possible that they were, though I never came to that conclusion. I mean, yes, they were close, but we were all close; you have no idea what it was like to live under siege in Atlantis. We all shared a kind of bunker mentality." —Dr.

Elizabeth Weir, 26 November 2010 "You'd be surprised to learn how many people made passes at Colonel Sheppard when we were off-world: tribal chiefs, alien princesses, killer robots, you name it. The colonel said he never saw it coming. Now, I don't know whether he ever got into a thing with Rodney McKay or not, but I'll tell you this much: you'd have to be blind not to see Dr. McKay coming. Rodney McKay was a fire engine with full siren and flashing red lights." —Sgt. Theodore Harrison, 8 May 2011

"I think it's absolutely possible that John Sheppard got involved with Rodney McKay because, you know, John slept with him. I don't mean that he—I mean, I'm pretty sure they weren't *sleeping together* back then, but they did often sleep together, like on away missions and stuff like that. Our teams often doubled up on big assignments, so I got a sense of their SOP in the field. John slept next to Rodney,

which only made sense: Rodney was an asset, and he was the most vulnerable member of their team. They all tended to organize themselves around Rodney actually, taking up defensive positions with him at the center. So that wasn't strange. Here's what was strange: John really *slept* with Rodney. Really slept and just, John didn't sleep, John was always—you know, right on the edge, one eye open, protecting his people, but with Rodney, you know, he went out like a light. And it would happen back on Atlantis, too; you'd go to see Rodney about something, and there would be John, sacked out on a cot at the back of the lab, and Rodney ignoring him, working and typing and, just—it was weird. And I remember thinking, 'okay, he must feel safe here', which wasn't—well, maybe it did make sense, because Rodney was the only other senior staff member on John's level, so that when the shit hit the fan, it was either John's problem or Rodney's problem or both. So maybe John thought that if he slept near Rodney, he'd know if something was wrong. The thing is, we none of us slept enough. There was always

something going on, and then when you could sleep you still couldn't sleep because you were high on coffee or adrenaline or uppers or something. So, I mean, to see John sleep like that... I mean, it meant something. I don't know what but it meant something."

—Lieutenant Colonel Evan Lorne, 12 February 2011

14.

At 0800 hours on 35 April 4 A.T. (May 16, 2008 A.D.) the document later known as the "Declaration of Galactic Sovereignty" was sent by email to the SGC and everyone in the Atlantis expedition. Within minutes, the city was alive with gossip about the impending confrontation between Sheppard and Weir. People were thronging the halls, standing in worried clusters, whispering and watching to see what would happen. When Sheppard walked into the gateroom, he was flanked by his team, several key scientists, and a number of Marines. By the time they climbed the

staircase, Weir was waiting for them outside her office door. Weir asked him if he understood he was going against a direct order. Sheppard replied that yes, he understood that. Weir said that, in that case, she had no choice but to remove him from command by force, at which point she radioed for Sheppard's second-in-command, Major Evan Lorne, to report to the gateroom. — Alfred Walson, *Atlantis: Year One*, p. 96 Evan Lorne is one of the unsung heroes of the Uprising; were it not for his level-headedness on the morning of 35 April, there likely would have been bloodshed. Lorne arrived at Weir's office with a complement of armed Marines; Sheppard, Emmagan, Dex, McKay, and the military personnel accompanying them were all carrying sidearms. Sheppard and his people were obviously under a lot of strain, as were the Marines, who had suspected that they would eventually be forced to choose between their allegiance to Sheppard and their allegiance to Earth. But Lorne cut through this dilemma by taking a middle-way position of respectful disagreement: he would not join Sheppard's uprising, but he also

refused to take up arms against his commanding officer. By setting this example, Lorne gave Sheppard-loyal soldiers a graceful exit strategy, and a day that could have ended in violence ended instead with the peaceful detention and orderly evacuation of those allied with the SGC or reluctant to live out their lives in Pegasus. — April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 141

Evan Lorne is as much of a traitor as John Sheppard; by failing to stop Sheppard on the morning of 35 April 4 A.T. (May 16, 2008 A.D.) Lorne practically delivered Atlantis into his hands. Lorne was also personally responsible for the overthrow of the legally appointed governor of Atlantis, Elizabeth Weir, who was led away from her office in chains. In her account of the event, April Martin describes the "peaceful detention" and "orderly evacuation" of personnel, by which I can only assume she means the rounding up and arrest of all Earth-loyalists, who were barely allowed to pack their bags before being placed under armed guard and summarily deported through the Stargate.

Based upon on the testimony of the Atlantis deportees, the SGC immediately arrested Lorne upon his return to Earth and kept him in custody during the investigation into his actions.

Incredibly, despite months of depositions and an eventual hearing before a closed session of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, Evan Lorne was never formally court-martialed. He was allowed to return to duty as of January 1, 2009. —Thomas Lesso, *The Lost City: Atlantis*, p. 57

15.

"They're gonna fuck you over for this," John said, leaning against the door frame. "You know that, don't you?" Lorne was bent over, and shoving stuff into a heavy canvas bag. "Yeah," he said, smiling tiredly. "Probably." "No probably about it," John insisted. "Those guys, you know what those guys are like—" "Yeah, I do," Lorne said, with deep patience. "The thing is, sir, I *am* one of those guys." John was already shaking his head. "No way. You are *not*—" "No, I am," Lorne said, straightening up.

"And forgive me for saying so, sir, but you're not going to be on anyone's Christmas list this year, either." "No, I know," John said wearily, and rubbed at his forehead with the back of his hand. "This isn't over, not by a long shot." Lorne sighed, shook his head, and heaved his bag up over his shoulder. "I sure hope you've got a plan, sir." "Oh, yeah. Sure I do." John's mouth twisted into a grin. "One of my extra-special patented plans." He laughed and then said, with a shrug: "McKay'll think of something." "Yes, sir. I hope so, " Lorne said, and then he extended his hand.

They stepped out into the hallway, where Cadman took charge of Lorne and walked him down toward the makeshift holding cell they'd set up just off the gateroom.

Cadman had her gun in her hand but that was just a gesture; really, she looked like she was trying not to cry. John steeled himself and turned away. He ran into Rodney on the way to Elizabeth's quarters; Rodney was standing in the middle of the hallway, staring down at his

tablet. "It's about 65 percent," he said to John, before John could even say anything, hello or anything. "A little more, actually, more like 67 percent, which is incredible; I mean, much, much, much better than I would have expected. Still, we're talking 33 percent attrition, call it 70 people, which, I mean—do you think we can handle it? I think we can handle it." "We can handle it," John said firmly, not that there was any other choice; he wasn't going to keep people here against their will. "Right. Okay, then," Rodney said decisively, but then his face contorted and his voice faltered: "Still, you know, we're losing a lot of nurses, and some of the soft scientists. Parrish is going; so is Feltham and Heightmeyer and Katie Brown—" "We can handle it," John said tightly, crossing his arms; shrinks and botanists and Katie Brown; he personally didn't see the loss. "We've got a lot of Marines, most of the hard scientists, a couple of medical doctors; hell, I'd take my chances with Nurse Ko and a bottle of aspirin—" "Yes, right, absolutely," Rodney said hurriedly. "She's very plucky," and then Rodney's radio beeped and he said, "No. No,

stay there and don't let him touch anything. I'm on my way," and took off at a near-run without saying anything else. Stackhouse had drawn the task of guarding Elizabeth. He was standing outside her door, his eyes fixed distantly on a point beyond Sheppard's shoulder, his face carefully blank. He seemed grateful when John relieved him of his post and told him to go help Cadman and Jefferson round up the emigres, except that wasn't the right word, was it. Expatriates. No. *Repatriates*. He opened the door. Elizabeth was sitting on the edge of her bed. Her hands were clenched in her lap, her mouth drawn tight, and he felt the sudden panic of things slipping through his fingers. "Hi," he said, in the quietest, most gentle voice he could manage. "Can I..." She spoke without looking at him. "I don't know how you can do this," she said, and there was something warm and thrumming and barely contained in her voice. "We could have had Atlantis. We could have had *Atlantis* and gone *home* if only you'd—"

"It's not," he blurted, the word huge in his mind. *Home*. "It's not home, not anymore—" Her eyes

stopped him dead. "Oh, yes, right," she said, "I forgot to take your adolescent angst into account. You couldn't make friends in your own galaxy and so now you have to start a war over it," and Jesus, it felt like his insides were tumbling out onto the silvery blue-gray floor. "You know, it's funny," she continued with a shake of her brown hair, "but I've studied a hell of a lot of political history in my time: rebellions, revolutions, coups, uprisings, secessions. But this is the first time I've seen one from inside. Tell me, do you think they were all as petty as this? Do you think the whole history of the world has just been the story of one poor, unloved little boy after another?" He wasn't sure what Elizabeth saw on his face, but suddenly she was on her feet, her expression crumpling. "John," she said, and that warm and thrumming thing was back, "*John*. I didn't mean it," and his eyes were stinging, and yeah, that was great: way to show Elizabeth how essentially *weak* he was. But then her arms were around him and he held her so tight he lifted her right off the floor. "I'm sorry," she whispered, and he felt her thin arms flex and try to squeeze his shoulders.

"No, *I* am," he said, and then, as he braced himself to let go of her: "You could stay." She laughed then, a small, brittle sound. "No, John, I don't think I can. Not after this." She pulled away and wiped tears away with her fingertips. "I think I'm doomed to enter the history books as the 'weak-willed civilian who lost Atlantis.'" She cocked her head and showed him a tight smile. "I wonder how history will see *you*." "I don't care," John said shortly. "I can't think about—" but then his radio buzzed, and he raised his hand to it and heard Rodney's voice, normal and reassuring. "Hey, I think we're ready over here," he said. "Everyone's been searched, nobody's got anything that isn't theirs, but if we wait much longer, we're going to have to start bringing in sandwiches and scheduling bathroom breaks—" "We'll be right there," John said, and bent to pick up Elizabeth's two bags.

The mood in the gateroom was almost festive, despite the armed guards. Most of those going were late arrivals, replacements, reinforcements: people who had never really

signed on for Atlantis, not like John had. John had flipped and flipped and flipped a coin and then signed his will and given everything away; everything; taken

his life apart until he'd erased himself completely. These folks had been on an exotic tour of duty. Now the rules had changed, and they wanted to go home. There were a few narrow-eyed Marines and a few angry scientists on the periphery, defiantly clutching their luggage. John could feel their eyes following him as he escorted Elizabeth onto the gateroom floor, almost hear their biting, whispered thoughts: *Traitor. Deserter.* It was something he was used to after three disciplinary hearings. If someone wanted to kill him, he was probably doing something right. Rodney was noisily haranguing one of the departing scientists to contact someone about something, or to go to some restaurant where they knew him; John couldn't make out the details, but he knew that yelling was Rodney's way of caring. Teyla was smiling sadly and touching foreheads with one of the lady doctors; John had the idea that they

went to the gym together. Ronon materialized behind him, one hand on his gun; he was watching the narrow-eyed Marines who wanted to kill him with a mean smile that said, "Try it." John said to him, in a low voice, "We're gonna need more men." Ronon never took his eyes off the Marines. "I can get you men," he said flatly. "So can Teyla. Galaxy's full of soldiers," and then, cutting off John's question: "You never asked." John opened his mouth to argue, but Rodney was striding up to them, looking like he'd worked himself up to a fine fit of indignation and was maybe about to cry. "Can we get on with this?" Rodney demanded angrily, eyes suspiciously wet. "Or do we have to spend all day at this cocktail party of the damned? In which case I think we should bring out the canapes and the—" "Let's get on with it." John turned to Elizabeth. "Do you want to give the order?" She looked at him strangely. "No," she said. "Okay," John said, and then, raising his voice, "Dial the gate!" The room hushed to stillness, save for the soft metallic clangs of each chevron locking into place. Finally, the silence was broken by the kawoosh

of the wormhole and the soft click of the radio: "*Hello, Atlantis. This is Sergeant Allard of Stargate Command.*" John gestured toward Elizabeth's radio and mouthed, "Go on." But Elizabeth just stared at him, her eyes wide and green in her freckled face. "*Elizabeth,*" John said in a low, desperate voice; fuck, everyone was watching, "please don't make me—" She arched an eyebrow and tilted her mouth, and understanding slammed into him.

Rodney got it a second later and said, in a panicked whisper, "No, wait, don't; you can—" but no, no, Elizabeth was right. He pulled his sidearm, ignoring the muted gasps around the room, and aimed it at her. She nodded slowly, with what looked like grim satisfaction, and then raised her hand to her radio, staring down the barrel of his gun. "Stargate Command, this is Doctor Elizabeth Weir of the Atlantis expedition," she said, and Jesus, anyone who thought Elizabeth was weak-willed didn't know her. "This is an unscheduled activation; we need to evacuate immediately," and John snatched the radio from her ear before he even

heard the tinny reply: *"All right, Dr. Weir; go ahead."* "Go," John said in a tight voice, waving her on with his gun. "Go on, get out of here..." "If you say so, John," Elizabeth replied, and that was the truth. He was the man with the gun. He had always been the man with the gun, and she was making sure everyone saw it, cocked and loaded between them. Then she turned and walked through the event horizon. The others followed, walking three and four abreast, plop plop plop. Lorne was among the last to go, and he stopped in front of the gate, turned toward John, and saluted sharply before walking through. A moment later, the wormhole closed, and they were gone. "Raise the shield," John said, staring after them. He felt a hand on his arm; Teyla was nudging him to lower his weapon. He let the gun drop and holstered it. "You should say something," Teyla murmured, and that was when John turned and saw all the people standing and staring at him. His eyes moved over their pale, earnest faces: Biro and Stevenson and Porter and Tolen and Stackhouse and Filbey and Cadman and Ko. Palmer and Nelson and Jefferson and Zelenka.

Wick and Yamoto and Simpson and Lock: this was everyone, now; this was all of Atlantis. 67 percent, 124 people, and while some of them were newcomers, most were from the original 200, who had stepped through the wormhole not knowing when or if they would ever return. John cleared his throat and said, "Um. Thanks for staying," and then, willing his voice to be stronger: "I'm not...I can't pretend I'm a great leader. But I love this place, and I would give my life for it, and I know that any place you love like that is home. I think we're home, now," and he was a little freaked out when the cheering started.

Volume Two

1.

In the first six months after the Uprising, John Sheppard demonstrated remarkable leadership, transforming Atlantis from a city of — *"Wheat!"* Rodney yelled. *"What the fuck do I know about—"* *"Seriously, shut up!"* *"I'm going to kill both of you in a moment,"* Ronon said flatly. — empty corridors and abandoned rooms into the beginnings of a vibrant market town. This accomplishment is all the more remarkable for being so surprising: no one, not even Sheppard's closest supporters, had ever ascribed to him a talent for— *"Sorry, I'm late,"* Teyla said breathlessly, slipping into a chair. *"I was training the new—"* *"It's all right, Teyla. Don't—"* *"You didn't miss anything. It's not like, 'No one will be admitted during this fascinating discussion about wheat'—"* —statecraft. But in a mere six months, Sheppard managed to put into place the key structural elements of a working economy, making Atlantis the vital

center of Pegasus by turning it into a hub for interplanetary trade. "No, look, really: do I have to be at this meeting?" "We're moving past the wheat, Rodney, okay? We need wheat, we'll go get some." "Great. Seconded. Can we move on to talking about—?" "Okay, but that's stupid," Ronon said. John held up his hand. "Hang on. You were the one who—" "Going to get it is stupid," Ronon said. "We should have them bring it to us." This was a visionary, and somewhat counterintuitive, move for Sheppard, considering that the expedition's primary goal had been to isolate the city, to keep it invisible and closed off from the rest of Pegasus and its various threats. Even on offworld missions—"All right. If that makes you happy, then sure," John said.

"You don't get it," Ronon said. "You've got to stop dicking around with trade. We're getting a bag of wheat here, a bolt of cloth there—"

Rodney sat back, arms crossed. "Yes, fine, so? What's the alternative?" "Well, you see, McKay, there's this really cool thing called a store." —

Sheppard's team had identified themselves only reluctantly as inhabitants of Atlantis, fearful of bringing unwanted attention to the city and its—
"Now look, Ronon," John said, "bonus points for sarcasm, but—" "Wait, shut up—store?"
Rodney asked, looking interested. —vulnerable inhabitants. Ironically, it was only after the expedition had secured enough ZPMs to power the city's shields that they developed the moral courage to throw open their doors. Sheppard opened Atlantis— *"Ronon is right," Teyla interrupted. "We should invite our trading partners to bring their goods to Atlantis. We have ample space, and if we establish a marketplace, our friends will be able to trade not only with us, but with each other. Everyone will benefit." "I—do you seriously want to turn Atlantis into Grand Central Station?" John asked. Teyla looked delighted. "That is exactly what we need. A grand central station!"* —to the many diverse peoples of Pegasus, making it, for the first time, a genuine economic and cultural center. Atlantis became recognized as the seat of interplanetary government, and Sheppard came to be revered as a ruler of

near-unlimited power. —Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p. 149

2.

John looked worriedly across the meeting table. "Rodney? What do you think?" Rodney was nervously gnawing on a thumbnail. "I don't know!" he shot back. "Ask the Minister of Culture over there," he added, and flicked a hand at Ronon. John turned back to Ronon. "How will we know who we're letting in?" he demanded. "How do we know we can trust them?" Ronon shrugged, implacable. "Start with people we know. Get them to vouch for people we don't."

"Our new soldiers were selected in precisely this way," Teyla pointed out. "They were the sons and daughters of good families, or recommended to us by trusted village elders." "Build up slow, and set up consequences for bad judgment," Ronon said. "Hold people responsible for who they bring in. If someone screws up, everybody goes." John looked at

Rodney again. Rodney's face looked tense and distant, the way it always did when he was working through a complex problem. "It's a workable idea," Rodney said slowly. "Kind of a reverse pyramid scheme: he tells two friends, and she tells two friends," *and so on, and so on*. "I could design something that would monitor connections within the network: to record who recommended who, who's associated with who. That way we vet people once, put them into the system, and track them from there. It would be like granting a visa, or giving out a green card—come to think of it, we should probably build in some kind of credit system: one Atlantis credit equals 2 Mars Bars or something. Actually, we could just make the Mars Bar our unit of currency; it would make more sense than most first-world economic systems." "Yeah, I like it," John said, sitting back. Rodney jerked a sharp look at him. "You mean, I actually get to name something?" "Just this one thing." "Oh, well, fine. So an electronic identity card that serves as a provisional IDC, situates its owner within a trust network, and can be used to effect trades in units of Mars

Bars?" "Exactly," John said. "It beats the fuck out of Amex."

3.

The deciding factor was Rodney's reminder that Atlantis was already divided into zones, "so we could make a commercial district," he suggested, bringing up a three-dimensional map, "around the market, and lock it down if we had to. I mean, nobody needs to be given unrestricted access to the city except—well, you, and Teyla, and the Minister of Culture over there. I mean, we can take this as an opportunity to reorganize the city in a way that makes sense," and then they were marking out a commercial area and a military area and a medical area, and Rodney made a blissed-out sound and said, "Oh, yes, we can get *larger quarters*," and that was how John ended up, almost three hours later, standing on the balcony of a high-up apartment and staring out at the sea.

He had figured Rodney for the picky one, but Rodney just wanted more space. It was John who found himself not liking the way an interior wall curved, or how the windows faced north, or that a building was blocking his view. He liked these rooms, though: large and spacious with windows on both sides, giving out on the city and the sea. He went back inside and found Rodney, who was leaning against the Ancient version of a kitchen counter and squinting at some foreign appliance. "I like this one," John said, and Rodney glanced up absently and said: "Okay," before turning his attention back to the machine; Rodney had actually been fine with the last three places they'd been. "What is that anyway?" John asked. Rodney shook his head. "No idea. It's probably a blender. I keep hoping we'll find one of those *Star Trek* machines that make any food you want," he sighed, straightening up, "because without regular supply runs—" John pushed Rodney against the counter. "Fuck me," he said. Rodney barked out a laugh and shoved back. "And people say *I'm* pushy." "You *are* pushy," John said. "And we just picked a place, so let's

christen it." Rodney's hands slid up over John's black shirt and made loose fists in the fabric; he was obviously warming to the idea. "You could fuck me once in a while, you know. You're not the only one who likes it." Rodney's fists were tightening, tugging John closer, though he didn't seem to know it. "We're going to have to come up with a schedule or something. What did you do in the past: just trade off, or—" Something about the way Rodney was touching him provoked John to honesty. "There wasn't," he said. "Before you. Not—exactly," he added quickly, as Rodney's face went somewhere between appalled and horrified. "You know, just that—" Just that nobody had ever fucked him before Rodney had, that first night they broke contact with Earth.

4.

It had been his idea; he had gone looking for Rodney and had found him in one of the too-too-silent halls. "Can we—?" he said in a low voice, fingers knotting in Rodney's sleeve. He had tried to put the rest of it on his face, unable

to say more. "I want—" Rodney had understood, though he seemed a little taken by surprise. "Yes. Yes, of course."

He didn't tell Rodney he'd never been fucked, because he didn't want Rodney to stop. He wasn't sure what Rodney would make of his limited experience: a handful of women, a handful of men. If he'd managed to make it work with Julia, that probably would have been the end of it: two teenaged girlfriends and a wife. But it hadn't worked with Julia, and for years he'd been too stupid to figure out why. Even then, he couldn't get what he wanted: his few encounters with men had been stolen from under the eyes of base commanders and bartenders and patrolling police officers. With women, he'd had all the time in the world to feel absolutely nothing; with men, he'd barely had time to spurt into a mouth or a hand before being shoved away, desperate, angry, still starving. So he had been completely taken aback by Rodney's luxuriousness, the firm, casually-entitled way he'd pushed him down and taken his time. The weight and slow heat

as he'd sprawled across John's body, tilted his head, taken his mouth. John had been breathless and boneless by the time Rodney slid down to suck him, and Jesus, Rodney's version of a blowjob was damn close to cock-worship. He had drifted in a haze of pleasure, like Rodney was sucking all the terror and tension out of him. Rodney's mouth had been slick and warm, the brush of his hair soft against his fingertips. And then Rodney had slurped off, stopping only to suck at the head of his dick, and John had opened his eyes and seen that Rodney was sweating and shaky and wild-eyed. "Turn over," Rodney had said, fingers tight on John's hipbones. John had rolled over, had let Rodney shove him into position, and pull his asscheeks apart and—Jesus!—bend to lick and kiss him there, and it was all he could do to scrabble for a grip in Rodney's rumpled sheets and hold himself up on all fours. He had been too weak to lift his head, but he hadn't been able to stop himself from pushing back against Rodney's mouth, Rodney's twisting tongue. Rodney had groaned for a long moment, then pulled away and put

his fingers in—fuck, almost too much, almost. "God, you're tight," Rodney had breathed, but it didn't seem to be a complaint, and he had felt Rodney's lips kiss the small of his back, Rodney's strong fingers working inside him, pushing, stretching. *Break me open!* he had thought almost hysterically. *Crack me open, I need*—and then Rodney's fingers were slipping out of him, smoothing over and grabbing his hip, holding him hard, holding him steady. He began to shake as the slick, hard length of Rodney's cock slowly pushed into him, and he was glad that he and Rodney had never acted on their weird sexual tension before he made the decision to renounce Earth for Pegasus, because honestly, he could have gone to war for this.

5.

"Okay, it's ridiculously, impossibly hot that you saved your ass virginity for me," Rodney said, his face going strange as he tried to control it, "and I appreciate it, really, don't get me wrong,

but you should have told me, because I sometimes

get *excited* when I'm having sex and I could have done something *stupid*, been too rough with you or hurt you or maybe gone too fast and—" "You didn't," John interrupted quickly, because Rodney would be onto anal bleeding in a moment and then John was pretty sure he wouldn't want to have sex anymore; like, ever again. "You were great. It was *perfect*," he said and Rodney puffed up like a proud bird. "Yes, well," he said modestly. "People have said." John nudged his dick against Rodney's hip, driving him back against the counter. "There's a pretty big bed in there. I'll do you, if you want." He slid two fingers into the waistband of Rodney's pants and prepared to override any objections, but Rodney just cleared his throat and said, "Yes. Please. I want that," and blushed furiously from neck to temple. The bedroom was all space and sky: so much larger than John's narrow barrack, with a far wall made all of windows. On the other side of the room was a vast bed, rectangular in the Ancient

style, wider across than it was deep. Rodney didn't hesitate: just kicked his shoes off, shoved his pants and underwear down into a crumpled heap. He crawled onto the bed, naked from the waist down, his shirt stretched across his broad shoulders. John unzipped his pants, and paused, torn: he was pretty sure that getting on all fours was the universal sign for "fuck me now," but it seemed wrong somehow, too fast. He climbed onto the bed beside Rodney and gave him a shove, knocking him off balance. Rodney lay there in a tangle of limbs and blinked up at him. "What?" "Nothing," John said, and stretched out over him, turning his face and taking his mouth. Rodney moaned and opened up to him instantly, and they kissed for long minutes. John wormed his hand up Rodney's shirt to stroke over his chest, smooth except for a small patch of soft hair, just over the breastbone. John kept expecting Rodney to get all pushy and take over, but Rodney just hooked an arm around John's neck and made out with him. It was nice, and maybe a little strange, to have this kind of easy access to Rodney's body: his strong arms, the warm

fleshy softness of his middle, his thighs, his cock. Rodney's body was reassuring—hell, just feeling *desire* was reassuring—and he pushed his face into the warm and spicy skin of Rodney's neck.

When Rodney finally did get pushy, it was only to mutter, "There's some lubricant in my left pants pocket," and "or spit; spit works, too," but John had brought a small tube of the stuff, which he flicked open and squeezed onto his fingertips. Rodney immediately pulled his leg up and closed his eyes when John pushed fingers into him. "Don't worry too much about stretching me," Rodney said breathlessly, "not that I'm saying rush it," he added, "please don't rush it, just that—" and John slowly

crooked his fingers and watched as Rodney's long eyelashes fluttered and his mouth went slack. John just stared at Rodney's flushed, fair skin, the way his chest heaved as he panted for breath. It was weird seeing Rodney enjoy his body instead of treating it as a problem, or an embarrassment: an unreliable machine.

Rodney sold himself as a brain, but he was also kind of emotional and self-indulgent and pleasure-seeking, as anyone knew who'd ever seen him eat a donut. John twisted his fingers again and saw the stab of ecstasy cross Rodney's face. Abruptly, John pulled his fingers out. Rodney's eyes opened. John grabbed the hem of Rodney's shirt and tugged upward, and Rodney obligingly squirmed and lifted his arms so that John could yank it up over his head. Rodney made to turn over the moment his head had popped through the neck, but John said, "No, wait," and grabbed him to still him. He slid his hands over Rodney's chest to his shoulders and pressed them back to the bed. "Like this," he said, and got on top of him, and Rodney's breath seemed to catch. Rodney began to shake before John was even fully inside him, and John gasped and began to speed up, because Jesus, the sounds Rodney was making, not to mention that he'd never been anywhere so slick and tight. Rodney was losing it, jerky and out of control, and John strained forward, arms still curled around Rodney's legs, to kiss him, because he had the sudden,

irrational feeling that Rodney wasn't there with him, that Rodney was lost in some other when with some other who. But Rodney immediately pulled his mouth down and kissed him and said, "John," and then he was convulsing around John's cock and John was coming inside of him. "God," Rodney breathed, oofing as John fell on top of him. "God." He cupped the back of John's neck. "I missed that so much," he said, and softly kissed the shell of John's ear. John bit his lip and tried to hold the question back, because really, yeah, not such a great post-sex question, but it was eating at him. "Have you been fucked a lot?" Rodney didn't seem to mind the question, or maybe he wasn't really paying attention. "Some," he replied offhandedly. "Back in the day. Believe it or not," he said a moment later, sounding wistful, "I used to be almost pretty. I mean, not *you*-level pretty," he snorted, wrapping his arms around John, "but you know: not bad," and maybe it was mean, but he was glad that Rodney wasn't so pretty anymore. "The real question," Rodney continued, "is how someone as pretty as you got this far without getting fucked." John sighed

and closed his eyes, burrowing into the warmth. "No space. No freedom." "Hm," Rodney said, thinking that over. "Well. We have both of those, now."

6. John couldn't make himself work in Elizabeth's office, even though it was huge and central and had a great view of the gate. Instead, he snatched her laptop from her otherwise bare desk and decamped to the secondary command center in the Northwest Tower, where he set himself up in an office that had its own private puddlejumper and landing bay. Slowly, his chin propped on one hand, he went through all of Elizabeth's files and procedures. He ignored most of the SGC forms and bureaucracy—call it a guess, but John figured they were all pretty fucking *fired*—but there were supply issues to think about. They now had a limited supply of antibiotics. They had only a six-month supply of MREs. He massaged his temples. Their P90s would be useless once the ammo ran out. He brought these problems to the next senior staff meeting. Ronon went to scavenge bandages and drugs

from Sateda. Teyla began rationing ammo and hoarding blaster weapons. Rodney freaked out and stole half the remaining MREs. "No, but seriously," Rodney said, desperately clutching his armful of foil packets, "it's not like I have time to cook! Not with the hours I keep!" and John rolled his eyes and stole them back.

7.

Teyla was standing in the doorway of his office when he looked up. "Do you have a few minutes?" she asked. "There is something I would like to show you," and John saw that she was suppressing a smile of almost Rodney-scale smugness. "I think you will like what you see," and so John followed her into the transporter, along a maze of empty corridors, and through a narrow door. They stepped out onto an upper balcony that overlooked a great, open square. Below, on the floor, were groups of gi-wearing soldiers engaged in hand-to-hand combat. John felt his mouth twitch with pleasure and leaned forward to watch, bracing his forearms lazily on the railing. It was an amazing

display of combatives: holds and throws, side kicks and knife jabs, blurring hands and twirling sticks. John recognized some of the people—his own Marines, a few vaguely familiar-looking faces from the Athosian village—but most of the people were new to him: a woman with a glossy black ponytail, spinning like a dervish; two tall men fighting furiously, hands and legs flying; a couple of guys with short dreads, dark twists of hair, circling gracefully with knives. John watched them, mesmerized, and when Teyla slid beside him, he shifted his weight and leaned into her, silently grateful. She leaned back, and he felt her warm, strong weight from shoulder to hip.

"Tomorrow," Teyla murmured, "we will be at the firing range. You are welcome to come and observe a display of our marksmanship," and John laughed and said, "Oh, hell, yes." Ronon turned up at the firing range, too, and stood with John behind the glass in protective earphones while Teyla's army blasted the shit out of everything that moved. "Look at that," John said, feeling almost emotional as the Ancient

targets dissolved into fragments and shrapnel. "I mean, would you *look* at that? Isn't that *beautiful*?" "Yeah," Ronon admitted. "It's pretty beautiful," and then he turned serious and said, "You need to meet them. They want to know you. You're like a legend to them," and John rolled his eyes and said, "Yeah, well, I've been kind of—" and Ronon put a hand on his arm. John looked down at it for a moment, then looked up at him. "You need to know them," Ronon said seriously. "They're your army now." "Okay," John said. "And there should be a ceremony," Ronon insisted. "Ceremonies are important." John took a deep breath. "Okay, Ronon, " he said. "Okay."

8.

The market space they'd marked out was impressive: a huge outdoor area on the flat of the northeastern pier, flanked on two sides by long, low buildings for warehousing merchandise. Teyla and two of the new Lantean Guards were testing security measures while another group of Guards built stalls out of

timber brought from the mainland. Some other Guards were setting up transporters at key intervals to facilitate the import and export of goods. Everybody seemed to be working together seamlessly, Milky Way emigres and new Pegasus recruits, and there was a lot of shouting and laughter. John drifted around the periphery of the square, trying to imagine it full of traders and goods from all the worlds they'd visited. For the first time, he thought he could picture it: it would be like the markets in Afghanistan, with street stalls and bright, multi-colored awnings. Except these awnings would be purely aesthetic: the force-field, thickened over the stands, was already casting patches of shade up and down the narrow grid of streets.

He touched his hand to his radio and said, "Rodney, you ought to come down here. It's pretty cool, what they're building," and Rodney said, distractedly, "Busy now," before adding, "I saw the blueprints. Call me back when there's pizza," and disconnecting.

Teyla smiled hesitantly as she approached, and John shook his head and grinned back. "Nothing," he said. "Rodney. Never mind; what's up?" "I think that we have devised an adequate security plan for this district," Teyla said. "We have several routes for importing goods to Atlantis, all of which can be defended. Traders who come on foot or with small carts can transport directly from the gateroom; more advanced traders will be able to transport their goods into our warehouses from orbiting ships. Additionally, Dr. Zelenka has adapted the Wraith compression and storage technology to our jumpers, so we can fly large items ourselves, if need be." John nodded and tried not to seem worried. "Great," he said. "That sounds great." "We have also cleared several nearby buildings for residential use. In fact," Teyla continued, "the Athosians have already requested the east-facing quarters of tower nine, so that they may see the sun rise," and John stared at her for a moment before realizing what was itching at the back of his mind: *the Athosians*, she'd said, not *my people*. He was starting to do it, too; he could already

remember telling her to house the Lantean Guards in *the Earth people's* abandoned barrack rooms. They stared at each other for a moment, then drew together instinctively to touch foreheads, cupping each other's arms in their hands. "Yes," he said softly. "Of course. Anything you—" "Yes, John, thank you," she said.

9.

John kept it together through the ceremony where Teyla formally presented the Lantean Guard to him and they all stood at attention and saluted, and he kept it together when the first traders began to stagger through the gate with their wheels of cheese and bolts of cloth, and he even managed to keep it together when some of these traders turned out to have brought their teenaged daughters as "assistants"—because he'd somehow gotten used to having attractive girls curtsy to him after four weird-ass years in the Pegasus galaxy. But then he saw the growing pile of goods on the gateroom steps: some small casks of wine,

bunches of orange and purple flowers, spools of thick red cable with strange, alive-looking connectors, some dried meat wrapped with string, a basket of dark red fruits. "Okay, what's this?" John asked loudly of nobody in particular, because they couldn't have stuff cluttering the gateroom like this.

Ronon came up beside him and looked at it. "It's your tribute," he said, and it wasn't so much what he said as *how* he said it, with that low, deep Satedan undercurrent of, "*Duh.*" That was when John started yelling, and then Rodney was there and grabbing his arm and saying, "Uh, excuse us a moment," and dragging him out through a side door. "What the hell was I *thinking?*" John shouted, nearly shoving Rodney into a wall, "Why didn't you *stop* me? You're supposed to *stop* me from doing really stupid—" Rodney was staring at him, both hands raised. "Oh my God, you're getting hysterical. You can't get hysterical! You're usurping my hysteria!" "—shit like this! Do you understand that we're trapped in another galaxy with a bunch of people who think I'm—I'm—"

"The king of Atlantis?" Rodney asked, and that's when John had to put both hands on the top of his head to keep his skull from cracking open and spraying his brains all over the hallway. He pressed down hard, and that felt good, so he pressed harder. "Okay, come here," Rodney directed, and put John's back to the wall. "Sit," he said, and pushed on John's shoulder. "Yank your shirt up and breathe into it." Rodney crouched beside him, one hand warm and steady between his shoulder blades. "Do you need a Valium?" "Nah. I'm—okay," John managed, even though he was suddenly so tired he couldn't keep his eyes open. "Good," and then Rodney said, seriously, "Look, you're doing the right thing. That's why I didn't—it's the right thing." John lifted his head and slumped back against the wall. "I don't know, Rodney," he said. "I think I lost my mind somewhere." Rodney rolled his eyes and bent to pull John's arm over his shoulder. "I think you need a power bar and a nap," he said, heaving him up. "Believe me, I know the symptoms."

John slept for what felt like forty hours but was actually, he discovered when he blearily grabbed for his wristwatch, more like fourteen. He hadn't realized he was so tired; he couldn't remember the last time he'd slept so long. Rodney was sacked out beside him in his boxers and t-shirt, face mashed against the pillow and a proprietary

arm slung across John's body. He was sporting morning wood, and John was tempted to wake him up and see what he could get going. Except Rodney needed the sleep, too; Rodney tended to do this thing where he worked to the limits of his endurance, and then collapsed into a soft, snoring heap of limbs and warm cotton. And Rodney was still snoring softly. So John carefully disentangled himself and got up to pee. Afterward, he went into the kitchen to make coffee and saw there was more "tribute" piled high on the table. Sighing, he went to sift through it: a gray machine with its own power-source (a household appliance, maybe?), a

basket of strange-looking herbs (for medicinal use? for salad?), a solid cube of shiny reddish metal (?). John hefted up a large, pockmarked vegetable (fruit?) that looked *kind* of like an avocado and *kind* of like an eggplant, and wondered how you'd go about eating such a thing. Fry it in oil? Mash it with lemon juice? He turned it in his hands, and saw that it was eerily iridescent in places. "Oh, *coffee*," Rodney said, stumbling out of the bedroom like a zombie. "Thank God." "Thank *me*," John said absently, and then he heaved up the large, iridescent vegetable for Rodney's inspection. "What do you make of this?" he asked. Rodney squinted at him through one eye, jealously clutching his coffee to his chest. "I saw that one. Donald Sutherland was in it. There were pods, they killed everyone." John snorted and put the vegetable down. "Yeah, go ahead and laugh, but we're going to have to figure this out sooner or later. We're almost out of MREs—" Rodney's spine went straight, like he'd been electrocuted. "We're not really, are we?" he asked, and then he was putting his mug down and opening their food cupboard and nervously counting foil

packages, and before John could explain that, *really*, no number of MREs was going to be sufficient to see Rodney through to his disgruntled and crotchety old age, Rodney pulled a false bottom out of one of the cabinets. "Rodney! You're hoarding MREs?" John said, and covered his face with his hands. "I don't want to be seen with you." Rodney stabbed a glance at him. "I *told* you, I haven't got time to—" "—to feed yourself? Because seriously, Rodney, there won't be enough, and there's no more coming. So unless you—" and the idea slammed into him so hard that John had to steady himself against the counter. He couldn't even articulate it: it was so huge. "You don't think we're going to make it," John said, and at least his voice sounded normal.

"No!" Rodney turned quickly, foil packets flying. "No, no, no; of *course* we'll make it, I was just—" and his empty hands flailed for a moment before dropping helplessly. "I mean, it can't be *too* long before somebody opens a restaurant," and John was torn between laughter and the need to commit some kind of violence.

"Actually, my uncle owned a restaurant," Ronon said. "See?" Rodney sat back, satisfied. "There. Like I told you, matter of time—" John sighed and tried to get the meeting back on track. "Can we please—" But this time it was Teyla who interrupted. "Ronon," she said, turning to him with unusual excitement, "does anyone know what happened to Jeslin Block?" "No," Ronon said, frowning thoughtfully. "Though they say he made it out of Darfine." Teyla nodded. "I have heard that rumor, too. They say he survived and has gone into hiding. If that is true, perhaps he could be persuaded to come to Atlantis." Rodney clasped his hands together intently. "Tell me he's a chef." "Better," Ronon said, slouching back in his chair with a grin. "He's a brewer, McKay; Block's Tavern was the most famous alehouse in the western quadrant," and then he turned to John and added, "Best brew in Pegasus. Makes your Coors Lite taste like—" Rodney was looking at John in horror. "You didn't *actually* give him *Coors Lite*—" John groaned and slumped

forward onto his elbows. "Can we *please* get back to—" "I mean, you could have brought Sleeman, or Harp, or even Guinness—" "Block's Tavern did also serve food," Teyla told Rodney with a smile. "Simple food, but very hearty: mainly soups and stews—" Rodney pressed a hand to his chest. "'Simple but hearty' is my middle name—" "'Simple,' at least," John muttered. "—or, all right, fine, 'Didn't cook it myself' is my middle name," Rodney amended, "but you say tomato, I say *tomahto*. God, what I would pay for a fresh tomato..."

"John, it would be wonderful if we could bring Block's Tavern to Atlantis," Teyla said. "It would remind people of the old days. It would be a symbol of our new position within Pegasus, as part of Pegasus, as defenders and preservers of Pegasus culture—" "Symbols are important." Ronon stroked a thumb along his bearded chin. "So's beer." John raised his hands. "Hey! Bring him! If you think I'm going to speak out against beer, you've got the wrong guy. And anything that shuts Rodney up about food is—" His radio

buzzed, and Stackhouse said, terse in his ear, "Sir, we need you in the control room. We've just picked up four hive ships," and there was a scrape of chairs and they were all on their feet.

12.

"How long?" John asked Rodney, who was staring at one of the scanner displays. Rodney jerked around to look at him. "How the hell should I know? I was with *you*!" John leaned over Connolly to peer at his cosmograph, which showed four hive ships in formation, maintaining course and speed. "How long?" he asked grimly. "Two weeks?" Connolly looked nervously over his shoulder. "More like two days, sir," and before John could process that, Rodney had burst in with, "Two *days*?" and then he was shoving Connolly's chair out of the way and bending to tap frantically at his console. John turned to Connolly and demanded, "What happened to our long-range sensors?" and when Connolly looked helpless, he tapped his radio and said, "Zelenka! What the hell happened to our long-range sensors?"

"Why are you asking *him*?" Rodney said, abruptly straightening. "Ask *me*." John threw up his hands. "I thought you didn't know anything." Rodney rolled his eyes. "That was 35 seconds ago," he said, and then: "It's sabotage; they've attached a device to our long-range sensors that's been sending a dummy all-clear signal, like the high-tech equivalent of playing the same loop of surveillance tape." John cut to the chase. "So they're *past* the long-range sensors."

"Oh," Rodney said, with a hollow sort of laugh, "*ha*, yes, they are *well* past the long-range sensors. They're about thirty-one hours from ringing our doorbell. Trick or treat!"

"Oh, great," John muttered, and turned to look at the hives, coming closer. "Colonel," Zelenka said in his ear, "I believe our long-range sensors have been sabotaged. The Wraith seem to have attached some sort of device which—" "Yeah, thanks, we're past that," John said, disconnecting, and then, to Rodney: "What are our options?" Rodney opened his

mouth, then closed it and flailed his hands at the various consoles. "Options?" he repeated, his voice going high. "You want options? We've got options, Sheppard, Jesus, we've got *fourteen fucking ZPMs*—" John figured Rodney'd be stuck on this theme for a while, and turned to Teyla. "What do you think?" Teyla tilted her head thoughtfully. "It depends on whether the Wraith know we are here, or merely suspect it. Though in either case—" John was already nodding. "Yeah," he said. "Cloak's not an option." "I did not say that," Teyla said, frowning. "I only said—" "It's not an option," Ronon said firmly. "We've got to show everyone that Atlantis—" "I think we must consider safety first," Teyla said to Ronon, "and politics later—" "Uh, excuse me," Rodney interrupted, turning to John, "but while the Generalissima and the Minister of Culture fight this out, may I just remind you that while the Ancients had all the power we currently have plus more natural ATA gene holders than you can shake a stick at, they still had to flee the Pegasus Galaxy and run for their lives—" John turned to glare at him. "Gee, Rodney; thanks."

"No, no, no, no, look, I'm excited, believe me. Just don't get cocky!" Rodney was turning a little pink. "This is amazing, but nothing like a sure thing. The Ancients—" "The *Ancients* ran because that's what they *do*; they *run*; call it Ascension or anything you like," John said, crossing his arms. "Us, we're not going, Rodney, so find me some *goddamned weapons*. Teyla, I want tactics in five, and you," he said, to Ronon, "go down to the marketplace and tell them to buckle up."

13.

"It is a risk," Teyla said, leaning forward and folding her hands on the table, "but—"

"—we can have the shield up within two seconds," Rodney said, flinging his hand at the holograph of the shield. "1.86 seconds, to be exact—" "—and our cloak will give us a tactical advantage," Teyla explained, "for at least a few minutes. We should be able to launch our drones and destroy the first hive before—" "—they even know we're here. Because the thing

with invisibility is—" Rodney looked delighted, "—you *never see it coming*." "We've got a boatload of civilians," John interrupted. "I won't risk us taking a hit." "We won't," Teyla said firmly. "We *won't*," Rodney agreed, "because one of the things full power brings online is a new defensive blast weapon that'll intercept anything the Wraith throw at us." "You're sure?" John asked. "We're sure," Rodney said firmly. "Positive," Teyla agreed. "And then we will raise the shield, and I believe that you will have no difficulty destroying the other hives—" "—presuming we have enough drones to do the job," Rodney said fast, but then, "which is the only potential catch, but I think we will; I do; I really do. We've got the power to make them, so we're making them, but manufacturing them takes time—" "—which is why we should begin the attack while cloaked," Teyla said. "We must destroy the first hive with minimum firepower so as to conserve our drones for the other three ships." Teyla looked at Rodney; Rodney nodded approvingly. They both looked at John. "Okay," John said, standing up. "Sounds good." Rodney was instantly on his feet. "Wait," he

said. "That's it?" "Cloak, drones, shields, blow up the ships," John said. "Just get me those drones."

14.

The next day, everyone was preparing for the attack, but John couldn't sit still. He went from Rodney's lab to Teyla's office to the armory and back to Rodney's lab, but everything seemed to be under control. He didn't want to be one of those guys who was always staring over people's shoulders and micromanaging things, but it was hard not to stare at the readouts—shit, why weren't the drones coming together

faster?—and when Rodney jerked around to glare at him, he raised his hands and fled the lab. He decided to walk the two miles back to his office. There were more people than usual walking the halls; Atlantis was twenty square miles, and John was used to having most of them to himself. But now there was definite foot traffic along the north-leading corridors. Rodney had been asked to mark out and lock down the

most direct route between the central tower and the commercial district, and he'd apparently done so: John realized that he was currently walking Atlantis's *main road*, like the *Appian Way*. He smiled politely as two unfamiliar-looking women passed him on the one side, wrestling some large, wheeled object between them, and then a group of men came the other way, and John made a run for it, darting to the nearest door and sliding his hand over the lock, which was glowing a muted but forbidding orange. It changed to a soft blue for him and the door slid open to let him through. He stepped into the empty corridor with relief, because this was his Atlantis—dim halls and silvery walls and dust-motes spinning through the air. He moved steadily northward along these back halls toward his office, reached a T-section of corridor, and turned left, toward the restricted zone where his tower office was located. And then he stopped short, made a face, and turned again, heading down the other way, toward the market. He opened another Rodney-restricted door and stepped onto the windy flat of the northeastern pier, about twenty

yards from the first stall. The market was busier than he'd expected; more than a third of stands had been claimed, and unfamiliar people were clogging the narrow aisles, laughing, talking, making deals. The stalls were blanketed with merchandise: barrels of pickled fruit, rolls of colorful carpet, huge boxes of loose tea, as well as small machines that whirred or flashed or beeped softly. John felt himself drawn forward in a haze; he could almost believe he was back in Afghanistan, in one of the bazaars near Bagram Air Field. He walked down the first row of stalls, eyes sharp but keeping his distance: in Qatar the vendors would practically grab you by the arm to get you to buy, but thankfully, that wasn't the rule here. People were staring at him, but no one spoke to him, and a few people even lowered their heads and averted their eyes. He became aware that someone had fallen into step behind him and asked, without looking, "Did you tell them about the hives?" "Yeah," Ronon said. "Announced it over the comm. system." John did stop then, turning to regard Ronon thoughtfully. "Nobody seems particularly upset. Business is booming."

Ronon licked his lip, a long slow swipe. "Yeah, well. Most of these people, Sheppard, have been facing the Wraith a lot longer than you."

"Well, good, then," John said, and continued down the street with Ronon following him. He slowed and then stopped before a display of brightly colored bolts of fabric. His attention had been drawn by some shimmering blue stuff that looked like the sky. He reached out, touched it, rubbed it between his fingertips. The cloth was soft, but didn't feel like anything familiar: not silk, not cotton, not wool. It was only then that John noticed that the vendor, a dark-eyed woman with a heart-shaped face, biting her lip, was visibly debating whether or not to talk to him. "That is very good cloth, sir," she said finally, jerking back suddenly when he really looked at her. "It looks it," John replied honestly. "I've never seen anything like it." She swallowed several times before she spoke. "It's called Zephyr," she said. "It is woven from the long, soft hair of the creel." John wasn't sure he wanted to know what a *creel* was. "It's nice stuff," he said. "I'd like to get a shirt made out of

it." The words were out of his mouth before he'd realized. In the middle east, the fabric merchants had been great copiers of western styles: John had more than once brought them a favorite shirt or pair of pants and had it copied down to the collar or cuffs. But this wasn't there. "That is, I mean," he said stupidly. "Maybe you just sell the fabric. But I don't sew, so maybe you know someone who could—you know." He made a vague sewing-a-shirt-together gesture, and the woman's eyes widened. "Yes, of course," she said. "Just tell me what you want, or show me the garment you would—" She fumbled for a coil of silky pink ribbon, which, John realized a moment later, was her tape-measure. "Sir. I would be so honored to—" "It's not for me. It's a present," John explained, though he felt compelled to add a moment later, "Though I mean, I could probably use some new pants." He looked over at some heavy black cloth, and wondered if it would be good for uniforms. "If I brought you an example..." "I am sure I can make a garment to your satisfaction," she said, bowing her head. "Well, great," John said awkwardly, and then he tried

on a smile. "Sorry," he said, going for charming, "I'm just new at this trading thing. I'm not even sure how to pay you. How much is—" and okay, failing at charm, because she looked horror-struck. "Oh, no," she said, "sir; I could not possibly accept—" and suddenly he *got it*.

"Crap," John said, and then: "Look, lady, you need to stop this *right now*." Her face went from horrified to terrified and she let out a little moan of agony. "Aw, Christ," John said, feeling as pained as she looked, and then he took a breath and said, in the

voice he used on people who wanted to kill him, "My name's John, and I just want some *pants*—" "Yeah, she knows," Ronon said, and John turned to see him rolling his eyes. "Everyone's heard of you, Sheppard." "Well—" John was at a total loss for words. "No one introduced her to *me*." "This is Merce," Ronon said, shrugging, and behind the counter, Merce looked like she wanted to die. "She comes from Hessaya. They have very good tailors, Hessaya." John reached over the cloth, hand extended. "Merce, it's nice

to meet you." Merce stared at him for a moment, then looked down at his proffered hand. Then she curled her hand around his fingers and gave them a tentative squeeze—and okay, yeah, that was really weird. John swallowed hard and tried not to look surprised, but she must have seen the look on his face and guessed that she was doing it wrong. "Should I..." Merce began hesitantly, still tightly clutching his fingers, "kiss your—" "No. Really not, no," John said, immediately snatching his hand back. Ronon abruptly ran out of patience. "I'll have someone bring down some samples," he told Merce, obviously wanting John to move on, "so you can get to work—" "I'll bring them," John said, feeling stubborn. Ronon looked off into the distance. "Okay. Yeah. Good use of your time." "Colonel," and John immediately turned to her; it was the first time she'd addressed him directly. Her face was serious. "I wish you every blessing in your fight against the Wraith," she said. "Oh. Well. Thanks."

"Don't get me wrong," Ronon muttered, trying to hustle him down the row of stalls without touching him. "You should come here, let them see you, but not like this—" John slowed from a walk to a saunter to a stroll, feeling stubborn, wanting to see if Ronon would actually grab him or push him or something. Everyone was watching him, openly or with discreet little glances, and he could hear a low murmuring wave of whispers as he moved along.

"How, then?" John shot back. "In a parade?"

Ronon shrugged. "Thought about it," he said, and John pursed his mouth and broke away suddenly. Ronon sighed and jogged after him. People darted to get out of the way. John stopped short in front of a stand of high-piled iridescent vegetables: the avocado-eggplants. "Hey," he said, to the guy manning the stand, "so how do you eat these?" "I—" The man looked confused. "However you like!" "No, I mean, do you cook them, or—" "You can

certainly cook them. Or you do not have to cook them—" He picked up a giant pockmarked purple thing and thrust it into Sheppard's hands. "Please, sir; my gift—" "Okay," Ronon said, and put a hand on John's shoulder. "I think we should go." John was going to protest, except he was holding a giant purple avocado, and the guy looked desperate for him to leave, and two women from the next stall were gaping, and there was a little kid peering up at him with huge eyes from underneath the tablecloth. It was little kid who did it. "Yeah, okay," John muttered, and then he raised the vegetable a little and said, "Thanks," and let Ronon steer him out through the crowd.

16.

"Look, I just want to be normal," John said. "You can't be," Ronon said. "You're not."

17.

He went back to his empty apartment, broke into Rodney's stash of MREs, and ate two of

them while staring out the window at the sea. Then he put his hand to his radio. "Teyla," he said, and Teyla told him she had briefed the Lantean Guards for tomorrow's attack; some would be posted to defensive positions around the city, and some had been dispatched to maintain order in the commercial and residential districts.

"Stackhouse," he said, and Stackhouse gave him an update on the progress of the hive ships; they were right on schedule, and Atlantis was set to cloak before they arrived.

"Rodney," he said, and Rodney said, "Busy now," and hung up on him. John sighed and went to make himself a cup of coffee. He stared down at the avocado-eggplant on the counter. It seemed to be mocking him. By the time Rodney came back to the apartment, he had the fucking thing well and truly subdued. "What are you..." Rodney came up behind him and stared down at the pan. "I don't know," John said; suddenly, he felt really stupid. "I just needed to do something normal." Rodney looked up at him

sharply. "So you decided to cook alien fruit? I mean," he added a second later, "not that I'm trying to talk you out of it or anything, because it smells amazing." "Thanks," John said; he actually thought it looked pretty good. "Just that we're about to be attacked by four hive ships," Rodney added helpfully. "Yeah, I know," John said. "You want some of this?" "Yes," Rodney said, and dragged a stool up to the counter. "Seriously, how did you do that?" he asked as John dished some out. "You made that thing into *food*." "Sliced it up, dipped it in herbs, fried it in oil," John said, pushing the plate over. "Possibly some of those herbs were meant to be medicine, in which case, it'll also cure foot fungus." He shrugged. "Mm," Rodney said, mouth already full. "S'good. Tastes like zucchini. How'd you learn to do that; your mother—?" John laughed suddenly, the world going weirdly bright for a second; Jesus, his *mother*. He hadn't thought about his mother in— "God, no," he said, and his face almost hurt from the flex of unfamiliar muscles. "My mother was poor black Irish: mayonnaise sandwiches all the way." "Hm," Rodney said,

swallowing. "My mother was a class-A neurotic. She was—never mind, it's not worth talking about." John frowned, but Rodney was pushing on: "So where did you learn? Don't tell me this is K.P. duty." "My ex," John admitted. "She could cook. It was the one good thing about my marriage." Rodney's face got strange. "Oh, right," he said. "You were married."

John made a face. "Less than a year."

Rodney took a huge mouthful of avocado-eggplant and chewed for a while. "It makes me crazy," he said finally. "Thinking about you being married." "So don't think about it," John said, and forked a piece into his mouth. "I don't."

18.

They stayed up for a while, talking contingencies. Rodney told him more about the new blast weapon, ("like Reagan's whole Star Wars idea; you know, if that had worked") and that they had managed to manufacture nearly

four hundred drones, ("which isn't enough," Rodney said glumly, "we should have thousands and thousands, but with luck—") and suddenly John was tired of talking about it, and collared Rodney's neck with his hand. "Oh, yes," Rodney said instantly, fisting John's shirt and smashing their mouths together, and then everything was crazy for a while, with Rodney clumsily sucking his tongue and John fumbling to get Rodney's dick out of his pants. Rodney was hot and hard and already leaking, and John groped him urgently, loving the way the head of Rodney's cock brushed the inside of his wrist. John pushed forward to deepen the kiss, and they overbalanced and tumbled off the sofa. Rodney thumped onto his back and John slammed down on one knee, but they barely stopped. Rodney was shoving John's pants down his hips, and John tugged Rodney's shirt up and dragged his dick along the soft arrow of hair that led from Rodney's cock to his bellybutton, shuddering at the sensation. "Oh," Rodney breathed, and John held him down, gripping his hair and tilting his mouth up for kisses. He rubbed against Rodney with short,

increasingly frantic, strokes, came on his belly, and collapsed, his hands slowly unclenching...and why hadn't he noticed that Rodney's hair had grown long enough to put his fingers through? He pressed his face into the warm skin of Rodney's neck and deliberately tangled his fingers in the strands. Beneath him, Rodney panted and squirmed. "Jesus, Sheppard," he said. Rodney tugged at John's hips, then slid his hands up his back and roughly grabbed hold of his hair, encouraging him in an unsubtle, downward direction. John obligingly slid down Rodney's body, stopping to kiss Rodney's brown-freckled shoulder and to suck lasciviously on his nipple: Rodney's nipples were pink and hard and as tiny as dimes.

"Oh. God. Come *on*," Rodney begged, but John dragged his mouth across the sparse curls of brown hair on Rodney's breastbone to his other nipple, feeling the hard pectoral muscle against his lips: Christ, the luxury of all that maleness. He mouthed his way down Rodney's quivering belly to his cock and licked it, nosed it, rubbed

his lips over it. Rodney's breath came hard and fast. "John," he said, his voice rising. "Johnjohnjohn—" and John tipped Rodney's cock up and carefully fitted his mouth around it.

It didn't take long: John only managed to bob his head a few times before Rodney was gasping "*oh* fuck, *oh fuck*," and coming in his mouth. John struggled for air through his nose and tried not to gag; still, he felt Rodney's thigh muscles jittering and felt smug.

19.

Rodney's arm snaked possessively around his neck when John crawled up to collapse on the pillow. "We're going to be all right tomorrow, right?" Rodney murmured. "Yes," John said firmly, and pressed close.

20.

"Colonel," Teyla said in his ear, "the hives, they're ahead of schedule," and John was out

of bed immediately and saying, "Lock down the commercial and residential districts. No one who's not military personnel should be—" while beside him, he heard Rodney shouting, "No, right now; shut down all nonessential systems, and get me a report of—" John scrambled on the floor for his pants, then frowned and threw them over to Rodney. He found his own pants crumpled up near the door and slid them on. Rodney grabbed him as he was heading for the door. "Keep your radio on." "Yeah. Of course." "I'm going to monitor the power influxes personally," Rodney said breathlessly, "and I've got an extra ZPM standing by, so you don't have to worry about conserving power. Use all the power you want." Rodney's fingers tightened on his arm. "But the drones—" "Right," John interrupted. "Yeah. Four hundred—" "Five hundred and thirty one," Rodney corrected, finally letting go of him, "but Sheppard, *four hives*—" "Right. Got it," John said and hurtled down the hall.

John barely spared a glance at the flashing read-out—four hive ships, 8 A.U.s and closing—before flinging himself into the control chair. He had Teyla in one ear, feeding him tactical information, *"The hives are slowing. 7 A.U.s—6.8, 6.5, speed declining while maintaining their typical 1-1-2 tactical formation—"* and Rodney in the other, *"—using optical flow sensors, but the cloak's up and working and I've got*

retroreflectors angled precisely to—"The chair lit up around him and slid backwards. He closed his eyes just as Teyla said, *"4 A.U.s. 2.5, 2—John, thermodynamic readings indicate that the Wraith are preparing to launch their darts—"* and Rodney said, in a strained voice, *"All the new drones are online, so if you want to launch a surprise attack, this would orange orange orange orange—"* Teyla agreed and said, *"blue blue blue blue,"* and he could see *their voices*, see the snaking yellow flash of Zelenka's caution, see the four hive ships and the pink-

tinted gold of the drones at his fingertips, waiting for launch. But behind that, there were darker, deeper colors—magentas and violets and deep fire reds, and he found himself sucking for deep breaths, because *powerpowerpowerpowerpower*, he'd never experienced such— "*blue*," Teyla said, and then, "*blue blue 1.859, 1.438, 1.074, blue .6892—*" and John fired, and he was one of the shoal of drones, hurtling upwards and feeling the perfectly synchronized movement of all five hundred and thirty one of them. He shot into the sky with them, a wave of wriggling tentacles, gliding in unison up and out, over the city, which— "*orange*," Rodney murmured—suddenly blazed into visibility beneath them, all spires and towers, as the shield went up. They flew together in perfect formation, maintaining distance and speed in a throng of harmonized motion, and there it was, the first hive, though the Wraith's 1-1-2 formation meant that there was another right behind it, hovering in its silhouette, still and predatory. He didn't need to say or do anything: the shoal understood and soared around the first hive, tracing its

contours, washing over it like a wave. Most of the drones were already engulfing the second hive when John willed the tail end of the shoal to detonate, and the two hives exploded near-simultaneously, wreckage falling toward the shielded city and burning up in the atmosphere. Two hundred and twelve drones left, he knew this like he knew he still had ten fingers and ten toes. But the third and fourth hives were releasing their darts, hundreds of them, swarming toward Atlantis in an ever-widening V. John let fly all the remaining drones, knowing it wouldn't, couldn't be enough, and stretched his mind toward those deeper colors: the magentas and violets and blood-reds. Something pineapple-shiny was angling for his attention, and he picked it up and felt it thrum with energy. *Oh, yeah.*

Blindly, he willed a message to Rodney: *Rodney, hang on! Tell everyone to—* but it was too late. He was already firing, the blinding column of spitfire shooting straight upward, rending the air over Atlantis with a bang! and jerking the city with the force of its blowback.

The beam blasted through the battle wreckage of drones and darts and blistered a giant hole in the third hive. The Wraith screamed as the beam seared through the living flesh of the control room, but John couldn't sustain the beam and fell back, gasping, clutching the glowing arms of the chair. Colors were screaming in his mind: Rodney was breathlessly recalibrating the ZPMs, Zelenka was giving him a triumphant report on the damaged third hive, and Teyla was jubilantly informing

him that the fourth hive ship was turning to flee, building up the energy for a hyperspace— *No fucking way*, and Atlantis shuddered and wetly heaved up and out of the ocean, responding to John's desperate black-purple desire to *get them, stop them, don't let them get away*. They picked up speed as they burst out of Lantia's atmosphere, and John ignored his frantic orange headache because the blue readout was showing a hyperspace window, and *no you don't, you bastards; no, you fucking don't!* He flew Atlantis smoothly around the wounded third

hive, ignoring its pitiful pulse of weapons fire and blowing it to smithereens almost as an afterthought, with the momentary mental caress of his totally cool pineapple-energy-cannon. And then he was bearing down on the fourth hive, and— Something was glowing red at the edge of his vision. His mind drifted toward it curiously and circled, sniffing and licking. It crackled. It was hot. It was for him, he knew that. But the hyperspace window was widening, there wasn't time to—except he really, really wanted to, and *Atlantis* wanted him to, so he dropped the energy cannon and impelled himself toward— He arched and convulsed, every neuron singing as his body became a conduit and closed a circuit. All the colors in his mind gathered and exploded into a single, white hot ball of energy that overtook the fourth hive ship, enveloping it and—eliminating it. The ship was *gone*: not fragmented or disintegrated but *vanished*, and he knew by the force still zinging through him, making his blood rush and his bones rattle, that it was the ZPM: the chair had channeled the ZPM's energy through him, using him to magnify and focus it. He convulsed

again, body jerking with residual electricity. He tumbled out of the chair, smashed down hard on the platform, and was seized by an unexpected and toe-curling orgasm that left him shaking and laughing up at the high, curved ceiling. *Holy shit*—and he could feel the vibrations of the city's engines thrumming through his back as the city flew on without him, circling the wreckage and setting a course back for Lantia. There was some vague shouting, and then Rodney was looming over him, red-faced and frightened; he'd been nearest, just down the hall. "Oh my God," Rodney said tightly, "are you—" and then he was reaching down and yelling, "Medic! Medic! I need a—" and John had a second, overpowering orgasm the moment Rodney's hands touched him.

He convulsed and groaned, gasping and arching up off the still-vibrating floor. Rodney looked wildly panicked and held on to him. "Sheppard," he said, "oh my God, stay with me," and then, snarling into his radio: "For God's sake, *hurry up*—" and then Rodney's face changed, and his nose twitched, and he

turned and touched the spreading dark wet patch on the front of John's pants. John had been catching his breath, and he was about to tell Rodney it was all right, he was fine, *best ride ever*,

when Rodney cupped his cock and he came *again*, almost dry this time, his hard-on jerking and throbbing in his pants. Rodney looked shocked. "What the—" and he was looking John up and down; he'd got the picture now. John's nerves were still surging with electricity, and he wanted to grab Rodney and pull him into the circuit and gasp, "Feel this; can you *feel* this?" But there were people, he could feel them, coming closer, fast, running—so he clutched for Rodney and struggled to sit up, gasping and panting. "Hurry. Get me out of here." Rodney instantly shoved an arm through John's armpit and began to haul him to his feet; fuck, his legs felt like rubber, and he nearly burst out giggling again. "It's all right!" Rodney yelled, one hand flailing for his radio as he tried to pull John up, "we're all right, belay—" but it was too late now, because Teyla was on his

other side, supporting him, and there was Dr. Fielding and Nurse Ko and Cadman and one—no, at least three complements of Lantean Guards, and Rodney was shouting something to Teyla and moving them forward, steadily, through the hubbub and chaos and the press of Guards on all sides, and then John saw why Teyla had brought in so many soldiers: outside the chair room they were having to link arms to literally hold back the shouting, jubilant crowd, some of them singing in languages John didn't know, and when he came out and they spotted him, there was a sudden snap to unity, the kind of happy, rhythmical chanting that John remembered from football games and rock concerts, and people were screaming happily and surging forward and waving their arms to get his attention, and he found himself wondering for the first time whether winning this thing was scarier than losing it.

Volume Three

1.

While the SGC had any number of contingency plans for the expedition's retreat or destruction, they seem not to have considered the possibility of revolution. Generals Landry, Giordano, and Merriman held a series of meetings with the IOA over the first few days, eventually seeking the advice of more than thirty of the SGC's key personnel, including all current and past members of SG-1. According to General Merriman, no fewer than eight distinct plans were formulated and discarded over the following weeks. "We couldn't get consensus: not within the IOA, not among the exiled Expedition members, not among the SGC." General Carter agreed:

"I think they wanted easy answers, and there were no easy answers. There weren't any villains, either, and that was harder for them to accept. You see, we knew these

guys: McKay, Zelenka, Stackhouse, Cadman. Sheppard, we knew least well, because he came on so late, but even he—I mean, if Lorne was willing to vouch for him, if *Rodney* was—because Rodney doesn't like *anybody*. They wanted us—Jack and Daniel, me, Teal'c, Cam—to tell them what to do, but we couldn't. We knew these guys. By and large, we trusted these guys." Major General Jack O'Neill framed the matter more bluntly, "Seriously, they never thought this would happen? With Sheppard in charge? That man liked *Antarctica*." To the SGC's dismay, O'Neill and the other members of SG-1 refused to join any diplomatic or military mission whose aim was retaking Atlantis. This was partly due to SG-1's historically close relationship with the expedition members, and partly due to the fact that Atlantis's own exiles refused to endorse the SGC's plans. Weir, in particular, refused even to discuss them: "It was over. There was no point belaboring it." There were other motives for refusing. "I could understand it," Dr. Daniel Jackson admitted. "The takeover, the need to assert your separateness, your cultural

sovereignty. I wouldn't have done it myself, but...well, let's just say, I understood it." Teal'c of the Free Jaffa Nation never commented on the Uprising, but his role in the Jaffa rebellion implies that he possessed strong Lantean sympathies. — April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 140

The Earth response was delayed by the recalcitrance of SG-1, who were reluctant to take up arms against their former colleagues. The SGC tried to convince them that Atlantis had fallen under the sway of a tyrannical dictatorship from which it now needed liberation. But O'Neill scoffed that tyranny sounded like more work than Sheppard had ever been up for, and Carter argued that McKay would never sign on to a dictatorship, as he had never taken orders from anybody about anything. As a civilian and an anthropologist, Jackson was a correspondingly harder sell, repeatedly making the point that everyone still in Atlantis had explicitly chosen to be in Atlantis, so whom, exactly, were they supposed to be liberating? Teal'c said nothing during any of these meetings, but reportedly carried a copy of Sheppard's Declaration of

Galactic Sovereignty, which he would unsmilingly offer to his interlocutors when pressed. — Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 89 Having badly miscalculated the response to the Recall, the International Committee were understandably wary about their next move. This nervousness was compounded by the failure of any of the more experienced SGC personnel to sign on to an Atlantis recovery mission. But rather than take this as evidence that the mission itself was flawed, the Pentagon and SGC looked elsewhere for leadership.

They found it in James Paisley, former Assistant Director of the C.I.A. and close strategic advisor to Vice-President Kinsey. Paisley was the architect of Operation Snow White, the plan the IOA eventually adopted, which was to send John Sheppard a poisoned apple. A team of six negotiators would be dispatched to Pegasus, ostensibly to open diplomatic relations and set up an Earth embassy on Atlantis. In fact, the IOA would send Sheppard five negotiators and one trained

assassin. — Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 240

2.

The plan advocated by Paisley was chosen for its flexibility, a key advantage considering the lack of operable intelligence. Since the wormhole had closed behind Weir, Sheppard's people had refused to lower their Stargate's shield, and they hadn't acknowledged any of the SGC's databursts. No transmission could have been clearer: "We stand alone now," or, as Jack O'Neill waspishly put it: "Don't call us; we'll call you." Consequently, any plan to contact Atlantis now involved a time-consuming and tactically risky trip to Pegasus. While the *Daedalus* certainly held enough troops to overwhelm the 124 SGC renegades, they were unlikely to get the chance; Atlantis now possessed full shield strength and five ZPMs. Moreover, the city itself could fly, and even bearing in mind its skeleton crew, there was considerable doubt as to whether the *Daedalus* would be able to prevail against Atlantis in an

aerial engagement. Paisley's plan thus seemed much the better option. The *Daedalus* would ferry six diplomats to Atlantis and hope that Sheppard's people would accept them. If they were turned away, nothing would be lost, and in fact, the SGC would have begun to regain the moral high ground; if they were accepted, a fact-finding mission would begin. All six of the diplomats were instructed to gather intelligence on the revolutionaries and their running of the city. All six were empowered to begin negotiating a treaty such as had been concluded with the Jaffa, the Tok'ra, and other alien peoples. However, one of the team had been given more elaborate instructions: if Atlantis was weak, and if Sheppard in particular could be found vulnerable, he should be killed, power seized, and a wormhole opened immediately to Earth. —Mark Leredo, *The Atlantis Uprising*, p. 164

James Paisley's choice of team demonstrated immense psychological astuteness, particularly where Sheppard was concerned; then again, Sheppard's record had been studied with an

intense scrutiny more typically reserved for Supreme Court nominees and serial killers. The team was selected to echo the composition of the Atlantis expedition, and so consisted of three American military officers and three international civilian scientists. The three officers—General James R. Keane, Lt. Colonel Lily Armitage, and Major Hal Royce—were of different ranks not simply to

form a chain of command, but because Paisley wanted to hedge his bets: would Sheppard relate best to a superior officer, a comrade of equal rank, or a subordinate? Similarly, the civilian scientists were chosen from a number of strategically chosen fields and countries: Dr Rosalind Croft (Anthropology, CA), Dr. Philippe Severn (Physics, FR), and Dr. Annaliese Ostergaard (Mathematics, DK). The six member team was given an intensive, two-month briefing before setting off on the *Daedalus* with a minimal crew and no weapons. —Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.122 By the time the *Daedalus* was approaching Atlantis, the diplomatic team knew

the members of the Atlantis expedition better than they knew their own families. They had been given unrestricted access to their confidential military records, medical histories, and governmental files; they had read the papers published by the scientists and all the mission reports filed by Sheppard and Weir. The team had no idea what to expect. The SGC had projected, based on the Expedition's previous rates of consumption, that Atlantis would be running low on crucial supplies, so they packed the *Daedalus's* storage compartments with staple foods and medicines. They also packed the ship with luxury reminders of the comforts of home: wines and spirits, fancy cheeses and chocolates, Hollywood movies and mp3 players. The diplomatic team spent many long nights in hyperspace speculating on what they might find when they reached Atlantis. According to Philippe Severn: We expected to find a city of castaways: isolated and starved, and yet still hostile to Earth and everything she stood for. We thought that many of the key players exhibited delusions of grandeur, and so we

decided to approach them as if they were overtired children and we were their calm and loving parents. It had never been said aloud, of course, but we all knew that the ultimate goal of our "diplomacy" was to bring about the reunification of Atlantis and Earth. But for the moment, we were to approach them as a sovereign nation. It never occurred to us that they were in fact a sovereign nation. —Alfred Walson, *Atlantis: Year One*, p.132

3.

We dropped out of hyperspace on the morning of 15 November 4 A.T. and flew toward Lantea, achieving a stable orbit early that afternoon. We were all on the bridge, hoping to get our first glimpse of Atlantis, when the ship's communicator beeped noisily. A voice came over the speakers. "*Daedalus*, this is Atlantis. Please identify your passengers and state your business." We all held our breath as our

captain, Colonel Jason Morelli, casually flicked the reply button and began to explain the nature

of our mission. — Rosalind Croft, *City of Spires: A Memoir*, p. 19

4.

John leaned back in his chair and braced a foot against the communications console. "They're fucking with us." "They're totally fucking with us," Ronon agreed.

5.

"*Daedalus*, please stand by," the radio said. The next few minutes were tense; everything seemed to hang on this moment. We did not speak, but looked at each other worriedly. What if they sent us away? This trip and all those months of preparation for nothing. I remember turning to Major Royce and asking him if we could still leave them the food and medical supplies if they refused us, as a gesture of our good will. Major Royce grinned at me and said, "Don't worry; they'll let us in." Five minutes later, the radio said, "*Daedalus*, Atlantis welcomes our guests from Earth. Please have

Colonel Armitage, Major Royce, and Doctors Croft, Ostergaard, and Severn prepare to transport down with their personal baggage." "What about the General?" Major Royce asked. "How do they know our *names*?" Colonel Armitage demanded. Colonel Morelli frowned down at the radio. "Atlantis," he began, "we also have General James R. Keane on board. Do you copy? Atlantis? Do you—?" And then we were standing in a huge chamber, our standard-issue U.S. military rucksacks at our feet, and Major Royce was saying, "What the hell?" because we hadn't heard Colonel Morelli give any kind of transportation order. I turned and saw the Atlantis Stargate, and beyond, three stories of purple and yellow and pink: the most exquisite stained glass window I have ever seen. I was stunned, but Colonel Armitage and Major Royce were already moving into tactical positions. People were coming and going, manning equipment on the surrounding balconies, descending the grand staircase, coming at us from both sides, guns slung across their chests. A man was coming down the steps, tall and thinner than he'd looked in

photographs: Colonel John Sheppard. His posture was casual, his eyes were intelligent; his smile was lopsided and entirely phony. "Guess it's my job to welcome you to Atlantis," he said, giving us an obvious once-over. "Greetings, Earthlings," and then, his smile briefly becoming genuine: "I always wanted to say that."

Colonel Armitage confronted him. "Where's General Keane?" she asked, and I saw then that the General hadn't been transported with us. Sheppard just shrugged, a

gesture that said, quite eloquently, "I didn't want him here." Our information suggested that Colonel Sheppard had recurring problems with male authority figures, likely because of his estrangement from his own father. In this, it seemed, our analysis was correct. "So," Sheppard asked, tilting his head, "have you come for the wedding?" This was an unexpected question, and Sheppard looked from one to the other of us in mock-surprise. "No?" he asked. "Just good timing?" He

extended his hand, and a woman stepped forward and took it; she was petite but wiry and well-muscled, her coppery hair loosely pulled together at the nape of her neck. He looked at her fondly. "This is Teyla Emmagan, leader of the Athosians, commander of our army, and my bride-to-be." — Rosalind Croft, *City of Spires: A Memoir*, p. 19-20

6.

15 November 4 A.T. J.S. controls Atlantis totally. He possesses highly advanced scanning technology, as well as a ship-to-planet transporter, and was able to take us from the *Daedalus* without our consent. Five of us have been permitted to enter the city; General Keane was refused, probably because of his superior rank. (Is J.S. threatened?) J.S. appears to have raised a large army of native soldiers (for pay? What has he promised them?) J.S. also claims to be betrothed to Teyla Emmagan, an Athosian native who was a member of his team. (Did J.S. have a sexual motive for the Uprising? Why did no one consider this?) Our intelligence was

faulty: there are several thousand people living in Atlantis and more arriving daily. A section of the city has been set aside for wedding guests and visiting diplomats. We're not the only ones who want an embassy. Security is tight ("for the wedding," J.S. claims: disingenuously). We've all been searched, and we're being closely guarded. J.S. has refused our supplies ("Thanks but no thanks; we've all had enough pre-packaged sandwiches to last us a lifetime"), so he must have alternate sources of food and medicine. We were brought dinner in our rooms: some kind of meat and potato stew. We've been promised a guided tour of the city tomorrow (which probably means a closely supervised tour of what parts of the city J.S. will allow us to see.) NB—The view out my window is the most incredible thing I have ever seen. — Hal Royce, unpublished journal

7.

The technology is astounding, beyond what I have even dreamed. To see Ancient technology at work in all the banal things of life, in light

switches and door locks, is truly to understand another civilization. The scientists who have been living and working here for the last four years have clearly begun to think within the pattern, along the intellectual grooves laid down by the long-ago occupants of this place, though they themselves do not seem to realize it. This morning, a Lieutenant Cadman presented us each with a black I.D. keycard, which she instructed us to carry with us at all times. These cards seem not to be of Ancient design, but certainly demonstrate someone's Ancient-inspired thinking. They are coded to the areas we are authorized to visit, so Annaliese and I have been approved to visit certain laboratories, and Rosalind has been given access to something called the "Holo-room." Last night, Major Royce argued that we were unlikely to be allowed to wander the city at will, but we have, in fact, been given considerable freedom. My guide (of course, Major Royce is correct in saying that our guide is also our guard) escorted me to the scientific district, where I ran into Radek Zelenka, whom I know from when we were both at the *Physikalisches*

Institut in Freiburg. I greeted him, and we immediately fell into our old habit of speaking German. I asked him how he could possibly have turned against Earth, but he just laughed and said that after Prague, revolution was maybe a way of life for him now. —Dr. Philippe Severn, *Civilisations et mondes perdus* (trans. by Francine Mercier) p. 49.

8.

No wonder Colonel Sheppard refused our supplies. Atlantis has a marketplace of food and crafts and technology from across the Pegasus galaxy, and I have been happily wandering from stall to stall. I tried to get my guide, who is called Naz Fallona and comes from a planet whose name I could neither spell nor pronounce, to tell me what he thought of Sheppard, what he thought of the Earth-people, how he liked living in Atlantis. He didn't answer for a long time, so long that I thought he either hadn't understood my questions or was going to pretend that he hadn't. But then he said quietly,

"Now we have a chance." —Annaliese
Ostergaard, unpublished journal

9.

I asked Stackhouse if I could see the puddlejumper. I'd seen pictures of them in the briefing materials, but I wanted a first-hand look, so he took me to the docking bay, where there were thirty ships, maybe more, in a series of vertical hangars. They were

beautiful. According to the SGC's records, they were sub-light but not too shabby: Mach 1500 or more. Sheppard must be like a pig in shit flying those things. I was hoping to get a look inside, but Stackhouse's radio buzzed. He took me back to the commercial district, and led me through a heavy wooden door, weird among all the steel and glass. Inside there was a long bar and a bunch of rough tables. The place was crowded with people talking and drinking out of heavy mugs. I followed him through to the back, and found Sheppard sitting at a round table with a tall, dreadlocked man who I knew to be the

Satedan, Ronon Dex. "Colonel Armitage," Sheppard said, drawling my name out. "Take a seat, have a drink." He signaled to the barman, who brought over a mug for me; it was very good, like the best Irish ales. Then Ronon Dex leaned over the table, fingers laced together, and smiled the most terrifying smile I have ever seen. "So," Dex said. "How goes the spying?" I immediately protested that we *weren't* spying, but Sheppard waved that away. "Yeah, you are," he said, "but that's okay." He slouched back in his chair, arm casually dangling off the back. "The SGC wants to know what's going on, so go ahead and tell them," he said. "We've got nothing to hide," he said. "You got any questions, just go ahead and—" I jumped, startled, as a man collapsed into the chair beside me and stabbed a finger at Ronon Dex. "I am never letting you have an idea again," he said. "This whole thing is a nightmare and I hate you and you totally owe me, except you can never repay me because you've taken literally years off my life. Do you know that someone from that stupid planet with the yellow trees has sent Sheppard and Teyla a pair of

giant birds which are supposed to represent love or something equally ridiculous? They're huge, they're pink, they're like *ostriches*, I had to put them in the brig, they kept *pecking* at me," and it was only then I realized that this was Dr. Rodney McKay. He didn't look like his SGC photograph. Sheppard frowned at him. "You said you were fine with it." "I'm fine with it, I'm fine, I'm fucking *fine*. See how fine I am?" The barman came up unasked and put a pint of ale and a bowl of something like chili in front of McKay, who dug in immediately. "And bring me some of those chip things!" McKay yelled after him. "See, he's fine," Sheppard deadpanned, and rolled his eyes. "No problem." McKay saw me, did a double take, and yelled, "What, we eat with *spies* now?"

Sheppard laughed and covered his eyes with his hand, and I found myself wondering if Rodney McKay was also in love with Teyla Emmagan. It seemed to me the only reasonable explanation for his bizarre behavior.
—Lily Armitage, unpublished journal

The significance of Sheppard's marriage to Teyla Emmagan has been hotly debated, with some convinced that it was a love match and others convinced that it was merely a political alliance. Even those who were at the wedding seem to have wildly varying opinions. Philippe Severn claims that Sheppard and Emmagan had "obvious chemistry," and that "[Sheppard] had great respect for Teyla and was visibly enamored of her." Hal Royce disagrees: It was clearly a political thing. There was a rumor that Sheppard lived up in some tower with McKay, while Teyla Emmagan lived someplace else entirely, and continued to live there even after they were married. Some said she was involved with Ronon Dex; others claimed that she had taken a lover from among the Lantean Guards. She and Sheppard were close—hell, the four of them were thick as thieves—but believe me, that wedding was pure political theatre. Rosalind Croft gives a more nuanced view: "It was obviously a symbolic act, brilliantly staged to send a political message. By marrying Teyla

Emmagan, Sheppard effectively gave her control of Atlantis and announced his intention to dedicate his life to her, and through her, to the Pegasus Galaxy. But it wouldn't have worked if Sheppard's feelings for Teyla hadn't been real and visible and obvious to everyone." —Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.140 Most of the conflicting and contradictory rumors about Sheppard's sexual and political alliances have their roots in the events surrounding the Sheppard-Emmagan wedding. While each member of the diplomatic team was asked to keep a record of what they saw and heard in Atlantis, this has produced very few verifiable facts: a wedding did in fact happen on 3 December 4 A.T. There were over a thousand people present, including representatives of 128 planetary or intra-planetary governments. The bride wore red.

But their interpretations vary wildly. Lily Armitage's journal unintentionally provides strong evidence that the Sheppard-Emmagan wedding was primarily political in nature. She quotes McKay as saying that the wedding was

Ronon Dex's idea, and Dex was, of course, principally responsible for renegotiating Atlantis's relationship with Pegasus in the post-Secession era, so much so that McKay frequently (and

mockingly) referred to him as Sheppard's "Minister of Culture." If, in fact, the Sheppard-Emmagan marriage was Dex's idea, it was one of his most brilliant; not only did it spread power from the Earth-born Sheppard to the native-born Emmagan with a stroke, but it also created an opportunity for thousands to visit and tour the city. Many liked what they saw and stayed; others brought glowing reports of Atlantis back to their homeworlds. Others saw the marriage as genuine. "[Sheppard] adored her, I saw it with my own eyes, the way he looked at her," said Philippe Severn. That cannot be faked, you understand? His arm, if she were there, Sheppard would put his arm around her waist, or touch her shoulder. Teyla was lovely, but very serious in her demeanor, and Sheppard liked to tease her; he would call her "my better half," or "my old lady," or "the old ball and

chain," and Teyla would smile and then say, in her queer, serious way, "I am very much younger and more attractive than you," or "I do not believe you are any sort of prisoner, John." Hal Royce confirms Severn's facts but interprets them differently: I think Sheppard was nervous. All the jokes about his old lady, his better half: that was how he dealt with it. He was definitely nervous about McKay, because he needed McKay; he checked in with McKay, like, a couple times a day. McKay had a lot invested in Sheppard, too; he'd backed Sheppard against Weir and the whole planet Earth. So McKay was looking pretty tense there for a while, which I guess he would be if he felt he was being displaced. Rosalind Croft puts the matter even more bluntly: There was a lot of teasing, but nobody was kidding. Sheppard calling Emmagan "the old ball and chain"; McKay calling Sheppard "the King of Atlantis"—these jokes were telling the uncomfortable truth: that like many heads of state, John Sheppard had to enter into an arranged marriage while being emotionally and sexually involved with someone else. Sheppard presented Emmagan

as his lover and McKay as his best friend, but I have no doubt that it was the other way around, and moreover, that it pained Sheppard to have to pretend otherwise. —April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 154

As the wedding neared, as hundreds of guests gated into Atlantis, Rodney McKay grew noticeably somber and withdrawn. Hal Royce suggests, albeit obliquely, that McKay feared being displaced from Sheppard's affections, and even the most cursory study of McKay's life suggests that he had reason to be afraid. McKay's twenties and early thirties had been littered with failed courtships and fair-weather affairs. The worst of these had been Anna Verbeck, whom McKay had been certain he was going to marry and who had shocked him by abruptly marrying someone else. In the days

leading up to the Sheppard-Emmagan wedding, McKay must have been having unsettling flashbacks. —Denise Chapman, *Several Kinds of Genius: The Life of Rodney McKay*, p. 121-2

"Seriously, epaulets? Do I really *need* epaulets?" "Absolutely," Rodney said absently. "I insist." John made a face and flung back the cape. "I feel like Darth Vader in Vegas." Rodney didn't look up from his laptop. "That's how I personally always think of you." John turned to glare at him and nearly fell off the box he was standing on. Beneath him, Merce grabbed his legs and then returned to expertly pinning the hem of his cape. "I look stupid," John whined, catching himself in the mirror. "Better you than me," Rodney said. "Not so fast, McKay. If I'm wearing a cape, you're wearing a—" Rodney looked up sharply, then. "No." John grinned at him. "Come *on*, you'll look good in—" "John, no," and that was serious; Rodney hardly ever called him "John" outside of bed. "I don't want to be in it," Rodney said resolutely. "The wedding. At all. I just—no." John just blinked for a moment, and then said, stupidly, "Halling's writing the ceremony. It's going to be a mix of traditional Athosian elements and—" Rodney looked away, then; just looked back down at his

laptop and started typing. "They don't have a best man in a traditional Athosian ceremony," John said finally. "Good," Rodney said, still typing. "That solves that." "I asked Halling to put one in, though." "Take it out again."

"I—" John looked down, suddenly aware of Merce, nimbly pulling pins from her mouth and tucking them into the heavy black fabric. "We almost done here, Merce?" Merce nodded distractedly. "Mm-hm." He wanted her gone: right away, yesterday. He fidgeted and looked at Rodney. "It's just a ceremony, Rodney," he said, almost helplessly. Rodney didn't look up. "I know." "It doesn't change anything." "Right," Rodney said. He remembered Ronon first saying it: "You should marry Teyla," he said. "And you should have babies." He remembered feeling confused and a little panicky, and then saying, stupidly, "McKay—" But then Ronon said flatly, "I talked to him. It's fine," and then, "It's fine with me, too," and John had thought *huh* and then *oh* and *of course*. "You said you were fine with it," John accused. "I *am* fine with it. I signed *off* on it." John closed his eyes,

waiting for Merce to put in her last goddamned pin already. But he couldn't wait. "And the baby, I mean—you know there's a machine, right?" That got Rodney's attention. "Oh, my God!" he said, slamming the laptop closed. "Would you please *stop*?" But he couldn't stop. "It's Ancient, it makes babies, so it's not even like we—" "All right, that's *it*!" Rodney was on his feet, red-faced and belligerent, and John was almost giddy with relief; all that listless agreement was beginning to unnerve him. "Merce," Rodney said, whipping the heavy cape off John's shoulders and shoving it at her, an unruly ball of black fabric, "I'm sorry, but you've got to go. We need to fight now," and she nodded, whitefaced, and left the room. Rodney turned back to him, took a deep breath, and said, "Okay, *look*, asshole," which was an opening for the ages. John immediately tried to derail him: "I can cancel it." "*What?*"

"The wedding. I can cancel it."

Rodney opened and closed his mouth like a fish. "Oh," he said, finally. "Oh. Yes, of course,

what a brilliant idea: *jilt* the alien princess in front of a thousand intergalactic witnesses! Or no, wait, hang on, I've got a better one: why don't we just put our heads up on pikes in the gateroom?" "*Rod-ney*," John groaned. "Look, I know what you're doing. And I know why you're doing it: ceremonies are important, blah blah, the children are our future; I got it, okay? It's the right thing to do—Ronon, that asshole, convinced me—but you want me to be *happy* about it? *Fuck you*, I'm not *happy*. I don't have a manual for this situation, and neither do you. So if you're telling me I'm doing it wrong, then *fuck you*, all right?" Rodney was out of breath. John stood there and tried to think of something to say. "I can't do this without you," John said finally. "Any of it." Rodney looked suddenly wary. "All right, look, let's just drop it." "Fine," John said; he was tired now, too. "Just, you have to know that..." and then he trailed off, because maybe Rodney *didn't* know. John blinked at him for long moments, watching emotions cross Rodney's face like clouds: worry, fear, and then something a lot more desperate. "You're indispensable," John said

finally. "You're like, the one really indispensable person. You just—you should know that." To John's surprise, Rodney turned away again, his mouth tight and unhappy. "*What?*" John demanded. "Nothing," Rodney said, but he was back to not meeting John's eyes. "That's fine, that's—very nice." He raised a hand to his head, briefly clutched at his temple, and ran his palm over the short spikes of his hair. "Look, can we please just not talk about this anymore?" "Sure," John said, and let it go.

12.

That night, in bed, he pressed up to Rodney in the dark and slid an arm across his chest. "I love you," he said. He'd practiced saying it in his mind all day, so it would come out okay. Rodney didn't say anything for a long time. "Yes," he said finally, and John let out a breath he didn't even realize he'd been holding, because okay, yeah, okay, good.

"No! No! Sir, you can't!" and there were all these goddamned Athosian handmaidens in white dresses, waving their hands in his face. "We have a custom, it is bad luck—" "You don't know what bad luck *is*," John said dangerously. "Get out of my way." They hesitated for a moment, and then they backed away, dresses fluttering, to let John into Teyla's private rooms. There were two more women in there, but John knew them: Davia and Hana, Teyla's friends. They looked up in surprise. "John," Davia began, coming toward him with her hands raised, "you shouldn't—" "I really need to see her," John said. Davia stopped, and looked at Hana, who nodded. "Tell her we are waiting outside," Hana said, and then the two women moved past him and out the door. John glanced over at the large, freestanding mirror that had been set up on one side of Teyla's new quarters, caught a glimpse of himself, and averted his eyes. He fidgeted in his new, heavy boots, his red vest and his gold epaulets and his stupid cape, which sadly, was now his

favorite part of the whole outfit. He wasn't sure what to expect when Teyla came out from around the high screens which blocked her from his view, but it wasn't the deep red color of her gown, and it wasn't the cape of embroidered silk and shiny beads, and it sure wasn't the huge headdress of what really had to be *feathers*. "I thought perhaps something understated," she said, and John laughed out loud. He went to her, and was relieved to find his own anxiety reflected back on her face. "Oh my *God*," John said, and Teyla nodded back earnestly, her dark eyes theatrically wide. "Okay," John said, relieved. "Okay. I'm glad I'm not the only one who's freaking out." "Oh, no," Teyla said, smiling wryly. "We have all clearly lost our minds." "You look beautiful, though," John said. "Like a beautiful, red—bird." "You look..." Teyla trailed off and bit her lip, her capacity for lying obviously strained. "That is not a native Athosian outfit," she said finally. "I am not really sure what that is." "Yeah, well, we clearly should never have let Ronon come to movie night," John said grimly. He yanked the cape to one side and collapsed onto Teyla's

sofa, legs sprawling everywhere. Teyla carefully sat down beside him, one hand coming up to steady her head. "I suspect that Ronon has had second thoughts as well. How is Rodney doing?"

John groaned and let his head roll back. "He started drinking at Block's around one o'clock. Seriously, this is going to be so ugly, you have no idea." He rolled his head to look at her and said, "We should get smashed later, too; what do you say?" "Oh, yes," Teyla replied seriously. "Absolutely," and the truth was, he loved her more than any woman in the world.

14.

He went down to Block's the long way, through empty, Rodney-restricted hallways, and let himself in through the back door. The tavern was technically closed, but Jeslin Block let the team use the back room as their clubhouse, plus he always left something on the warmer for Rodney, who therefore treated him with a respect that bordered on adoration. Rodney

was there now, sitting in front of a mostly-demolished potpie and finishing a glass of ale. He was dressed for the wedding; or at least, as dressed as he was going to get. All Earth-born Lanteans had been asked to wear something made in Pegasus, and while some people had really gotten into the spirit of the thing, wearing Athosian dusters and Malkanite-cut trousers and flowing Tarani silk dresses, Rodney had obviously adopted a policy of minimum compliance, and was wearing some regular earth-style pants and the sky-blue creel shirt John had given him. He looked nice in it though. The big surprise was Ronon, who was decked out in a white leather suit that looked terrifyingly like something Elvis Presley would have worn in 1973. John was just trying to frame the insult for maximum cross-cultural effectiveness when he heard what Ronon was saying. "It's just a *ceremony*, McKay," and God Almighty, were they all destined to spend the rest of their lives reassuring each other about this? Ronon's voice was soft and implacable: "He's not going to love her any more than he already does, and he already *does*, McKay, if

you haven't noticed, so I don't see what the problem is." Rodney's chin jutted up the way it did when he was about to be cutting, then he bit his lip. "You're very young," Rodney said instead, and drained the rest of his pint. John took a step back when Ronon's hand slammed down, hard and loud, against the wood table, but Rodney didn't even flinch, though his potpie quivered and slid an inch to the left. "I won't let you ruin this for me," Ronon said, and then suddenly he was up, on his feet and pushing out the back way past John. He did actually look very young.

Rodney looked up then, saw John, looked him up and down. "I think that outfit's actually starting to turn me on," he said. "I'll keep that in mind," John said, and pulled up a chair. "Are you ready for this?" Rodney asked. "You want something to drink?" and John could tell by the faint slurring and the particular slackness of his mouth that he'd had a couple already. He stared at Rodney's lips, wide-mouthed and wet. "No. Yes. I don't know," and suddenly what he wanted was for Rodney to bend him over the

table and fuck him stupid. He could picture it clearly. It would be hot as all hell. He leaned toward Rodney. "Fuck me," he said in a low voice, knowing that it was impossible, that there was no time, which only made it worse. "Fuck me hard," he said, and then it all came spilling out of him: "over the table, until it hurts, put your cock in me, sit on my—" and Rodney at least kissed him, deep and wet and sloppy-dirty, and that was kind of a relief. He calmed down a bit. "You're really kind of cute when you freak out," Rodney said. John slid his fingers into his collar and fished around until his finger hooked the chain, then pulled his dogtags off, over his head. He handed them to Rodney, who immediately closed his fist around them. His eyes were wide. "They're all I've got," John said, and then added, stupidly, "Don't lose them." "I won't," Rodney said.

15.

It was the single most traitorous act I have ever seen. The gateroom was jammed—people on the steps, people hanging off the balconies,

people crammed into every available space—except for the area right in front of the Stargate. Emmagan was waiting there with the priest, wearing a red dress and a headpiece made of feathers. And then Sheppard comes in and *gets down on his knees*, and everyone gasps, and he spends the whole goddamned ceremony kneeling in front of her and making promises: making promise after promise after promise. — Hal Royce, unpublished journal

The wedding was held late in the day; the afternoon sunlight struck the pink and yellow glass behind the Stargate. The gateroom was filled to capacity with visitors from a hundred worlds, dressed in a riot of colors and fabrics. The bride appeared first, stepping onto the platform in an elaborate red gown obviously meant to evoke the glories of Athosian society before its decimation by the Wraith. Many around me were moved to tears, not only by the visible reemergence of the Athosian royal line, but by the presence of so many people gathered together, in safety, under the Atlantis

shield. For those besieged for generations, coming together in numbers was itself a daring political act. The Athosian leader Halling came next, clad in simple brown robes; he was performing the ceremony. Then John Sheppard stepped up onto the platform and, guided by Halling, knelt before Teyla and pledged himself and his city to her. His voice quavered a little, but his eyes were fixed on her as he made his vows, only occasionally glancing at the parchment text Halling held for reference. The guests, the thousands crowded into the hall, were silent, all listening to John Sheppard's voice. He swore the usual marital oaths: love, honor, loyalty, and, crucially for the ceremony's political subtext, protection, both for her and her people. But then Sheppard pledged a series of more unusual marital virtues, at least for a bridegroom: he promised to be gentle, and thankful, and joyous; to face each day confidently and with compassion; to live with purpose and grace. It was a strange and wonderful series of promises, and my respect for Athosian culture deepened as I listened. At the end of this recitation, the bride reached out

for the groom and pulled him to his feet. "I accept you," she said, steadying him. From where I stood, you could see Sheppard shaking; they were both shaking. "Husband, I accept you," she said, and while I still believe that the primary purpose of the wedding was to cement a political alliance, there is no denying that both bride and groom meant what they said. It was, in its way, as real a wedding as I have ever been to. — Rosalind Croft, *City of Spires: A Memoir*, p. 58-9 Once the ceremony was completed, the crowd flowed out of the gateroom and into a high-ceilinged hall where a banquet had been prepared. The tavern owner, Block, had set up a series of huge, wooden casks with pumps, and the ale flowed freely. A band was playing, and an area had been cleared for dancing; some danced in couples, others in same or mixed-sex groups. The bride and groom moved through the crowd, meeting and mixing with their guests. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that Teyla Emmagan met and mixed while Sheppard stood beside her, or behind her, the very picture of gentlemanly deference. One could see, then, that she had

been brought up to be the leader of her people; she moved with all the grace and elegance of a queen. Dr. Philippe Severn, *Civilisations et mondes perdus* (trans. by Francine Mercier) p. 99.

The bride and groom left midway through the reception; I was standing near the door that they slipped out of and saw them go. They were flushed and tired-looking. I

caught Sheppard's eye as he slid his hand over the ATA keystrip. I smiled my congratulations, and he smiled back and immediately shepherded Emmagan out into the hallway. One of the other guests happily told me that they were off to make a child; everyone seemed to be hoping for a child: a Pegasus-born heir born with Sheppard's strong, natural expression of the ATA gene. I figured this explained why Sheppard had been laying pretty heavily into the ale throughout the reception. No pressure or anything. Jesus. —Lily Armitage, unpublished journal

John wondered, for a crazy minute, if he'd stepped into a flower shop; the room that had been set aside as their honeymoon suite was full of yellow-orange blossoms. "I feel like I'm going to my own funeral," John said. Teyla paused in her struggle to remove her headdress. "Thank you," she said, arms still over her head. "That is very flattering." John grinned and went over to help her. "Hang on, hang on," he said. "You'll rip your hair out," because there were a bunch of tiny pins holding the feathered headdress to her head. She stood, still but faintly impatient, while he pulled them out. "Hey, come on," he said, trying to distract her. "I gave you an opening." Teyla sighed and then dutifully took it. "We have been married three hours and I am already ripping my hair out." "There you go," John said. The headdress tilted to one side, and he gently pulled it off her head and set it down. "Better?" "Much. If you would just..." She presented her back to him, and he began to undo the long row of tiny buttons. "I am very warm in this," and

then she was shoving the red fabric down her body; underneath, she was dressed in a tan sports bra and shorts. She exhaled in relief and rolled her eyes, looking like the old, familiar Teyla again. "That is *much* better. Do you want help with your cape?" "Yeah, just—" but she was already undoing the buttons on his left shoulder. When the heavy fabric finally slid to the floor, he straightened and roughly yanked his shirt out of his pants. "Okay," he said. "Now it's Miller Time."

Teyla grinned as he poured them each a glass of cold, pale wine, and accepted the glass he handed to her. They clinked glasses and drank, and John took the bottle with them as they crossed the room to study the squat, silver machine beside the bed. It

looked a little like an old-fashioned canister vacuum cleaner, and it was blinking yellow and pink. "So this is it, huh?" John said. He drained his second drink and poured another. Teyla didn't dignify the question with a reply, just held out her glass. He filled it. "You sure you're okay

with this?" "We have talked about this already," Teyla said tensely. "That wasn't a yes," John said, and frowned. For a moment, Teyla just stared at the machine. Then she said, "Yes. I am okay with this. You know," she said, "you are not my first political betrothal." John jerked to look at her, surprised. "Really?" "Yes. I was promised by my mother to the son of a neighboring landsman before I was even born. Many years later, my father betrothed me to one of his allies, back when we believed that there might be safety in numbers. I myself entered a marriage agreement with a man named Lind, who was a brave soldier and an excellent ruler of his people." "So what happened to...?" John began, and then he stopped, because duh. Seriously. He was such an idiot. "Okay, so...that's not very encouraging." "You have survived the wedding," Teyla replied. "That is a good start." John felt his palms starting to sweat. "Should we do this thing?" "Yes," Teyla said, and together, they turned to the machine. They knew the principle—the machine was going to sample their DNA, combine it, and provide a

womb-like matrix for the fetus's development—but it took them a couple of minutes to figure out exactly how to operate it. As with most Ancient machinery, there were no helpful buttons labeled "on" or "off" or "press here"; along the top there were some raised Ancient letters, but John was pretty sure that was just the brand name. "All right," John said finally. "I think we just put our hands on it. Are you ready?" Teyla had a deer-in-the-headlights look that he completely understood; it was no doubt the same panic currently jackrabbiting in his own chest. "Yes," she said. "Ready," and together, they pressed their hands to the machine. John flinched as something pricked his skin and watched Teyla suck on her own bleeding fingertip, but the machine seemed to be working, now: the lights had changed from pink and yellow to reddish orange, and the oval canister in the middle of the device was starting to glow.

"I think—that's it," John said, feeling dazed and exuberant. "I think we did it." His legs were suddenly rubbery, like at the end of a really long

run: this was *it*, it was *over*, they'd done everything they were supposed to. He turned to share this with Teyla and saw joy and relief already transforming her features. "Teyla—" "Yes," she said, and they leaned in and pressed their foreheads together. For a moment, it was all right. Teyla's forehead was warm, and her hands were strong and familiar where she gripped his shoulders. And then everything changed, and he was leaning in to kiss her mouth and her hands were clutching his face, and then they were pulling at each other's clothes, trying to get to skin. Her breasts slid into his hands, soft and firm and Christ, so gorgeous, and her arms were wound around his neck. His legs gave way, and he sat down on the bed with her half-straddling his lap, and then she pushed at his shoulders and he went down like a ninepin, game over. He groaned and rolled on top of her, wanting to fuck her now, now: right fucking now. Her thighs came up around his hips, and they panted and ground against each other for a moment before she tilted up and he pushed into her. It was easy and sweet; their bodies knew each other

intimately from sparring matches and long nights on stakeout. Making love to Teyla was like reliving every mission all over again, like reliving everything that had happened since he first touched that goddamned chair. She rolled on top of him, gasping and straining, and he stroked her sweat-slick skin and put her breast in his mouth. Teyla closed her eyes and began to shudder, and he held her hips and thrust hard and fast into her, wanting to go with her, wanting to come with her. She let out a small, breathy sound that was a lot more dignified than his own incoherent moaning, and then they were shuddering together, and she was coming in his arms. He closed his eyes—sweat was stinging his eyelids—and held her tight. "John," Teyla whispered. "Oh, John," and John heard it as "husband," and thought, stupidly: yes.

17.

He opened his eyes and slipped out of bed, blindly fumbling for his pants, shirt, and boots. Teyla was snuggled deep in the bed's luxurious

blankets, and he stopped to tuck the quilt around her neck. He bent down and whispered, "I have to go," and Teyla made a contented sound and didn't open her eyes. "Mm," she said. "Yes. Go home," and he kissed her forehead before slipping out the door and down the hall.

The sky was just beginning to lighten from black to gray when John slid through the door. He went toward the bedroom door on autopilot, without bothering to put on the lights, and then stopped when he noticed an unfamiliar gray mound in front of the sofa. He narrowed his eyes, but even his with his sharpened vision, he couldn't

make sense of the shape: an impossibly huge lump of person with two arms and four legs— He drifted closer, frowning, and the strange shape suddenly resolved itself into Cadman, sitting on the floor in a huge, poofy, brown skirt. John could see a lot of rumpled silk and, beneath it, wadding out in all directions, some crinkly petticoat material, and in the middle of

that mess of fabric was Rodney, sprawled out with his head in Cadman's lap. Her hand, John saw in a flash, was *in his hair*, moving slowly, her thumb gently stroking his forehead, and some part of him went irrationally homicidal. "Sorry, sir," Cadman said softly, but John was still startled; he had *seen* her, but he hadn't understood she was *there*, "but I thought I'd better take him home before he did something stupid. He got really shitfaced," she said, a note of pride in her voice. "Yeah. Well. Thank you, Lieutenant," John said. "I can take it from here." He crouched down and shook Rodney's shoulder. Rodney let out a low groan, lifted his head from the nest of fabric, and said, blearily. "Laura?" "John," John said, and slid an arm around him. He hooked Rodney's arm over his shoulder, and tried to haul him up. Rodney didn't budge; he didn't seem to realize that John was trying to move him, and just stared at John like he was *fascinating*. But then Cadman was at Rodney's other armpit, Rodney's arm draped over her spaghetti-strapped shoulder, and they had lift-off; she looked like a princess, but man, she could *heave*. "So, hey," Rodney said, as

they steered him, white and sweating, to his feet. "You came back. Not that I thought you wouldn't, don't get me wrong, only I've been here before, in the summer of 1985—I think it was 1985, maybe it was 1986, I should remember, but I've blocked it out. I think I've blocked it all out," Rodney said, and John had no idea what the hell Rodney was talking about; he was focused on steering Rodney toward the bedroom, and just hoped that Rodney, pink and green around the mouth, wouldn't puke on his shoes.

As they guided Rodney through the narrow doorway to their bedroom, John darted a glance at Cadman, embarrassment and a strange, violated feeling layering over the roil of jealousy and guilt and exhaustion. They'd more or less tried to keep their private lives private, but one glance told the whole story: the large double bed, one of Rodney's laptops on one nightstand, one of John's books, *A New Theory of Political Economy* ("a little light reading," Rodney had snorted) on the other, a jumble of boots on the floor and blue and black clothes

mixed in piles. John fought down the urge to kill everyone in the world, and began to tow Rodney toward his side of the bed, knowing that Cadman would see that it was his side, that they shared a bed, that they had sides.

John and Cadman carefully settled Rodney on the bed; he was asleep almost instantly. Cadman blew out a breath and straightened; her dress was wrinkled, and one spaghetti strap had fallen down her shoulder. John supposed he owed her one. "Cadman; thanks." She showed him a crooked little grin, which reminded him of Rodney's. "No problem, sir," she said. "But keep an eye on him; he got really tanked, and he hasn't thrown up yet. So he's—" and she see-sawed her hand, "—still kind of fragile, you know?" John nodded, and met Cadman's eyes; he was pretty sure she wasn't really talking about Rodney's stomach. "Right," he said. "Got you."

The sun was coming up as he slipped into bed, so he darkened the windows. Rodney had rolled onto his side, and John gave in to the urge to snug up hard against his back. He bent forward and breathed in the sour, drunken smell of him, then slung an arm around him and squeezed, fitting his knees into Rodney's, trying to get as close as he could. He ran his fingers across the soft fabric of Rodney's pants, and slipped a hand into his boxers. Rodney stirred, and John curled his hand around Rodney's partly-hard cock and kissed the back of his neck. "Mm. Yeah. Good luck with that," Rodney mumbled, and was asleep again. John pressed his face against Rodney's neck, the sweaty, snoring, bad-smelling lump of him, and wanted to be here more than anything in the world.

19.

It was nearly afternoon when John woke up alone. The covers had been shoved back, and Rodney's side of the bed was empty. He could smell coffee. Groaning, he pushed back his covers, got out of bed, and found Rodney half-

asleep and hunched over a steaming mug in the kitchen. "How're you doing?" John asked, pulling up a stool. Rodney opened one eye and squinted at John. "On the whole," he said, "I'm glad I'm alive." He took a long slurp and closed his eyes in obvious bliss. Rodney's coffee was strong enough to raise the dead. "What about you? Did you turn on the machine? Congratulations in order and all that?" John had a sudden, uncomfortable flash of Teyla, above him, her head thrown back and—"Yeah," he said, squirming in his seat. "We turned it on. Rodney—"

"Can I see it? The machine? I'm not trying to horn in on your love-child, I just want to see it actually working. It must be incredible," Rodney mused, taking another swig. "I remember my sister saying after she got knocked up that no pregnant woman could possibly believe in intelligent design. At least it spares us from losing Teyla to first trimester nausea and third trimester flatulence. I confess I'd almost enjoy watching the mood swings." He mimed swinging a stick. "'Get me ice cream or *die*—'"

"Rodney." He should do this fast; like pulling a tooth. "I slept with Teyla." Rodney's face didn't change; he just nodded slowly and took another sip of coffee. From long experience, John knew not to rush in and fill the silence with explanations or excuses; it didn't help with commanding officers, and John supposed that significant others wouldn't be much different. Finally, Rodney put his cup down and tilted his chin up. "Well. I guess I would have, too, given that sort of chance," and that was like a 'get out of jail free' card, except that hadn't been it at all. "It wasn't like that," John heard himself say, and goddammit, he was such an idiot; this was how he always got into trouble: telling people the truth, and expecting them to understand. "Something happened, Rodney. Something—I don't know. Real." Rodney's face suddenly got that pinched look it got when he was upset. "Right. Yes. Of *course* it did—" "Shut up and let me finish, would you?" John forced his hands to unclench. "It's nothing to do with *us*—believe me, I've resigned myself to *you*—just, the wedding was—I didn't expect it to be—" but Rodney was rolling his eyes so hard that he

almost fell backwards. "No, of *course* you didn't, because you never see things coming. God! *I'm* supposed to be bad with people, but you—you could give *lessons*." Rodney was openly scornful now. "Say what you want about Ronon—and what I could say, given sufficient time, and perhaps a protective cage of some sort—but he understands people. You, on the other hand—" and whatever Rodney saw on John's face made him suddenly break off and shout, "It's *Teyla*! It's *Pegasus*! You married *Atlantis*, you dumb fuck!" and then, suddenly, "Shit, I'm going to throw up—" and he rushed from the room, hand over his mouth.

Volume Four

1.

Immediately after the wedding, and with rumors of an heir already circulating, Sheppard and Emmagan embarked upon a series of formal visits to various heads of state, leaving McKay and Dex in charge of Atlantis. This post-wedding tour was, unsurprisingly, orchestrated by Dex, who continued to show impeccable political judgment. The couple were greeted as visiting royalty, and Sheppard and Emmagan managed, through a combination of strength and diplomacy, to parlay that good will into a series of concrete alliances. As a result of the wedding and the subsequent tour, Atlantis signed forty new treaties, and the provisions of an additional thirty-five were significantly strengthened. —April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 230

Teyla Emmagan was a huge political asset during the tour: it was she, more than Sheppard, who was able to bridge the relevant cultural gaps and

thus successfully negotiate treaties and make alliances. Sheppard, always uncomfortable with public speaking and his diplomatic role, willingly took a back seat to his wife, frequently referring to himself as Teyla Emmagan's "consort" or "escort". This self-deprecation greatly endeared him to the peoples they visited, many of whom had feared colonization by the newly-strengthened Atlantis and its foreign-born leader. Pegasus had been expecting a warlord, but it was hard to cast the deferential and quietly observant Sheppard in that role. — Alfred Walson, *Atlantis: Year One*. , p.186

Everywhere we went there were crowds. People held banquets, threw parades; there were demonstrations of local music and dancing. It was a gold mine for me, of course; each visit was like an ethnographic Cliff's Notes. I was able, for instance, to learn of the Sargatta's proud heritage as a fishing culture: they served us a feast of raw and cooked seafood that would have made the Emperor of Japan blush for shame, and performed these incredible keening sea songs, which I recorded and recently sent to Kaye over in Columbia's

ethnomusicology department. At the other end of the spectrum were the people of Branu, a small but vibrant city whose luck it was to have been founded on a *karisi* mine. *Karisi* is used in the manufacture of high-end communication devices, and Atlantis has already adopted their highly flexible mic-radios, which are as popular there as mobile phones are here. *Karisi* also massively disrupts key systems on Wraith ships (scanners, visi-screens and so forth). Dr. McKay has stationed a team of scientists there, hoping to weaponize the technology. (He apparently won't go himself; he believes that *karisi* causes brain cancer, and no one can tell him different.) —Rosalind Croft, unpublished letter to Daniel Jackson, dated 15 March 2009

The four members of SGA-1 were intimate enough, and shared power naturally enough, that the governance of Atlantis was not noticeably disrupted during Sheppard and Emmagan's post-nuptial tour, despite the fact that the city's leader and

its premier military officer were away for substantive lengths of time. While most destinations on their tour were easily accessible by Stargate, others required long puddlejumper flights; the Lanteans did not possess their own interstellar battleships. Sheppard was an elusive figure in Atlantis at the best of times, refusing to be pinned down to a particular schedule or location, so it was difficult to track his offworld comings and goings. Hal Royce claimed that he could never be certain whether Sheppard was in Atlantis or not during this period, and it was this, more than anything, that might have saved Sheppard's life in the winter of 5 A.T. —Franklin R. Carroll, *Atlantis Revisited*, p. 190

2.

Sheppard and Emmagan had invited Rosalind Croft to join the retinue of ambassadors, advisors, and soldiers who accompanied them on their diplomatic tour. She was already taken with Atlantis, and believed this was an opportunity not only to study the many and

varied cultures of Pegasus, but to get to know Sheppard and Emmagan personally. "I liked them very much," she later wrote: "They were friendly and wry, and Sheppard sometimes made faces when the diplomats' speeches went on too long. Teyla Emmagan laughed a lot more than you'd think from the way the expatriate Lanteans described her, and Sheppard tried to bait her; she seemed to me to be forever biting her cheek against something he'd said. They were both extremely kind to me, which they needn't have been; they knew I had been foisted on them by their enemies. But they were gracious, and treated me no differently than any other member of the away party, which only made it more shocking when everything went bad." (*Spires*, 140) Croft wasn't the only one who was shocked; on the night of 17 January 5 A.T., John Sheppard moved with a cold-blooded swiftness that surprised not only the diplomatic team, but many of Atlantis's more recent citizens, who had never seen him in action. Hal Royce gave a dazed, first-person account of the rapidly unfolding events to the

SGC in his post-mission debrief of 13 February 2009:

We didn't see it coming. We didn't know it was happening. Everything was fine, had been fine. I spent the day talking to some of the Marines. I had dinner with Anneliese and Severn, who were talking about some project they were working on, something about vector-graphs. Croft had just come back from offworld—we were integrating, is what I'm saying. Everything was comfortable. I saw Lily before I went to bed. We met in the halls, spoke briefly; I don't even remember what we said, it was nothing important. No, wait: I told her Croft was back, and she said she had been to the

mainland. She liked to hang around with the pilots, she liked the puddlejumper, all the Ancient technology. I went to my room and went to sleep. I'm a light sleeper but I never heard the door open. When I opened my eyes they were near the bed, four Lantean Guards. The lights came on. Two of them grabbed my arms and pulled me out of bed, while the other

two aimed their weapons. Don't fight us, they said; we've got orders to kill you if you make trouble. I ignored them and fought anyway, but they overpowered me and dragged me out the door and down the hall. I heard screaming and turned to see them pulling Anneliese out of her room. She was in her nightgown. She was crying, and I broke free and threw a punch. They had me down on the ground almost immediately, and I felt a gun at the back of my head. I heard them take Anneliese. I heard Philippe gibbering in French and English. Then I heard Sheppard, and he said, "Take him to 4A. Now," and he sounded—like he was out of his fucking mind. The Guards knew it too, because they were all breathless and saying, yes, sir, and hopping to it. I got a glimpse of Sheppard as they hauled me up, and he looked like thunder, and I mean, I'd read his record but I'd never really imagined he could look like that. They pushed me into a small room, like an interrogation room—not one of the brigs, it had no forcefield. Sheppard must have been right behind us because he stepped in right after me and it was only the two of us in there. "What the

fuck are you doing?" I yelled at him. "What the *fuck*—" Sheppard was barely restraining himself. "What's your mission here? I want to know the *full fucking extent* of your mission here," he said. "Right *fucking* now." I wasn't going to answer that. I tried to bait him. "I know what you are," I said. "I see what you are. You're a fucking *dictator*, a fucking *tin-pot* dictator out here lording it over the natives with your *special magic genes*. And you're a faggot," I told him. "You think?" Sheppard asked, and he hauled off and socked me in the jaw. I fought back, he didn't stop me from fighting back, but even though he had ten years on me he beat the crap out of me. I was on the floor and he was just dragging me up to hit me again when the door opened. "*John*," Teyla Emmagan said, sounding like the voice of God. "*Stop*," and Sheppard held his punch. He stared at me, panting, and then suddenly his face contorted and he flipped me around and put me into a headlock. "John?" Emmagan said, but even she couldn't stop him now; he was yanking me out the door and pulling me down the hallway, pulling me by my *head*. I barely kept my feet. All

I could see was the weird Ancient linoleum, and then we went through a door and he was throwing me across the room. I crashed into the wall.

I smelled the blood before I saw it; blood, lots of it. We were in a control room, and when I turned, I saw her, Colonel Armitage, I knew it was her even though she was face down on the console. There was blood in her hair, her head had been smashed. I was like, what the fuck, what the *fuck?* and I must have said that aloud, because Sheppard said, "Me. I did it," and then, "So if you're up next, come and get me." I just stared at him. I just—I was like, *holy fuck, he's a lunatic, I'm going to have to take him out*, except then I heard what he was saying; he was taunting me, saying: "Come on, you have your orders. Now's your *big chance*," and honestly, I probably *would* have killed him if I hadn't seen the knife. It was on the floor, there was a lot of blood on the floor, but also this knife, and I— It was Lily's, I knew that; she was black ops, she had that kind of training, we'd talked about it: knives vs. guns, guerilla tactics,

the element of surprise. And the blood didn't make sense: she had a head wound, and there was blood under it, but there was also blood spattering the floor, blood splashing the wall. Not Sheppard's—he wasn't wounded—so someone else had been there. Sheppard had smashed Lily's skull for her, but that had been the end of it. I said, "I wasn't ordered to kill you." "Yeah, right," Sheppard said, but I told him I wasn't, I *wasn't*, and he began to look doubtful. I told him that if there was a plot to kill him, I didn't know anything about it. Which was true: I didn't know anything the fuck about it. I told him the truth: that I came to Atlantis on a diplomatic—that I *had been told* this was a diplomatic mission, and I knew of no plot to kill him or anyone else. The stone fell off his face like a mask, and he tapped his radio and said, in a voice that was cracking and strange, "Take him to the infirmary." It was like he'd given me permission to feel pain: he had broken my nose, my collarbone, and at least a couple of ribs. He was standing in the room with Lily's body when they took me out, and I wondered how long he was going to leave her like that.

Part of me still didn't believe it—that Lily'd tried to kill him, that Sheppard had killed *her*—and I don't think I really *did* believe it until they hauled me into the infirmary and I saw McKay. They were working on his hands. His hands were—he had cuts on his hands, bad ones: deep, slicing across his palms and up his forearms. He was getting stitches on one side, and it looked like they were doing surgery on the other, where she'd maybe slashed a tendon. That was all I saw; they got me out of there fast and moved me into a secured area. But they were indicative wounds: defensive, incurred by a novice to combat. McKay had somehow gotten between Armitage's knife and Sheppard, and when she cut him, Sheppard had killed her.

They taped my ribs and took me to the brig. The others were already there. We were still wearing what we had slept in. They'd all been questioned about the "true"

purpose of the mission, and they'd each answered that it had been diplomacy and intelligence-gathering. None of them had been

questioned further; I was apparently the only one Sheppard suspected of ulterior motives. I told them Lily was dead, but I didn't tell them how or why or what I suspected; I didn't want them to seem to know anything if we were interrogated again. We weren't; they let us sit there all night, and brought us trays of breakfast in the morning. We had barely finished eating when we were surrounded again. Croft moaned out loud, but the guards didn't abuse us this time, just led us to the gateroom. Sheppard was there. He looked like he hadn't slept at all. He looked at us and said, "You're out of here," then called out: "Dial the gate!" There was a series of metallic clangs. Then Anneliese went to Sheppard, and the guards' guns swiveled to cover her. She said, "I want to stay," and right then, I could have kicked myself for not telling everyone that Sheppard had killed Lily, even if it was self-defense. She should have known who she was dealing with. Sheppard shook his head, and Croft came forward and plucked at Anneliese's arm, trying to draw her back. Anneliese shook her off. She said again, "I want to stay. Not for a while, for good." Sheppard

looked hard at her. The event horizon formed in the Stargate. She told Sheppard that she knew what she was doing, that she really wanted to stay. She said Zelenka would vouch for her, that Sheppard should talk to him. Sheppard ignored her and waved his hand. Our bags had been packed. The guards began to herd us toward the gate, but then Sheppard said, "Not her." That's all I saw; we came through, Severn and Croft and me, and the wormhole died out, and Annaliese didn't come through. That's all I know. Royce's account has several elements worth discussing in detail. First, we have his almost offhand claim that he told Lily Armitage that Rosalind Croft had returned to Atlantis. Royce seems not to realize that, by doing so, he may also have informed Armitage of Sheppard's return, possibly determining the time of the attack. Royce also notes that Armitage spent the day "hang[ing] around the pilots," and that she was interested in Ancient technology; this also suggests she was gunning for Sheppard. —Mark Leredo, *The Atlantis Uprising*, p. 191

In his article, "The SGC's Real Target?" (*Journal Of Political Diplomacy*, OUP: 2010) William Summerville argues that while Royce clearly believes John Sheppard was the target of the assassination attempt, his testimony suggests the target was Rodney McKay. "We have very little first hand evidence of what happened," Summerville

notes. "Royce is the primary witness, but he didn't see the attack; he simply describes the crime scene and McKay's injuries afterward (35)." Summerville argues that the presence of defensive wounds on McKay's hands and arms, combined with Sheppard's apparent lack of injury, tells a different story than the one Royce automatically assumes. "Certainly, the SGC saw Sheppard as the primary insurgent, his natural ATA gene and long history of insubordination forming a dangerous combination. But Sheppard relied heavily on McKay's operational genius in the day to day running of the city, and Armitage could have

decided to attack Sheppard by targeting his closest advisors, who were, perhaps, easier targets (37-8)." Summerville doubts other elements of Royce's testimony as well. "Has no one noticed that we have only John Sheppard's word for it that he killed Lily Armitage? It was *McKay* who sustained the injuries; McKay's blood on the floor of the control room. Sheppard would have had an incentive to confess to the crime, but surely, it was McKay's crime to commit (43)." Paul Dugan strongly refutes this interpretation: "Summerville's argument is nonsense: Royce's assumption that Sheppard was the target is supported not only by the SGC's acknowledgment of the plot but also by Sheppard's own belief that Royce had orders to kill him. 'So if you're up next, come and get me,' Sheppard said, and this is unambiguous in context. Never mind that the mind boggles at the idea of Rodney McKay crushing someone's skull (219)." McKay biographer Denise Chapman agrees. "Rodney became a much better soldier than most people give him credit for, able to manage long hikes, successfully operate a variety of firearms, and even engage

in hand to hand combat. That does not mean that he would have been a match for a trained operative like Lily Armitage, not only because their skill-levels would have been grossly unequal, but also because he almost certainly would have hesitated before hitting a woman, no matter how deadly. John Sheppard, on the other hand, would have had no such qualms." Stanley Kairn, Sheppard's biographer, concurs with this assessment: "Sheppard had a history of good working relationships with women: Sgt. Major Lisa Ransom, Colonel Karen O'Reilly, Dr. Elizabeth Weir, and of course, Teyla Emmagan. He liked women, and respected them, and would have no problem at all punching one in the face." —Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.200

While we will never know for sure what happened on the evening of 17 January 5 A.T, we can make several educated guesses. It is probable, despite William Summerville's analysis in "The SGC's Real Target?" (*Journal Of Political Diplomacy*, OUP: 2010), that John Sheppard was the object of the attack. It is

likely that Armitage planned to ambush or otherwise surprise Sheppard; Armitage's military record, as well as her preference for knives, shows a distinct predilection for stealth. It is also likely that McKay stumbled upon or otherwise interrupted her approach; it is unlikely that he would have sustained the degree of injury Royce witnessed if Sheppard had been in

the fight. Royce's description accords with McKay having made a brave, if clumsy, grab for the knife while Sheppard's back was literally or metaphorically turned; it is not unreasonable to speculate that his injuries were sustained almost immediately as Armitage tried to ward him off. This likely gave Sheppard a clear shot at her, and Sheppard would not have hesitated; in fact, Armitage's death, which seemed to Royce to have been caused by smashing her head down on the nearest console, has John Sheppard's impulsive fingerprints all over it. — Tina Eber, *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 2.*, p. 37

Tina Eber's "reconstruction" of Operation Snow White is a true miracle of conjecture: her educated guesses are "likely", "probable", and

most reassuringly, "not unreasonable," and she then has the gall to tie John Sheppard to his "not unlikely" murder of Lily Armitage by his oh-so-hypothetical fingerprints. This is not to say I disagree with Eber in principle: Sheppard doesn't strike me as a fellow who would let a knife-wielding female carve up his chief scientific officer if he could help it, so yes, it's quite likely he wasn't looking. As a piece of analysis, it's right up there with William Summerville's moronic suggestion that Armitage wanted to kill Rodney McKay, as if any sane person would chase after the good doctor with a knife instead of, say, slipping him a cup of tea with lemon. Moreover, Eber doesn't address any of the really interesting questions presented by Royce's account, to wit: why did Armitage wait so long to launch her attack? If I were Tina Eber, I might make an "educated guess" that she simply never got the opportunity, because it would "probably" have been better, from the SGC's point of view, to eliminate Sheppard *before* he gave Atlantis to his bride as a wedding present and fathered an heir. In the event, Armitage's assassination

attempt was yet another in a long line of C.I.A. failures, but even had she succeeded, the SGC would have found themselves facing a formidable enemy in the broadly popular and well-loved Widow Emmagan. — Paul Dugan, review of Tina Eber, *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 2* in the *Cambridge Journal of Political History*, (Volume 42, Autumn, 2013, p. 24)

It is always difficult to know how seriously to take Paul Dugan. While cheerfully skewering Tina Eber in the Autumn, 2013 issue of *CJPH*, Dugan also makes a claim worth taking up: that Lily Armitage should not have waited until after the Sheppard-Emmagan wedding to assassinate John Sheppard. While I understand his arguments—that it would have been better to strike before Sheppard had a wife (i.e. a formal successor), and that Teyla Emmagan was a military powerhouse in her own right (and would have been even more powerful as the focal point of a massive outpouring of grief and sympathy), I can't believe that Lily Armitage—as authorized by the IOA, the Pentagon, and former C.I.A. functionary James Paisley—would

even have considered them. Dugan evokes the "long line of C.I.A. failures", but does not specifically evoke the history of right-wing thinking behind them. Those politicians

and generals who tried to assassinate Castro, funded the Contras, tried to overthrow the democratically-elected government of Guatemala, and sent Lily Armitage to Pegasus were not the kind of people to see Teyla Emmagan as someone who mattered, let alone as a force to be reckoned with. — Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 224

4.

He'd never been so glad for the miracles of Ancient technology, for the healing baths that turned the terrible red gashes on Rodney's hands and arms into a crisscross of white scars. The skin had puckered a little despite the surgeons' best efforts, so there was a faint ridge of flesh running down Rodney's left forearm, and another one crossing his right palm, like the seam on a glove. Rodney's right

hand had been badly cut, but the real damage had been to his left; the surgery had restored full movement, but he'd need physical therapy. John could hardly look at him. He went to the infirmary a lot right after it happened, and told the wall above Rodney's left shoulder that they'd deported the remaining Earthlings, all except Ostergaard. He reminded the clawed foot of Rodney's IV stand that Annaliese Ostergaard was the pretty blond Danish scientist, and nodded at it with interest when Rodney said that, no, she was a mathematician, and he knew exactly who she was because Zelenka had a crush on her and talked about her all the time. He tried to ask Rodney's scarred forearm if it was serious, Zelenka's crush, but his eyes skittered up Rodney's chest. Rodney was still wearing his dogtags, at least. He slid his hand into the gap of Rodney's kimono-like hospital gown, fingers searching for and finding a nipple, which peaked as he tweaked it. Rodney seemed easier to deal with in parts. John learned the rhythms of the infirmary, and the doctors and nurses learned to avoid Rodney's curtained

cubicle when John was around. "You could come back," John told Rodney's left nipple: it was glistening a little where he'd licked it, and he found himself mesmerized by the brown areola with its three scraggly black hairs. "I would help if you..." *needed to open a tight jar, or had trouble buttoning your shirt.* He couldn't find the end of that thought. He let it go. Somewhere above his head, Rodney said, "Maybe tomorrow. I'm comfortable right now," and John closed his eyes and said okay. The next night, John snuck a cup of coffee past the nurses and brought it to Rodney, who held it precariously between his hands, sipped at it, and then clumsily put it down, half-finished. "Thanks," Rodney said, looking away. "I don't know, maybe tomorrow," and John nodded okay to his unlaced boots and the weird Ancient linoleum.

Later, when they lowered the infirmary lights so there was nothing but the orange glow from the monitors, John gave him a long and excruciatingly slow blowjob, because he wanted to, and because he didn't know what else to do,

and because he really, really needed to hear Rodney's soft, ragged breathing and weird little moans. He wanted a cock in his mouth, wanted to feel hot, smooth skin moving over his lips and tongue. He closed his eyes and really gave himself over to it, relaxing into a slow, steady rhythm. Easy, so easy, sliding and bobbing and shallowly breathing through his nose, and he must have lost track of time because suddenly Rodney was chanting, "*oh god please now John please now John please—*" and John tightened his fist around the base of Rodney's cock and brought him off with hard, fast suction. He hadn't planned to spend the night, but Rodney drifted off into open-mouthed sleep almost immediately, and John fell asleep slouched in the visitor's chair. "That was pretty brave of you, McKay," Ronon said when he stopped by, and John jerked up straight in his chair because why the hell hadn't *he* said that? Christ, he hadn't said *anything*. "Though I'm going to have to teach you some real defensive moves if you're going to keep hanging around Sheppard. That won't be the last time someone tries to stick a knife into him." Rodney flinched

as he left, hard enough to rattle the medical equipment, and John could see it all flooding back. It flashed through his own mind, too, *seeing Rodney and Armitage locked close together like they were dancing, and not getting what was going on until he saw the spray of red droplets and Rodney's fingers, bright red and dripping*, and then Rodney was reaching out for him with those same fingers, white-scarred and trembling. John was halfway out of his chair even before Rodney said, "Come here, just come up here," and so he went, not even sure what to expect until Rodney put his arms around him and squeezed tight. Rodney flinched as pain shivered through his scarred arms, but he held on, hugging hard enough to hurt them both. "Rodney. It's all right—" But Rodney wasn't listening; he was tightening his arms around John's shoulders and muttering, "...promise me; promise me you won't..." "I *won't*," John said immediately, not sure what he was promising not to do, but willing to promise not to do it anyway.

"I thought she was going to kill you. I'm too old for this. No, seriously: I thought it would be great, you know, to finally have a little romance in my declining years, but I hadn't taken into account how busy I would be, and how you'd be the king of Atlantis and married and everything. It's too much to keep track of. There's not enough caffeine in the *galaxy* to—" and then suddenly Rodney was easing his grip and pushing John's shoulders away and saying, "Can't we just go somewhere for a while?"

For a moment, John couldn't figure out what he meant. "What, like a—vacation?" "Is that what they call it?" Rodney rubbed the circles under his eyes with the heels of his hands. "It's been so long, I don't remember." "Yeah. Okay," John said, nodding fervently. "Sure. Where do you want to go?" "Somewhere that isn't here," Rodney said. "Somewhere we could take off these goddamned radios for five minutes," and for a moment, they just stared into space and imagined it. "Somewhere with snow would be nice," Rodney added wistfully. "There was this one planet," John recalled. "I don't remember

which, it's all a blur. But we just went there, me and—" Rodney glared. John hurried onward: "—and they had big mountains and snow and these sled-things. Maybe they have skiing." Rodney looked thoughtful. "You know, I bet I could rig a engine onto a sled...." "Cool," John said, meaning it. Rodney cracked a sudden, tired grin. "You up for a Darwin award?" "Are you kidding? *Oh, yeah.*" "Come on," Rodney said, and scrambled out of his hospital bed. "Get me out of here." It was such a nothing thing—having Rodney at the kitchen counter, tapping at his laptop with one hand while rhythmically squeezing medically-treated Silly Putty in the other—but it made things feel almost normal, and John hadn't felt normal in months. He finished building the giant sandwich he was making, cut it in two, and slid half onto a plate. Rodney reached for it without even looking, like he had some special lateral sandwich sensor or something, and shoved it in his mouth. John rolled his eyes, only half listening to Teyla's voice in his ear; she was still reassuring him that she would be on top of things when he and Rodney took off for planet

Switzerland, as if he had *any* doubts on that. He slouched down against the counter, braced on his forearms. "*Thank you*," he said, pointedly.

Rodney didn't look away from the screen. "Hm? You're welcome." Then he blinked and said, "oh, wait; sorry; sandwich; yes." He waved what was left of it at John. "Thank you," Rodney said, then added smugly: "The king of Atlantis makes my

lunch." He leaned back triumphantly, wobbled on the stool, and leaned forward again, still clutching his food. "Yeah, well, the king of Atlantis would like you to shut up and eat so we can get out of here," John said, straightening up and waving a hand at the backpacks by the door. "We're pushing our luck as it is," and then he tapped his ear and said, "Teyla, look, I *believe* you: it's all good, it's great, and if you run into problems, just call me—" "No fucking way," Rodney growled. "—and if you run into problems, you're on your own," John said, and then he yanked his radio from his ear, threw it down onto the table, and jerked up his hands:

satisfied? Rodney nodded approvingly and took another huge bite of sandwich. "There you go! That's the spirit!" and John said, "mm-HM-hm-hm-hm," and looked significantly at the laptop. Rodney looked momentarily bereft before steeling himself and pushing the cover down. John crossed his arms, and Rodney sighed and took off his earpiece. "Yes, yes, all right. How soon before everything explodes, do you think?" "I don't know. Two or three minutes?" They exchanged tired grins. John slid past Rodney to get something to drink, and was surprised when Rodney made a play for him, hooked a leg around him and kissed him, hot and openmouthed. John closed his eyes and let Rodney push him up against the counter, let Rodney push hands up under his t-shirt and fondle his balls through his pants. "Hey," John said a little breathlessly, when Rodney's mouth slid around to kiss his ear; Rodney was a damn good kisser, "it was your idea to go skiing or whatever. I would have been happy just staying here and fucking." "Mmm," Rodney murmured, licking the shell of his ear and making him shiver, "such a class act. Such a cheap date—"

and John barked out a laugh and shoved him away. "Keep on like that and the king of Atlantis won't put out for you," John said. "What? After I was so brave and heroic and amazing and everything? I saved your *life*, remember? I fought a knife-wielding psychopathic bimbo—" "She wasn't a *bimbo*, McKay. She was in the Air Force—" Rodney stopped dead for a moment, looked him up and down, and smirked at him: "—to save your sorry ass, and I have the scars to prove it! Look!" He waved his hands in John's face. "See? I'll never play the piano again!" "You don't play the piano *now*!"

"No, but I could've! Taken it up again in my old age. Oh, shut up. Honestly, is a lifetime of sexual service too high a price to pay for—" Both their radios beeped simultaneously, and they jerked to stare at them, horror-stricken. "Don't do it!" Rodney yelled, flailing to stop him and actually hitting him instead. "Don't even look at it! It's like Schrodinger's cat; until we look at it, we won't know if—" but then the door chimed and so they really had to go and answer it. It was Radek Zelenka, breathless and

wreathed in smiles. "Good, good, we were afraid you had already left—" "Could've," John muttered, "if someone here didn't *need* six meals a day—" "—and you will really want to see this." Zelenka looked back and forth between them, nearly bouncing on his toes. "No, really," he said, hair flying everywhere. "You will."

5.

Rosalind Croft's account of the Sheppard-Emmagan diplomatic tour, while accurate as to specifics, is plainly biased by her enthusiasm and excitement. For instance, she seems not to have perceived Sheppard's real dislike for political socializing. This is perhaps unsurprising; Sheppard typically concealed his feelings under a surface of lazy charm. No doubt he understood (or had Dex explain to him) the tour's political and diplomatic value: the newlyweds not only brought home seventy-five signed treaties, but a series of highly valuable wedding gifts in the form of exotic delicacies, precious metals, and priceless

cultural artifacts. But Sheppard probably wasn't interested until the tour began to produce battle-significant results; namely, the fleet of Ancient warships offered to the Lanteans by the Quanati in the winter of 5 A.T. —Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 237

6.

"Stop it, you're *drooling*. Jesus, Radek, look at him: it's like his birthday and Christmas and the first day of school all rolled into one—" Radek's breath puffed out white in the cold air of Quana Nine. "The last day, you mean." "Don't tell me what I mean," Rodney said, his voice echoing strangely in the hangar. "Actually," John said, after taking a breath; it wouldn't be good if his voice came out all high and squeaky, "I think I'm having a Star Wars flashback."

"You mean, 'What a piece of junk'?" Rodney asked, turning to him. "Because that's where *my* mind went. These spaceships aren't exactly fresh off the line, are they?"

"No, but..." John bit his lip; but they were so beautiful. He took another deep breath. "Did you ever build those 1/22 model kits when you were a kid? Airplane glue and ten thousand pieces—" "Oh my God, yes—and all the pivotal pieces lost or broken or sucked into the vacuum cleaner before you were done. My stupid sister liked to steal the decals. These look like they're missing a few pieces—" "That first one looks pretty complete," John said, mainly to stop himself from shaking Rodney like a piggy bank and begging, *can you fix them can you fix them can you fix them?* "Maybe we can use that as a template to rebuild the others." "Hm; yes, maybe," Rodney said, looking more interested now. "Or perhaps we can cannibalize one of them," Radek said thoughtfully. "For parts; divide its systems between the bigger ships." Rodney's snort of derision was audible. "Well, yes, well, of course we *could* do that, except—stupid! We should fix *all* of them," and John had to take another breath to stop himself committing an act of embarrassing public hugging. "We've got the power to—hm, actually, what'd I'd *really* like to do is plug this

ship into Atlantis, see if she'll run a diagnostic for us—" Radek tsked in irritation. "Ah, yes, and if we could *fly* her to Atlantis. Oh, but *wait*—" Rodney wandered away, scuffling his boots across the ridged metal flooring, already talking to himself the way he did when he was thinking hard: "Hm, yes, set up a dedicated gate for databurst transmissions. Put Sheppard in the chair, see what he can get out of the computer. Hook up a ZPM, use it to power the station's manipulators and articulated robots..." and with Zelenka already drifting after him, John used his brief moment of privacy to execute a subtle little shimmy of delight.

7.

The IOA and the Pentagon were gripped by a kind of panic in the weeks following the deportation of the diplomatic team. The mission had failed in both its overt and covert aspects: it had succeeded neither in negotiating a functional relationship with Atlantis, nor in assassinating Sheppard and creating an exploitable power vacuum. From the IOA's

perspective, all the news was bad: they had hoped to find Atlantis in shambles, isolated and deprived, ruled over by a maniacal warlord. In fact, their intelligence revealed that Sheppard was a broadly popular leader and Atlantis was thriving under his governance: the political situation, in other words, was far from unstable. Paisley had hoped for a surgical strike: take Sheppard out, he reasoned, and his lonely band of exiles would quickly crumble. Nothing could be further from the truth.

— Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 231 Desperate for operable intelligence, the Pentagon conducted interview after interview with the returned members of the diplomatic team, hoping for some missed detail or exploitable weakness. What they learned made it obvious that Operation Snow White had been wrongly conceived as well as badly executed. The plan had been predicated on Sheppard's history as an uncommunicative loner; by this reasoning, his death should have thrown Atlantis into chaos. In hindsight, there were strong indications that Sheppard's character

had changed; Elizabeth Weir in particular described Sheppard's strong identification with and loyalty to his team. But it is easy to understand the SGC's failure to appreciate this, as those same reports also described Sheppard's acts of isolated heroism, strong resistance to authority, and almost fatalistic tendency to go it alone. But that was not the Sheppard they found in Atlantis. Far from an isolated loner, Sheppard was a near-invulnerable hydra, he and his team functioning almost as a single leader with four heads. With Dex masterminding their political strategies, Emmagan orchestrating the city's security, and McKay supplying him with almost unlimited power, Sheppard was able to dedicate himself entirely to strategy and coordination of tactics; moreover, his regime was strongly diversified. The more the SGC learned, the clearer the truth became: even if they had succeeded in assassinating John Sheppard on 17 January 5 A.T., the SGC would have been no closer to retaking Atlantis. — April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 238 Like many others, April Martin claims that John

Sheppard changed in Atlantis, that the "uncommunicative" and "isolated" loner described in military records suddenly became a team player and a people person. This is a gross oversimplification of Sheppard's character and ignores the fact that loyalty was always his defining trait; in many ways, John Sheppard was a team player who had never belonged to a suitably appreciative team. Moreover, for such a solitary person, Sheppard repeatedly chose to live within large institutional structures; he was a man who was comfortable in the barracks, at the communal table, or on the sports field. I am not claiming that he was gregarious, or even particularly charismatic; John Sheppard was not, in my opinion, a born leader. In fact, all indications point to a shy and surprisingly conservative personality who became a leader by deliberately overcoming his own natural sense of reserve. But that is a far cry from the almost disordered personality implied by so many recent biographical accounts. — Stanley Kairn, review of April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the*

8.

"They thought they were going to do this the easy way. They thought they'd kill Sheppard and McKay would *beg* to come back to Earth. They didn't take Teyla Emmagan or Ronon Dex into account, they didn't take Pegasus into account, Pegasus was spreading its wings—never mind that McKay wasn't so much into begging anymore. You could see them, the IOA, trying to get their heads around the fact that their stupid plan had failed and there was no quick and easy way to get the city back now. They could have done the right thing and opened negotiations, but they blew that chance with Snow White. Not that trade would have been easy; it was difficult to imagine what Atlantis could have wanted from America, from Earth. Was Sheppard going to trade us the secrets of the city of the Ancients for iPods and copies of *Happy Gilmore III*? "The IOA didn't want to trade or negotiate or compromise: they

wanted the city outright. They wanted to commission it as a weapon and use it to bolster Earth's defenses in case of attack. Our whole mission was a lie; anything less than the outright occupation of the city by natives of the Milky Way was seen as a traitorous capitulation to Sheppard and his gone-native attitude. They thought Atlantis was *theirs*." —Hal Royce, 18 August 2009

9.

It was Colonel Lily Armitage who had the final word on Atlantis, and ended up determining the IOA's next move from beyond the grave. On 17 January 5 A.T., the Lanteans had put the remaining diplomatic team members through the gate, and their belongings with them; in fact, Annaliese Ostergaard's personal things were sent through with the rest, despite her being given last minute permission to reside in Atlantis. Colonel Armitage's belongings were, understandably, not included, so Dr. Phillippe Severn was surprised to find Armitage's journal tossed in among his own possessions. "At the

time, I believed that this was a mistake, that in their haste to deport us, they had carelessly thrown our possessions into boxes," Severn later told Lisa Ellis. "But I now believe that Colonel Armitage intentionally planted her journal among my belongings so that it would be found." Severn had glanced at the notebook before turning it over to the SGC. It had seemed innocuous enough: descriptions of Ancient technology, of the key players, of the Sheppard-Emmagan wedding. But there was more between the lines. The SGC submitted the book to analysis, and discovered that Colonel Armitage had written a brief message in 2 DOT 7, an obscure military cipher. Only five words, but they would prove to be decisive.

ATLANTIS TAKABLE ONLY BY FORCE.

—Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p. 214

10.

"Give me that, uh, that, that, that, that, that—" Rodney's fingers snapped rapidly. John

contemplated not handing Rodney anything until he actually named something. Then he relented and slapped the spanner into Rodney's hand, which disappeared back into the guts of the Thunderbird's engine. John returned his attention to the hyperspace intake, which Rodney had just finished repairing. He compared what he was seeing to the electronic schematic on his computer tablet. Seriously, that couldn't be right, because the way it was set up would block the intake nozzle, and he didn't see how they were going to reaccelerate the inflow of vacuum to produce thrust.

"Rodney?" John said slowly, still focused on the schematics. "When you have a minute—" "Not now!" John sighed, took a final look at the diagnostic tablet, and picked up the prybar. He was elbows deep in the machinery when Rodney hauled himself out of the engine, his thinning hair sticking up wildly and a smear of blue grease on his forehead. Rodney blinked and said, "What are you doing?" "Nothing," John said, as casually as he could manage. "I was just—" It was too late. "What—what are you—" Rodney said, gaping and wild-eyed; he'd

gone from weary to wound-up in three seconds. "I just *did* that. I just *finished*, why are you—" "The intake was backwards," John said. Rodney boggled at him. "Backwards? That's—that's impossible, that's—" but John just grimly shoved the tablet at him. Rodney stared down at the schematic, then up at the ship, down and up, down and up. "Oh, well, all right. That looks right." John rolled his eyes, and Rodney burst out, "I could have been skiing, you know. I could have been sitting in a cabin somewhere near a roaring fire—" "Oh my God, here it comes," John muttered. "—warming my *horribly scarred hands*, which I got by—oh, yes, let's all take a moment to remember—*saving your life*—" "

"You know, some days I wish she had killed me," John said earnestly.

"—instead of lying here on my back on a cold floor on a foreign planet building your—" "Thunderbird," John supplied. Rodney looked almost mortally offended. "You are *not* calling this Galaxy Class warship a—" "Yes, I am,"

John said. "And that's one's the Mustang, and that one's the Corvette, and that's the Camaro," he said, pointing. "I'm the king of Atlantis. I get to name stuff." "And what do I get except *grief*?" Rodney's radio buzzed, and his hand shot up. "McKay, *what*?" His face changed immediately, though, and John knew it wasn't any of the scientists. "No, no," Rodney said, in a considerably politer voice, "it's fine," and then he was waving a finger at John and drifting away behind the ship—for what, *privacy*? Normally, John would have retreated to a strategic distance, or casually taken up some noisy activity like—hey, fixing the intake manifold on a hyperdrive engine, but instead he stared down at the ridged metal floor and strained to hear. Luckily, Rodney didn't really get the whole concept of "whispering." "No, I'm glad you—I was meaning to," Rodney said. "No, it's going very well, actually. As a clam, yes, though of course he wants to name them something stupid. Hm?" Rodney was silent for a disconcertingly long time, and then he said, "Well, I don't know," and then, "Of course, I—yes. What time? All right, yes," and then he was

coming back around the ship. John forgot to pretend not to be listening. "What was that all about?" Rodney's mouth tightened, and John didn't think he was going to answer. But he did: "That was Teyla," he said, handing the tablet back to John. "She wants to have dinner. With me," he added. "Not you; you're not invited. Members of your harem only." He wanted to scoff at that, make a joke, but he had a tight, sick feeling in his stomach. "I thought you and Teyla were...you know, all right." "We are. We're fine; we're having dinner tonight; without you; you're not invited; didn't I just say this?" Rodney reached for the spanner, then stopped and threw John a bone. "She's really been trying," he admitted. "With me. I should be trying harder with her." John's relief was almost physical; he couldn't stand having Rodney—and *Teyla*—

Rodney stood there, gripping and twisting the spanner. "We should all make more of an effort," he said finally, tilting his chin up. "Even though things have gotten complicated. Especially since they have. We're—" he said,

and faltered. "We're all of us still—" "Still team," John said, and met his eyes. "Still team. Yes," and then Rodney was grinning and stretching his back before turning again to the Thunderbird. "We should all play poker once a week or something," he said, squatting down to peer into the engine. "Especially since Teyla and Ronon broke up—" "Teyla and Ronon broke up?" Rodney shot him an incredulous look. "Yes? You know, I really don't believe you; could you *be* more oblivious? Don't you care at *all* who your wife is sleeping with?" "No," John said pointedly, crossing his arms. "I like dick, Rodney. And you're the biggest dick I know." The flat line of Rodney's mouth tilted up into a smile. "You say the sweetest things. Anyway, rumor has it that Teyla's taken up with that guy she's always—her shadow, what's his name, her second in command." For a minute, John couldn't think who he meant. "Naz Fallona?" Rodney pointed at him, then touched his nose. "Right, yes: that guy. Who's pretty good looking, actually, if you ask—ow, Jesus, what?" "What?" John repeated, as if he hadn't just kicked him. "I care who *you* sleep with." "Sweet talk all you

want, but you're still a psychopath. Anyway, I think Ronon was pretty devastated, but he just asked me about asking out Cadman. Obviously he has a type: he likes them petite and *extremely dangerous*." "Cadman, huh? Cadman's all right, isn't she? You know her better than..." but Rodney wasn't listening anymore, he was already crouched on the floor and muttering softly to the engine, apparently trying to guilt it into submission. John sat down on the floor beside him and turned his radio on. "Hey, Ronon, buddy; this is Sheppard. You want to go grab some beers later?"

11.

Operation Snow White had been attempted in relative secrecy, but there was no way to launch a full-scale military mission to Pegasus without alerting the whole SGC. As

expected, the idea was deeply divisive. Many within the SGC felt that John Sheppard had betrayed the U.S. military, and therefore deserved no more consideration than any other

enemy of the state. Sheppard had already been repudiated by the Air Force brass in a formal statement released on September 16, 2008; General Zachary Bell, U.S.A.F. spokesman, had called Sheppard "a disgrace" who had "dishonored the many fine men and women of the U.S. armed services." It was also commonly felt within the SGC that Sheppard's pro-Pegasus views marked him as "alien": "He basically put himself on the same level as any of the other alien races we encountered," said Colonel Paul Hamilton. "I didn't think we owed him and his people any more respect than we would have given any other hostile race in possession of a dangerous weapon." That weapon was Atlantis. "Oh, God, don't even tell me that; it makes me so angry," General Carter told Lisa Ellis, when Hamilton's words were put to her. "They didn't ask us [the members of SG-1] what we thought. They didn't dare put us in the equation. They knew what we would have said: we would have told them they were wrong. We would have told them they were crazy." General O'Neill agreed: "There're some things you just don't do. You don't sleep with

your best friend's girl. You don't shit where you eat. And you don't fire on your own people." But the IOA and the SGC were preparing to do just that: by the summer of 2009, they were in the process of outfitting not only the *Daedalus*, but two recently refurbished Beliskner-class Asgard ships, the *Critias* and the *Timaeus*, for battle. The ensuing bitterness nearly destroyed the SGC. — Franklin R. Carroll, *Atlantis Revisited*, p. 203 Two Asgard ships, the *Critias* and the *Timaeus*, were christened specifically for this mission and given politically significant names. *Critias* and *Timaeus*, two of Plato's dialogues, are the only existing written records which specifically refer to Atlantis, and, perhaps more significantly, they describe the Athenian victory over the aspiring empire of Atlantis. As Plato describes in *Timaeus*:

Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and several others, and over parts of the continent, and, furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt, and of

Europe as far as Tyrrhenia. This vast power, gathered into one, endeavoured to subdue at a blow our country and yours and the whole of the region within the straits; and then Athens shone forth, in the excellence of her virtue and strength, among all mankind. She was pre-eminent in courage and military skill, and was the leader of the Hellenes. And when the rest fell off from her, being compelled to stand alone, after having undergone the very extremity of danger, she defeated and triumphed over the invaders, and preserved from slavery those who were not yet subjugated, and generously liberated all the rest of us who dwell within the pillars.

The SGC saw themselves as the new Athenians, destined to contain the rapid spread of Atlantis's influence within the Pegasus galaxy. Like Athens, the SGC would shine forth to defeat Sheppard's army and to stop the consolidation of an imperial power in neighboring Pegasus. In their minds, they were heroes of virtue and strength. — Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 244 In *Atlantis*

Revised, Frank Caroll uncritically repeats Samantha Carter's assertion that the SGC "didn't dare put us in the equation," when planning their pre-emptive strike against Atlantis. In fact, SG-1 were *central* to the equation; Major Charles Eckhart, who took notes during many of these strategy meetings, claims that the SGC frequently discussed Jack O'Neill's conviction that "you don't fire on your own people." "They were aware of it, they were certainly aware of it," Eckhart testified: "Operation Snow White had failed at least partly because the SGC hadn't counted on Sheppard's loyalty to his team. This time, it was *all* they talked about. They figured that if O'Neill would never fire at a fellow member of the U.S. military, then Sheppard probably wouldn't either. There was a lot of talk about how Sheppard was from a military family, how he was estranged from his father, how he acted out against his commanding officers. All guesswork: shrinks spinning their theories. The thing that nailed it for us was how Sheppard had never left the service, even though they kept holding the door open for him. Three

demerits, three disciplinary hearings, but he hung on—and Sheppard wasn't stupid, he had other options, he had degrees. But he stayed; he took his lumps and he stayed. "So it came down to this: the SGC was willing to bet three ships that when push came to shove, Sheppard was a company man, blue down to his socks. For all his years of bullshit, Sheppard had still been thrilled with his promotion to Lt. Colonel; one of the shrinks joked that maybe Sheppard, like a lot of rebellious kids, was just looking for attention. They were gonna give it to him, all right: three ships, right down his throat. They called it Operation Prodigal." — Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.220

12.

On Quana, Rodney went straight to the hangar, but John stopped by the Winter Palace. He found the old king difficult to talk to, but liked his short and tomboyish daughter Galt, not least because it had been Galt's idea to give Atlantis their decrepit fleet of Ancient warships. John brought her a cask of Block's best ale, and Galt

had her servants lay out a cold lunch, and they sat around bullshitting for a while; he told her about golf, and she invited him to a game of karat, Quana's premiere sport, which was sort of like basketball except the balls sometimes mutated. John liked it a lot.

John had just gotten down to updating her on their progress—Zelenka thought they were ready to test-drive the Thunderbird, and Rodney had already begun to do some preliminary work on the Corvette—when the first blast hit. Not the palace itself, but near enough that there were stone chips and dust in the air, and John was up and out of there immediately, because he'd been there when Rodney set up the shield and knew that this was *not supposed to be happening*. He flung the door open and rushed into the chaos of the hallway, servants running to the windows and—There was a crack of thunder, the floor beneath him shaking hard enough that John was nearly thrown off his feet. People fell around him. The air was suddenly full of an acrid, metallic stench, and John knew what he would see

before he even shoved his way to the window: black smoke out on the horizon, rising up from the hangar. His hand was at his radio—"Atlantis?"—phoning home even as he was running through the hallway, because that was the important thing, making sure that—"Shields up! Lock down! Put up the iris!"—Atlantis was safe, even as he raced for the transporters and fought his way toward the hangar. The air around him shimmered and blurred and John yelled, "Out of the way!" as he yanked his gun out of his holster and moved toward it and fired at point blank range, blowing the side of the first Wraith's head off and then turning, even as the second one reached out for him, and moving close, closer, deep into its embrace so that he could shove the barrel underneath its chin and pull the trigger. His hand was at his radio—"Where the fuck is that *shield*, McKay?"—because Rodney McKay was *absolutely* on the other end of that radio somewhere. "I could use a little help over—" and there was another shimmer of light, but this time it was the blur of the shield going up. He reached the transporter, where a squadron of Quanati soldiers was

blocking the way. "Let me through," John demanded, waving his gun. "Sir, you can't!" one of the Quanati yelled. "The hangar's been invaded by—" "Wraith, yeah, I know." John yanked the machine gun out of the soldier's hands and checked the clip. "Get out of my way." "Sir, not you. I can't let you—" "Yeah, yeah," John said and shoved him aside. He stepped into the transporter, and stepped out a moment later into the stinging air of the hangar, already crouched low behind the machine gun. He coughed, then tugged his shirt up over his mouth and nose as a filter. It didn't help much. It would have to be enough.

John moved through the thick air and made out the three Wraith near the Camaro. They were crouched over a body—one of the Quanati mechanics, he saw as he drew

silently closer—sucking the motherfucking life out of him. John breathed steadily and silently through his shirt, trying to work out a plan. Only one chance at surprise: once he fired, all the Wraith would know he was there. And these

bastards were *feeding*, they would be *strong*, they would be hard to kill, and— Fuck, fuck, fuck, *fuck*, and he was moving fast and firing, the stream of bullets nearly tearing the head off of one Wraith, and pumping deep into the chest of another. The third Wraith grabbed him, snarling, the gun trapped between them. John fought blindly, the world white behind his eyes, tuning out the pain of his screaming muscles and slamming the Wraith back against the ship's outer hull. It reached for his chest, and John twisted his finger around the trapped machine gun's trigger and fired up into its arm. It screamed and jerked backward, and John pulled his Glock and fired into the maw of its open mouth, splattering white goo across the Camaro's hull. He turned to look at the shriveled thing that had once been a human being. The eyes were huge and pained in the skull-like face. The poor bastard blinked slowly. Once. Twice. He couldn't leave him. Not like this. Not as *food*— "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry," John whispered, and shot him. There was no time to grieve, he knew that. The automatic gunfire echoed through the hangar. The Wraith

would be on him in a minute. Still, he took a moment to squeeze his eyes shut against the smoke, and then he dropped to the ground and fast-crawled under the Camaro, dodging open panels and hanging wires. There were no Wraith on the other side. Now he could see the still-smoking remains of the Thunderbird, and— He was on his feet and running toward them. Hall and Sullivan were dead, Kelly was unconscious and wounded, and Zelenka— Gun first, he whirled around, not even sure what had ticked his internal sensor. But there were five of them, and he was firing, evading left and right but not wanting to run for it because—Kelly— Zelenka— He'd made two kills and wounded the third before they grabbed him, ripping the gun from his hands and sending it flying, clattering to the metal floor. Hands on him, those horrible, sucking hands and Christ, the smell of them, all teeth and rot. The Wraith he'd wounded came up smiling, blood darkening the leather on its shoulders, and taunted John with delicate long-fingered touches to his face and neck. John struggled to break free, but the clutch of their hands was like iron.

The Wraith's smile widened and John jerked as he felt the first burning touch of its splayed hand. *So this is how it ends. I tried, at least. I tried. I tried*—and the blast was like a punch to the face, dizzying, knocking his head backwards. He was falling, legs softening under him. He tried to put some steel into them, to straighten up and

find his balance. He teetered, turned drunkenly, and saw Teyla, surrounded by guards and carrying the largest and most beautiful gun he had ever seen. "Boy, am I ever glad to see you," he said, and passed out. A cool, wet cloth touched his face, and he smelled the warm and familiar scent of her before he opened his eyes. "Teyla?" he said, and turned to press his face to her. "Yes," Teyla said, and then, because she knew him better than anyone: "Atlantis is secure. Ronon is in charge. Rodney is alive and uninjured, Radek and Sandra will be all right. One of the warships has been destroyed, the others are damaged but salvagable. Five of our people are dead, and six Quanati. An additional fifteen Quanati were culled by the Wraith. Also,"

she said. "I am not a boy." John, his face pressed against her leg, muttered, "Yeah. I noticed." Teyla's hand briefly touched his hair. "Are you all right?" "Yeah," John sighed, and let himself have exactly five more seconds of safety and comfort before pushing himself up, out of Teyla's lap. They were in a quiet corner of the karat court; behind Teyla, people moved slowly between the army cots that marked out lines and rows across its polished floor. "I'm okay. I killed twenty thousand Wraith. Okay, thirty. Fourteen. Seven. It seemed like a lot of Wraith." Teyla smiled sadly as she cupped his face and drew his forehead down to hers. John closed his eyes and let himself go to her. They breathed together for a moment, and then Teyla asked, low and hesitant: "Did they take...?" "No," John said immediately, though he could still feel the burn on his chest. "Nothing much. Like twenty minutes. Probably the last twenty minutes of my life where Rodney's yelling at me for not wearing sunscreen while I die of cancer. It's kind of a favor, really. It'll heal," and he thought that was true: he'd had close calls before, and worse feed marks, and they'd

healed into faint irregular patches of skin on his chest. Teyla straightened and looked at him with concern. "But I would like you to go to the infirmary. Just in case. The Wraith—" "Honest, I'm fine. Oh, and hey: thanks." He gave her a wet, smacking kiss on the cheek.

"Oh my God. I can't leave you two alone for a *minute*." Rodney sat down on the cot beside John and anxiously looked him over for damage. "Are you all right?" "Yeah, I'm fine," John said. "What about you, what happened to you?" Rodney snorted and waved his hand irritably. "Fine, fine; I hit my head; I knocked myself out, it was a very exciting battle for me." He looked at Teyla and said, "What, I get nothing? You marry *him* and all of a sudden, even with a head wound, no hug, nothing?" Teyla smiled, put her arms around him, and let him fall forward against her neck. John scrubbed at his face. "I can't believe how much this sucks. What the hell happened?" He shoved at Rodney's shoulder. "We gave them a ZPM. And *shields*—" Rodney lifted his head and glared at him. "I'm really not ready for a strategy

meeting, all right?" "Well, I'm sorry, but you're all out of sick days," John shot back. "You're saying we can't go *home*, take a *shower*, have a fucking *cup of coffee* before—" "No, we can't!" John yelled. "Because they killed twenty-six people and blew up my Thunderbird! I want to know how the fuck that could happen!" and Rodney drew himself up the way he *always* did when he was about to lose his shit—except Teyla cupped a hand around Rodney's neck and whispered something to him, and whatever she said made Rodney blow out a long breath and say, tightly, "All right. Yes. I'll get on that."

13.

Two hours later, they met in the briefing room. Rodney looked like shit, soot and dust darkening the worry lines on his face. John figured he probably looked like shit, too: only Teyla looked like herself, and she'd killed more Wraith than any of them. John began the meeting. "Okay, so what the hell happened?" Rodney scowled at him. "Eloquence incarnate, as always. Here's an answer you'll hate: I don't

know." He typed a sequence on his laptop and a hologram sprung up over the table: Quana, spinning in orbit, the hangar, the Winter Palace, the area's shield. "It was a planned attack, that much is certain," Rodney said. "They knew about the Thunderbird, and that we were getting ready to launch it, because they hit it with pinpoint accuracy, relatively speaking. And they didn't touch the Camaro or the Mustang."

"So they were spying," Ronon said. Teyla asked sharply, "Long-range sensors, or someone on the ground?" Rodney's scowl deepened. "I don't know that, either; Atlantis doesn't have sensors in that area, and the Quanati's technology is—well, I won't say quaint, because god knows we've seen *quaint*, but they're not far from the radio waves and vacuum tubes stage of things." "Okay, but that's not—" John waved a hand, tried to collect his thoughts. "We gave them a ZPM. We set up a shield. I see the shield right there on the diagram, so how did—" "Oh, sorry, when I said I *didn't know*, obviously I meant I didn't know anything except *how the shield was disrupted*."

Because I like to mess around *during moments of great crisis*." Dr. Baines glanced nervously at Rodney and coughed. "The shield was down very briefly. Less than a minute. Forty-eight seconds, in fact." "—right, yes: a mere forty-eight seconds, which was enough time for the hive ship to blast the Thunderbird to *blazes* and beam down a squad of *goons* to—" "We'll need to send someone," Ronon said. "To the grieving. Not you. An ambassador—" "What happened to the hive?" John asked. "Can we—" "No," Rodney said. Anger rose in him. "I didn't even say what I—" "Yeah, I heard you anyway: no. A rescue is out of the question," Rodney said. "They hit hyperspace the minute the shield went up. They could be anywhere by now." John crossed his arms, barely able to contain himself. "Okay, so you understand this is *bad*, right? The Wraith broke through Quana's shields—" "Yes, it's bad. It's bad! It is very, very bad, but—" "—which are the same as *our* shields. So I need you to fix it. Now. *Yesterday*. We need—" Rodney's face was like a fist. "Anything else you want me to do while

I'm at it? Cure cancer, eliminate hunger, bring peace to—?"

"No," John said, and stood up; he didn't have time for this. "Just the shields, thanks." He sat down with Teyla and a couple of her guys to talk strategy. It wouldn't be easy for the Wraith to sneak up on them; their long-range sensors now covered the whole quadrant. They'd been building their drone arsenal since the Wraith attack of last year, and then there was John's favorite: the Death Star blast weapon. But John wanted contingency plans: hell, he wanted his contingency plans to have contingency plans. The Wraith had figured out how to disrupt a shield: what else had they been working on? Teyla outlined a plan to stake secondary shields over key sectors of the city and then a plan to fight the Wraith hand to hand. "We will herd them into bottlenecks," she explained, while Naz Fallona stood at the holographic map and pointed: there and there. "We will concentrate Guards at these positions," and again Fallona pointed. John saw the virtue of the plan immediately: they'd have the jump on

the Wraith from all sides. "We should have both superior numbers and superior firepower," Naz Fallona said, coming back to the briefing table. "As well as a tactical advantage." Teyla nodded her agreement. "The question of numbers is an important one," she told John. "The Wraith are not used to encountering armed resistance of any magnitude. Generations of cullings have left most worlds depleted and helpless to mount a defense. Occasionally, a world will have weapons, but rarely strength in numbers. But Atlantis... Atlantis has that strength, as well as the strength of its technology." She gazed at the map intently, and then added: "It is an advantage that even the Ancestors did not have. The tradition of ascension meant that the population of Atlantis was always in decline, and the Ancestors did not invite immigration, as we have done. They depended on their technology to compensate for the loss, but I do not believe machines can compensate for human effort, human intelligence, human judgment." "No, me neither," John said. "When push comes to shove, it's people, not machines, that get things done. But our

population also makes us a target: the Wraith won't be able to resist the concentration of humanity here. We're a goddamned smorgasbord—" "But," Teyla interrupted, "we are also the survivors of many worlds. We have lived through many battles and cullings. We are wily and strong. We are—what is the expression I have heard you use?" She frowned, and then her mouth curved into a satisfied smile. "We have not just fallen off the turnip truck, John."

John radioed Rodney periodically throughout the day, and got: "Working!" "Busy!" "Still don't have anything!" and "What part of 'I'm trying to figure this out, please leave me alone,' don't you understand?" for his answers. He finally went to check on Rodney personally, but Rodney wasn't in his lab; instead, he found Rodney up in the apartment, grimly surrounded by computers. He looked up defensively when John walked in, and John braced himself for an argument: Rodney's best defense was always offensive. Sure enough. "I'm tired of you treating me like a goddamned *calculator*. oh,

yes, punch in the data, McKay spits out answers. I'm not a *robot*, Sheppard; I'm a *human being* just like you—well, to be honest, some days I'm not sure about *you*—and I've had the same shitty day as everyone else. I get *tired*, and I get *cranky*, and it was *my* warship that blew up, *my* weeks of work wasted—not to mention, *hello*, I probably have a *concussion*. Just because I happen to be consistently brilliant doesn't mean I can't have the occasional off-day. It's ingratitude, is what it is: honestly, you save everyone's bacon *a few thousand times*, suddenly that's the baseline for your whole job performance. It's not fair, I tell you!" John had gone to the kitchen, cut himself some brown bread and sharp Tilean cheese, and drunk a glass of juice during this diatribe; now, he stretched and reached over his head to tug off his shirt. Food, check; shower next. He'd tuned Rodney out somewhere around "consistently brilliant," so he hadn't quite realized that Rodney'd stopped talking until suddenly Rodney was in front of him, wide-eyed and silent. "What?" John said, genuinely confused for a moment. He'd forgotten all about

the feeding marks until he saw them on Rodney's face, heard Rodney whispering, "John, oh my God," and then Rodney was kissing him, and kissing him. Rodney's fingers skimmed up his chest, ever so gently, brushing over the splayed burn marks—and then Rodney's other arm was curling around his neck and flexing, drawing him in, holding him close, and in a flash, the tenderness was gone and they were sparking, almost biting as they kissed and shoved and rubbed against each other. Grunting and already panting, John forced Rodney's head back so that he could suck on his neck, on that little bit of tendon just underneath the jaw, and felt Rodney blindly groping his cock through his pants. He tried to shove Rodney down there because *Jesus*, what he wouldn't give for a blowjob right now, but Rodney had other plans, tripping his feet out from under him and pulling him down to the floor.

It was fast, it hurt his back, it was *great*—having Rodney on his knees and scrabbling blindly on the counter for—something, butter, oil—with his

pants around his ankles. Yanking him back and trying to rub off against him. Biting his earlobes. Grinning like a maniac when Rodney moaned and yelled and eventually shoved him away by his *face*. Falling backwards onto the floor and lying there, mostly naked and laughing

his ass off, until Rodney came down hard on top of him, triumphantly clutching the small blue jar of Trinoldian margarine. Licking his lips and making a grab for it, getting it and holding it up, away, muscles straining. Rodney grabbing his wrist, hard, twisting, kissing him hotly when he let it slip from his fingers. Smears of margarine on his thighs, on his balls, on the outside of his knees when Rodney pushed them open and back. Feeling his spine melt as Rodney moved inside of him, but still managing to say, "Jesus, McKay! Fuck me like this—a few thousand times—and I'm going to make it the baseline of your job perf—" "Oh, shut *up*," Rodney gasped, and pushed John's knees hard to his chest. Later, John mumbled, "I don't think you're a robot," which turned out to be the wrong thing to say, because Rodney jerked up, dislodging

John's head from where it had been comfortably resting. It banged onto the floor and goddammit, okay, maybe a bed now. "No," Rodney said, sitting up; he looked disheveled, tufts of hair sticking up in weird directions, but wide awake. "No. Not a robot. Obviously. But—" "No butts." John sat up, too, wincing; stiff and sore and seriously too old to be fucking on the floor. Also he needed to take his hairy ass to the shower, pronto: his belly was matted with come and he smelled like the dead. "I mean, obviously I depend on you. We all do. But—" "No butts. I'll figure it out. The Wraith aren't very smart, which is reassuring. Not as smart as me, anyway." Rodney was already turning inward as his mind circled back to the problem. "It must be something simple, something I'm not seeing, forest for the trees—" John touched his arm. "Tomorrow," he said. Rodney turned instinctively toward his computers. "But the simulations, they might—" "*Tomorrow.*" John hauled Rodney up and pushed him toward the shower.

14.

The door chimed while it was still dark. John came awake, disentangled himself from the heavy weight of Rodney's limbs, and moved silently to the door.

Teyla's face was illuminated by the low lights of the hallway. "We waited as long as we could," she said. "But you needed to be told." He was already nodding grimly, bracing himself for it, even though he thought he already knew what she was going to say.

"Hive ships," Teyla said. "Nineteen of them. They just passed the long-range sensors."

15.

Most histories chronicle the events of A.T. 4 - 5 with the goal of elucidating the Terran-Atlantean conflict and forget that Atlantis was fighting a much more immediate conflict: a galaxy-wide war against the Wraith. While the Wraith are

typically mentioned as an underlying cause of the Uprising, few historians seem interested in tracing their impact on Atlantis beyond this, writing instead as if Sheppard was focused solely on Earth. This self-centered view interprets all of Atlantis's Pegasus-centered policies—the encouragement of immigration, the numerous trade agreements, the arming and defending of allied Pegasus worlds—merely as challenges to the IOA. In fact, they were designed to protect the peoples of Pegasus from the many thousands of Wraith, who had neither gone away nor given up. — April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, p. 295 The Wraith are in many ways the most terrifying enemy imaginable: rational intelligence in the service of blood-thirst. Their biological imperative to feed not only prevents rational negotiation, but also gives them a certain moral authority: they must eat or die. Most creatures this unevolved in their physical needs have achieved neither the Wraith's highly individualized nature nor their high levels of technology: so, for instance, while killer bees make hives, have a highly-organized society,

and share the Wraith's instinctive communication abilities, they cannot *invent*, they can not *strategize*; they do not *think*. — Jacqueline Frommer, *Cruel Evolutions: A Biological History of the Wraith*, xvi. Atlantis had been attacked by the Wraith in the fall of 4 A.T. and had destroyed all four hive ships easily. This must have come as a shock; the Wraith would not have seen this kind of firepower for generations. Their anger and fear was no doubt exacerbated when they discovered shields protecting many of their traditional feeding grounds. Sheppard's Atlantis had thrown down the gauntlet: *You will not have us. Not any of us*. Little wonder that the Wraith took it as an act of war; it *was* an act of war. The Wraith struck back at the earliest possible opportunity, testing their shield disrupting technology at an offworld base before launching a full-out assault on the city itself. — Caroline Lambert, *The Politics of Pegasus*, p.273

Rodney blinked at him a few times, then pulled on his bathrobe and went down to the gate room in his slippers. Ronon was already there, bent over the monitor, wearing a pair of baggy canvas pajamas and a grim expression. Rodney nudged him aside and started typing furiously. Ronon shrugged and came over to stand with John and Teyla. Together they watched the nineteen blips slowly moving toward them. Blip. Blip. Eventually Rodney lifted his head. "Nineteen hive ships," he said. "Moving on a direct axis from MC4-3002. They'll be here in six days; that's 161 hours." Nobody said anything. They looked at the monitor. Blip. Blip— Rodney glared at each of them in turn. "You know, right now I really miss Elizabeth. She at least had *platitudes* to offer in times of crisis: 'We can do this!' or 'Guys, we're going to get through this!' or—" John rubbed his face wearily. "Six days is better than five days?" "Oh, that's poetry." Rodney looked disgusted. "I can see why we elected you king; oh, *wait*—" "We have weapons," Teyla said firmly. "And

many ZPMs. Those ships will never reach Atlantis; we will see to it." Rodney looked intently at her, and then he was nodding and throwing significant looks at John as if to say, ha-ha, see, see, *she's* got the leadership thing; do it like that; asshole. John shot back a look of scorn and opened his mouth to—"I've got cake," Ronon said, and hooked his arm around Rodney's neck. Rodney looked up at him hopefully. "Really?" "I'll give you some if you figure out this shield thing," Ronon said seriously. "Okay," Rodney said, but it wasn't so simple. Forty-six hours of calculations later, and Rodney still didn't have any answers. The hive ships came closer.

17.

Sometimes, when Rodney was anxious, he slept with both arms around John and his face pressed to the middle of John's back. Rodney slept like that all the time now. John didn't sleep at all.

18.

He woke Rodney up in the middle of the third night. "Forget the fucking shield," he said, shaking Rodney awake. "I want a bomb, can you build me a bomb?" Rodney was flailing to sit up. "I—yes, I—how big a bomb?" "A *really big bomb*," John replied grimly. "I. Yes. Sure. What do you want to—? I mean, where, how are you going to—?" John pulled the covers over Rodney's head. "Just build the bomb, Rodney. Let me worry about the rest."

19.

He left Rodney malevolently tinkering with a ZPM and took Radek Zelenka back with him to the warship hanger on Quana. "Colonel, you do understand that we can not possibly get any of these warships operational in time." Zelenka nervously pushed his glasses up his nose. "Rodney spent weeks on the Thunderbird, which was already—" "Right, yeah, uh-huh. Look, I don't need them to actually *be* operational," John said. "I just need them to *look* operational. I need them to—" and then his radio screeched, and a voice said in his ear,

"Sir, we have a communication from Atlantis. I'm patching it through," and then Ronon was saying, "You gotta get back here." "Oh, Christ, now what?" John muttered under his breath.

20.

"—wouldn't even have *seen* it, we were all focused on the 26 degree axis, but then the klaxon went off and, look, look, *there* they are, coming on a parabolic curve from header 32, 79, 67," and the monitor went zoom, and zoom, and yeah, there they were: three more blips, moving in a standard two-one formation.

"They're not taking the normal intergalactic route," (uh-huh; right); "I think they must be navigating with reference to M9W-484 instead of M4C-312 for some reason," (some reason; he knew the reason) and also, they're not using their subspace identifier," (big surprise) "—but who cares, *whocares*, because they're *here*," Rodney said elatedly, straightening up and grinning at him. "Like the cavalry in an old American movie. Say what you want about the SGC, but they have great timing; they always

had great timing. We can put the bomb on the *Daedalus*, cloak her, and send her out to drop it in the middle of the hive-cluster. I'll make sure it's on a timer. I'll make sure that—"

"Rodney," John said softly, and Rodney looked at him expectantly. "They're not here to help." Rodney just looked at him. "They're not here to help, Rodney," and Rodney didn't seem to understand, and then all at once he did understand, and looked away fast.

21.

They determined that the SGC ships would reach Atlantis seventeen hours before the hives. "It's not like they're gonna side with the Wraith," Ronon said; he was slumped in his chair and looked fucking exhausted. "I mean, maybe they weren't *planning* to help us, but when push comes to shove—" "They will *not* side with the Wraith," Teyla said with soft desperation. "They *can* not. Not when they know what the Wraith *are*—" Rodney didn't say anything; he was lost in his own thoughts.

"Maybe," John said finally; it was all he had. "Look, I don't know what they'll do. I don't know anything anymore." He sighed and rubbed a hand over his head. "We've got to be ready for anything, is all." Later, when they were alone, Rodney suddenly came out of his abstracted state and blurted, "You know how this ends, right?" John couldn't look at him. "Yeah." "This story ends with all of us *dying*. This story of—of—a bunch of *noble revolutionaries*, and our *principles*, and—" Rodney suddenly clamped his lips together, and John was about to say he was sorry; God, he was so sorry, when Rodney surprised him by saying, "This is the best thing I've ever done. I'm so glad I got to be here with you," and John had to cover his face fast, and try not to make noise, because *Jesus*.

Volume Five

1.

Of course, a showdown with John Sheppard was inevitable; Sheppard had managed to get under the skin of every authority figure and commanding officer he'd ever had. Throughout his military career, Sheppard was shuffled around, isolated, repeatedly disciplined, and still, there was an underlying sense that he thought himself superior. The urge to smack him down was apparently irresistible, a universal constant like the speed of light. It is interesting to note that Sheppard is always described as a man whom *other people* found charming. In fact, based on the historical record and the documentary evidence, this charm of his would seem to be largely mythical. — Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 331

No doubt John Sheppard expected some military conflict with Earth: he was a good

enough soldier to know that there would be no peace until there had been a contest of arms between them. But in his article, "Forever Looking Toward The Sky: John

Sheppard and the Atlantis Experiment," Gabriel Pearson theorizes that Sheppard may subconsciously have wanted the IOA to take the burden of leadership from his shoulders. "Sheppard had spent most of his life in a resistant mode," Pearson explains. "He was more used to opposing power than to wielding it. Moreover, he had always provoked strong retaliatory reactions from authority; he would not only have been anticipating the blowback, he might well have welcomed it. It would have allowed him to relinquish the heavy responsibilities of command, which he never sought and for which he was never really suited." (Pearson, 23.) The mission plans filed on behalf of the *Daedalus*, the *Critias* and the *Timaeus* indicate that the SGC intended precisely this gentle wresting of power from Sheppard's hands. "Operation Prodigal was called that for a reason; it was designed to bring

Sheppard back into the fold," General John Kruger explained. "We had decided to treat this almost as a family matter. Sheppard was part of our Air Force family, but he was a rebellious boy and always had been. But rebellious sons need discipline more than obedient ones; it's how they know you care. You can't give up on them, or cut them off, even though they kick at you; they just kick at you to reassure themselves you're *there*. Most rebellious kids, they're scared shitless deep down, and Sheppard fit that profile perfectly. It scares them to get away with stuff, and it was likely that Sheppard had already gotten a lot more than he'd bargained for. We figured it was time to call him in, the way you call your kids into the house for dinner; they might yell and scream at you, but underneath, they're grateful for it, believe me." Major Charles Eckhart agrees: "This was exactly how the SGC thought of it, as a display of parental strength: the three warships forming a united front. They thought if they held firm, Sheppard would yield; they were counting on his complex and contradictory relationship to power: he liked to buck it, he

liked to be beaten down by it." —Thomas Lesso, *The Lost City: Atlantis*. p. 221

Nowhere are the psychosexual dynamics of the military-industrial complex more on display than in histories of the SGC's final battle with Atlantis, which read as if they were written by John Milton or some other overwrought religious visionary. The cast of characters includes Atlantis, the eternally feminized and helpless city who is simultaneously a deadly and destructive siren; John Sheppard, whose complex intellectual and ethical negotiations with the military culture he both loved and distrusted are routinely rewritten as some kind of sadomasochistic disorder; Teyla Emmagan, who, despite being the leader of a people whose survival is a testament to their social cohesiveness and intellectual creativity, is repeatedly rewritten as some kind of intergalactic Pocahontas; and Rodney McKay, who is portrayed as some

bizarre cross between Wernher von Braun and Ethel Merman. The only characterization more

offensive is 'the amazing strategic brilliance of Ronon Dex'; no matter how often this story is told, Dex's brilliance apparently never fails to be surprising. Descriptions of the patronizingly named "Operation Prodigal" are typically accompanied by pseudo-psychoanalytic analysis of John Sheppard's character, the gist of which is, "He was asking for it." Sheppard is depicted as a man actively begging for his own comeuppance, as if he would have been grateful, really, to the SGC for taking this pesky little Ancient island off his hands. Few historians have the guts to tell the truth: that there was simply no way in hell that the IOA was going to let Atlantis go without a fight, even if it meant killing Sheppard, even if it meant killing all of them. —Madeline LaScala, "Rereading Atlantis," in *A Journal of Feminist Political Thought*.

2.

He'd never been particularly sympathetic to Rodney's yelps of "Busy!" and "Working!" except he was trying to rewire the

puddlejumper's goddamned weapons pod and suddenly everybody had a stupid question. He realized that he didn't even have Rodney's level of patience when he was reduced to yelling, "Fuck off, please!" and flinging his headset away, realizing only belatedly that the "please" probably didn't mitigate the sentiment. Someday, when they weren't between a rock and a hard place, he was going to have to apologize to Rodney, but hey, he bet that day wasn't coming *any time soon*. Then Rodney arrived and launched an entire *volley* of stupid questions. "What in God's name are you *doing*? Why are you messing around with the puddlejumper's? Don't you care that there are three SGC warships at the door, demanding our unconditional surrender? Where the hell's your stupid radio?" "This. Because. No. And there, on the fucking floor," John said, and then, jerking his head wildly, "c'mere, grab that wrench, tighten this," and Rodney made a snorting, impatient sound, but he did grab the wrench and tighten the bomb claw down. Rodney dropped the wrench. John let his aching arms fall. "Seriously," Rodney said,

looking at him worriedly. "The SGC. What should we be—?"

"Seriously?" John brushed sweat out of his eyes with his arm; his fingers were sticky with that weird blue lubricant the Ancients used on their ships. "Nothing. I don't give a fuck about the SGC; I've got to think about the Wraith." Rodney looked unconvinced, and opened his mouth to protest, but John headed that off by saying, "I'm going to use the puddlejumper to drop your bomb on them; what do you think?"

Fifteen different expressions collided on Rodney's face; it was almost comical. "The puddlejumper? I thought you had Zelenka prepping the warships—" John shook his head. "They're empty shells: no propulsion systems, no life support. But we'll kit them out with shields, dummy up the readings, and use them to set off fireworks: distract the Wraith from the real action. I'll need to uncloak to drop the bomb," John said grimly, "and then I'd like to haul ass before the quadrant explodes. Thing is," he added, throat suddenly tight, "I'd like to

survive this mission if at all possible." Rodney clenched his jaw a bunch of times, and then said, "Well, that's something, at least," and then, "We need you upstairs. We're having a meeting."

3.

Ronon was already slouched in one of the conference room chairs, warily watching the SGC warships circle the holographic screen. "Hey," Rodney asked, sliding into one of the chairs opposite him, "did they stop the stupid loop?" "I turned it off," Ronon growled. "It was harshing my vibe." "Loop?" John asked, looking from one to the other of them. "What...?" "Oh, you know," Rodney sighed. "'The *Daedalus*, *Critias*, and *Timaeus*, as emissaries of Stargate Command, representing the *International Oversight Advisory* committee of the *United Nations* of the *Planet Earth* hereby demand the *immediate* surrender of the *city* of Atlantis to their *duly* recognized'—blah *blah* blah *blah* *blah*. *Surrender Dorothy*, is what it comes down to. They were on endless repeat for a while."

Ronon craned his neck back to look up at John. "We voted you Dorothy." "Yeah, thanks," John said, and smacked him as he passed. "I count on you for that shit." Teyla arrived a moment later, a little breathless and escorted by guards, who paused to salute John before leaving. Ronon looked at her with interest. "How did it go?" "Very well," Teyla replied with satisfaction. She took a seat, turned to John and explained, "We wanted to make sure that everyone in Atlantis was aware of what is happening, both in terms of the Wraith hives and the SGC ships." John winced suddenly; he never thought of that stuff. "Did they hear the—whatever it was, the announcement? 'Surrender Dorothy'?"

"Yes, there were many who heard that broadcast," Teyla said, and then frowned. "Though I do not understand who Dorothy—" "Not important!" Rodney interrupted, not looking up from his laptop. "Do they want to leave?" John interrupted, feeling this was the important point. "Because if they do—I mean, we can gate at least some of them out to—" "Leave?" Teyla asked, arching an eyebrow. "No. I heard

no wish to leave." "Yeah, it's funny," Ronon said dryly, "but they don't want to hand the city over to the next bunch of warlords. They just barely got used to *you* guys." "However, they *would* like more regular and open communications between the government and the people," Teyla said. "There is some talk of perhaps starting some regular channel of—" Rodney jerked up. "Oh my God, they've invented journalism!" He turned to John and said, "Hurry: let's surrender." "Have the ships made any threatening moves?" John asked Ronon. "No," Ronon said, and stroked his beard. "Though they can't. Our shields are at full—" "Right, good. So forget 'em," John interrupted, and then he leaned forward and touched the console. The holographic view responded to his thought, widening rapidly until the black cloud of hive ships was visible, dwarfing the SGC blips. "The Wraith'll be here in twelve hours. Except they won't, because we're not gonna let them get that close. And not just because of the shield disruptor; Rodney's bomb is big enough to—" He turned to Rodney and asked, "How big is it? Big enough to destroy a planet?" Rodney

looked suddenly guilty. "Yes," he said. "A planet. Or two. Maybe two or—" "Right, so we need to do this before they enter our solar system," John said. "Radek's setting up the dummy warships—there," and the holograph responded to his thought by showing them the spot, marked by a row of white dashes, "to catch their attention. That's our best shot: far out from us, not near anything inhabited, and close to a gate—here, this one," and the console marked the spot, and showed them the address. "I'll take the jumper and keep cloaked until they arrive. Then I'll trigger a distraction, launch the bomb, and—" "John," Teyla said softly, but he couldn't let her stop him; not now.

"—haul ass for the gate. I'm pretty sure I can get there," and he was; he'd worked it out: simple math: distance and velocity, and why the hell did everyone think he wanted to die? He was suddenly, irrationally angry at all of them. "I can," he said again, and suddenly he was standing. "And if I can't—I mean, you tell me who can do this mission if not me." He let himself look at them, then: Teyla's serious and

concerned expresssion; Ronon looking grave but determined; Rodney's—Rodney wasn't looking at him. He was focused unhappily on his laptop. "There is no one else," Teyla said quietly. "You've got to," Ronon agreed. John looked at Rodney, who was still staring at his laptop. A moment later, he registered the silence in the room and looked up. "What, am I supposed to vote?" he said in a tight voice, and then: "I can't vote on this. I abstain." "Right," John said quickly, and checked his watch. "I'll go in an hour; that'll give me time to do a little recon before the hives show up at the rendezvous—" "*John*," Teyla said again, and Christ, hadn't this been decided yet? He looked at her, and saw on her face that it *had* been. "There is something I would like you to see before you go."

4.

The machine had been moved to a small, dark room off the royal chambers, where he was supposed to be living with his supposed-to-be wife. The last time he'd seen the device, it had

been a reddish-orange color. Now it was glowing a pale, misty green, and John had lived in Atlantis long enough to know what that meant. A purplish-blue signified 'female' to the Ancients, and that weird, alien green was— "Oh my God, it's a boy," Rodney said, and pushed past him and Teyla. John hung back in the dark by the door, unable to move, barely able to breathe. His heart was hammering in his rib cage, his mouth metallic with the taste of panic. Rodney had gone in close, and now he was slowly circling the machine in open-mouthed fascination.

"That's incredible," Rodney said, almost to himself. "That's the most incredible thing I've ever—look at that interface. Some minutes, they just—they were so goddamned brilliant." He stopped and bent over, peering into the green mist, and then said, excitedly, "Oh my God, I can see him! He's there, he's—" and then Rodney broke up

with laughter. "Oh, for the love of..." he said, and looked over at John. "He looks just like

you." Teyla moved toward the glowing green light; she looked radiantly happy. "I am glad to hear you say it," she told Rodney. "I have thought so as well. Many of his features are—" "Yes, yes, of course: look at that *nose*, the shape of the *ears*. The *hair*—" Teyla arched her eyebrow at him. "I have hair as well." "Yeah, but..." Rodney snorted and waved his hand at the machine. "How can he have so much of it? Isn't it only six months?" "Yes," Teyla agreed; she had bent next to Rodney to peer into the canister. "It is about that, perhaps a bit longer. Oh," she said softly, her face going both serious and jubilant. "Surely he must be born soon." "But—" Rodney started, and then he straightened up and popped his hands together and said, "Oh, oh, oh. Right, of course: I'm an idiot. Longer days, longer months: six Atlantis months is, what, eight and a quarter?" Teyla looked confused. "Eight and a quarter of what?" and it was right then that John decided to make a run for it, turning and swiping his hand over the door key. He had to get out of here, he could get up to the puddlejumper bay before anyone caught up with him. He could—he could

get out of here, take off, blast through the stargate and do couple of extra recon loops. Make sure the warships looked convincing. He could— He gripped the doorframe tight, hung on, braced himself. Except he couldn't do that. To Teyla. To Rodney. To— That would be. Unforgivable—and so he turned, rolling so that the wall was at his back, and let the door slide shut again, closing off the rectangle of light. The room was murky, and he had to fight off the feeling that he was underwater. Teyla and Rodney were looking at him, their faces tinted pale green. The joy had gone; they were frowning. Man, he'd killed that moment but good. He swallowed through the tightness in his throat, and fumbled for words. "I—love you guys," he said finally. "I do, I just—I think I need some time to—" Teyla's face cleared with understanding. "Yes," she said. "Yes, of course, John," and then she took Rodney's arm and resolutely pulled him toward the door, and John realized that she had it all backwards, that she wanted to give him time, *here, now*, alone with—

The door slid shut, and for a moment, he couldn't move, couldn't breathe. The canister glowed softly on the far side of the room. Okay, he had to get a grip. He could just stay here and catch his breath. He didn't have to, nobody was going to make him—but he was already edging toward the machine, carried by legs that clearly weren't on the same page as the rest of him. He hadn't seen the device since his wedding night, and it had seemed a lot more mechanical then: round and silver, with its empty core. Now that empty core was full of thick, viscous fluid, and there was a shiny membrane floating inside. He had to go, he should go *right now*, except Teyla had wanted him to see this, to see—him. John crouched down to look. There was an indistinct blur on the far side of the canister, and then it floated closer, and John's breath caught in his throat. Dark hair, and he could see right away what Rodney was talking about, because he recognized his own pointy nose, his own ridiculously-shaped ears. Fine, black eyebrows arched over the baby's smooth brow; *eyebrows*, for Christ's sake. They reminded him of Teyla,

and now that he was looking, he saw her in the shape of the baby's face, his high cheekbones and the bow of his upper lip. The wrinkly arms and legs were bent, the umbilical cord floating in the water, and below that, the boy's penis and weirdly swollen sac—and it was that which suddenly slammed it home for him: this was a boy, this was his little boy, his *son*. He pressed his fingertips to the canister. The machine lit up at his touch and he jerked back. But then the baby *moved*—turned, kicked a foot, stretched its pudgy limbs out toward John's sweat-smudged fingerprints, and John fell to his knees and pressed both hands against the glass.

5.

Judging from the tone of Ronon's voice, he'd been buzzing John for some time, though John hadn't heard a thing. "Sheppard, goddammit! We need you down here!" John blinked, tore his eyes away from the canister, and looked at his watch. "I can't," he said, hauling himself to his feet and turning his back on the glowing green light. "God, I lost time; I've got to get to the

jumper, I've got to—" "You can't go anywhere," Ronon said grimly, and John broke into a flat-out run. The command center was in chaos: Rodney was already there, bent over a console; three other scientists were clustered around him, shouting out readings and handing him tablets. He glanced over the balcony and saw Teyla on the gateroom floor, surrounded by troops. He looked at Rodney. "What—" he began, but Rodney waved a frantic hand in his face, shoos him away. He turned to Ronon, who flipped his hand at the screen.

For a moment, he didn't see anything: just the orbiting SGC warships, maintaining their pointless blockade. He was about to shout that he didn't have *time* for this macho pissing contest, that he had nineteen fucking hive ships on their way to

Atlantis. And then he saw it, the new thing in the skyline. Those bastards. Those fucking *fucking*— "Where did that come from?" John shouted, and when nobody answered him, he strode over and grabbed Rodney bodily, and

shook him. "Where the hell did that—" Rodney shoved back with surprising force. "From the belly of the *Daedalus*, where do you think?" he shouted back. "And don't ask me why we didn't pick it up on our scans; the fucking thing's inert unless it's on!" It was on now, the wormhole blazing blue and strong. John stared at the Stargate. "Oh my God, we are so screwed," he said.

6.

The Battle of Atlantis should be memorialized as a story of hubris, with an epitaph from Oscar Wilde: "For each man kills the thing he loves." The IOA, in its pig-headed determination to hold on to Atlantis, lost the city forever. Some battles cannot be won by military force: not when there are principles at stake, not when winning means violating a people's right to self-determination. One would think that there would have been at least some thought given to the Revolutionary War, to that earlier time when a far-off colony decided they wished to live by local laws, local customs, and local rules. In the

eighteenth century, the distance between Philadelphia and London must have seemed as vast and unbridgeable as the distance between Earth and the Pegasus galaxy; perhaps more so. We write history so that we may learn from it, and yet we never do. After recovering Atlantis from the very mists of legend, we tried to enslave her, leash her, break her, and then tried to smash her golden mechanisms like the brutal, spoiled children we are. Atlantis is gone, already vanishing again into the white mist of fantasy. Perhaps that is where she belongs. Perhaps her history will only be remembered as the hasty scribbling down of dreams. —Ronald Koble, *From Rising to Uprising*, p. 278 There's something about Atlantis that engenders a kind of hysteria in the history-writing classes. This madness keeps historians from the sober practice of their trade: an orderly transcription of the facts as we know them. True, there are substantial gaps in the chronological narrative: things we do not know about the Battle of Atlantis, things we will never know. But that should not reduce us to metaphysics and poetry.

There were, of course, survivors. After months without contact, the *Timaeus* limped into view of Earth's sensors, her return to the Milky Way impeded by a badly

damaged hyperdrive. The fact that the *Timaeus* returned at all is a tribute to the ship's scientists, particularly astrophysicist Dr. Cecilia Levine and engineer Major Martin Hunter. Levine and Hunter were enslaved to the *Timaeus*'s hyperdrive engine as to a temperamental and malevolent god, but together they managed to coax the ship into making the series of small jumps necessary for the intergalactic journey home. The *Timaeus*'s crew was tired and starving but mostly intact, and their testimony forms the basis of the historical record, such as it is. General Joseph Pirelli, the ship's captain, could not confirm the destruction of either the *Daedalus* or the *Critias*, though he testified that both ships had sustained heavy fire. The hull of the *Daedalus* had been breached, and the ship was veering dangerously leeward; Pirelli recalls thinking that she was going to burn up in her rapidly

decaying orbit. The *Critias* had gone dark. "We couldn't tell if that was a deliberate strategy," Pirelli told the IOA hearing board, "or if her systems had fried. She looked black, like she'd been in a fire; there was carbon scoring all along her hull, and no visible power or light." The captain and crew of the *Timaeus* wanted to give aid, but they themselves had taken fire. Their scanners and communication systems were damaged, as well as their hyperdrive engine. They tried, and failed, to make contact with the other two ships. Most disquietingly, the *Timaeus* could not get a read on Atlantis. As Pirelli testified before the IOA investigatory board: "It was chaos: the space between us was full of debris, shrapnel, smoke. We couldn't see the city on the monitors, couldn't get any clear readings off our scanners. Our visual contact was limited: there was a white cloud where we expected Atlantis to be, but what the hell did that mean? Had we destroyed her? Damaged her? Was she lying in wait, preparing to finish us off, or had she just flown away? Look, our whole mission was designed to preclude violent engagement: we were

supposed to cut off their supply routes, and if we forced them into flight—well, there were three of us and one of them. There wasn't supposed to be a firefight. That just wasn't supposed to happen." Faced with uncertain intelligence, and aware of his ship's crippled state, Pirelli made the decision to withdraw both from the battle and from the Pegasus galaxy. "We had to weigh our ability to affect the battle in our damaged condition against the need to bring news back to the SGC," Pirelli testified. "We were highly conscious of the fact that if we didn't make it back, Earth might never know what had become of us."

Pirelli's decision to flee proved controversial, though it was ultimately upheld by the IOA hearing board. It is unfortunate that the crew of the *Timaeus* was unable to confirm the survival or destruction of Atlantis, but that hasn't stopped my fellow historians from concluding the city is gone forever: that it has been destroyed,

disabled, or otherwise lost. The lack of evidence either way doesn't seem to have given my noble colleagues the slightest pause, but that isn't surprising. It turns out that G.B. Shaw was right all along: history doesn't repeat itself; the historians repeat each other. —Paul Dugan, *A Political History of Atlantis*, p. 342

The IOA's simulations of the battle, constructed from the *Timaeus*'s reports, indicate that Atlantis likely sustained considerable damage. We know that the city lowered her shields; we know that our own ships, two Beliskner-class Asgard cruisers, as well as the USAF's *Daedalus*, were equipped with the Horizon weapons system, which had been successfully tested on the USS *Apollo*; we know that the Horizon had been used against a target with exactly Atlantis's profile: the Replicator-city on the Asuran homeworld. We have General Pirelli's first-hand testimony of a "white cloud", as well as the absence of any clear sensor readings: a fact which Pirelli takes as evidence of scanner failure, but which might also indicate a successful targeting of their power devices. But it does not matter. Operation Prodigal was

an olive branch, and Sheppard's depraved refusal to recognize the bond between his people and the USAF servicemen manning those ships, his denial of the deep bond between the Earth-born members of his expedition and the world that nurtured them and their civilization for centuries, marks him unprincipled and sadly irredeemable. We could have helped each other, worked together to build our societies and fight our enemies. But Earth cannot waste her natural, technological, and intellectual resources on such an ungrateful nation, and so we must turn our eyes to other skies, and leave what is left of Atlantis to struggle on against the Wraith alone. Still, we do not do so without sadness. In hindsight, one realizes that the death of Colonel Marshall Sumner was not merely a tragedy; it was a catastrophe that would impact the future of two galaxies. They say that one man can change the course of history. This is all too true, but as history shows us: it is rarely a good thing. — Thomas Lesso, *The Lost City: Atlantis*. p. 290

"McKay!" "What!" "You've got to turn that thing off!" John couldn't take his eyes off the screen, off that goddamned orbiting Stargate. Around him, the control room was chaos. "I've got to get out of here, got to hit the Wraith now or—" He forced his eyes down to his watch, and Christ, his window was—

"Raise them," Teyla said, pleadingly. "Explain to them that—" Ronon shook his head. "They're jamming us." John turned to Sgt. Weskett. "Dial the gate," he said. "Keep dialing." Weskett looked back at him helplessly, but complied anyway. "Sir..." "It's pointless." McKay was bent over, working furiously, but already shaking his head. "You can't open two wormholes at the same time, not at this distance, and they can just keep dialing—" John went over to him and said, in a low, desperate voice, "Then give me a solution." Rodney straightened up and looked—like he'd never looked before, helpless and a little sad. "*Something*," John insisted, but Rodney didn't launch into his usual frenetic motions, shoving John away, or saying, "Yes, yes, all right, give me a minute; I'm not

Superman." Rodney just stood there, his body gone still in a way that Rodney was never still, and looked at him with eyes as blue and huge as the sky. "I can't—" Rodney said helplessly. "Not while their ship's DHD is—" "Sir," and this was Weskett again. "Dial-out failed, sir. What should I do?" "There's no simple way to—" Rodney said, his voice pitched low. "Not without—" "The hell with them," Ronon said, and his face was hard. "Forget the bomb, let the hives come: they'll take care of this. Your friends want to put themselves in between—" "No—Jesus!" His hands curled into fists. "I don't want this on my goddamned doorstep!" "Sir—" Weskett said. "Fucking three-way clusterfuck—I said no!" John shouted at Ronon. "I won't have it! Sky full of ships, trapped like rats—" "Sir," and this was Brock, sitting at the weapons console, frowning and tapping his radio. "They're broadcasting again, sir. 'The *Daedalus*, *Critias*, and *Timaeus*, as emissaries of Stargate Command—'" "Heard it," McKay snapped. "Surrender Dorothy," and then: "You know, there hasn't been anything good on the

radio since new wave," and John blew out a surprised laugh.

"We should abort the mission," Teyla said firmly. "Our plan was a good one, but the circumstances have changed. These are no longer ideal battle conditions; we can have better ones at our choosing. We should fly away before the hives arrive—" "The SGC ships'll follow us," Ronon said. "I'm not running," John said, his eyes locked on the *Daedalus*. He'd lived on that ship. She'd saved his life more than once. He knew her crew, he knew her routines. He knew her layout. He knew where the ship's DHD was. "Sir," and John could hear the growing hysteria in Weskett's voice. "What do you want me to do?" He looked to McKay but McKay was bent over his station, hands flickering over the controls. He looked back at the ship. "Open fire," John said.

Epilogue

1.

When the first footfalls woke the sleeping city of Atlantis
And voices rang again across the city of Atlantis
The waters had not parted, the ocean floor seemed solid
But memories awoke again in the city of Atlantis. —Rashelka, "Song of the City"

2.

LO, let me tell you of the chaos that then fell upon Atlantis! She wept with joy as the foreign warlords were cast out of her sky. But she could not feast and dance. Instead she dressed herself in rags and sat down to fast, ashes on her head and an iron band round her heart. Her most noble son had gone alone to defend her, armed only with the love of his wife's heart and the work of his lover's hands. She kept vigil and was silent. Whispered in her ear, the news was:

victory, we are victorious! But Atlantis saw that her beloved queen was weeping, and found that her most noble son was lost; his ship, one spark in a furnace, had been blown away. He was found adrift near the world we call Kagi, and his body was brought back to Atlantis and placed in her lap, as if he were a child. He slept there for many moons, and his lover never left his side.

On the eleventh day, the minister came forth from the tower. Atlantis stood with her people, heart clenched for the news, but the minister's announcement brought joy. A child had been born to her son and his queen, a boy blessed with all the gifts of the Ancestors. But in those confused and disorderly days, even this joy had to be tempered, for the child's father was still lost to sleep, his head wrapped in white. The queen let it be known that the child was to be called after his father. She set the name free to race along all the hallways and corridors of the city, so that it echoed off the walls and was breathed out upon thousands of lips, *John, John*. In her wisdom, the queen knew that the

echo might yet call back his father. Each day the boy was placed in a basket beside his father's head, so that he would know his father's face. The brave queen ruled Atlantis alone, and when duty allowed, she came to them. His lover lived within reach of his outstretched arm, bringing his machines and his books and papers and spreading them out on the tables and the bed and the floors. He lay on a bed at the foot of his lover's, and together they grew pale and gaunt. But during the night of the ninety-fourth day, under a sky bright with starlight, Rodney McKay awoke from a restless sleep. The son of Atlantis was awake and sitting up, his own son in his arms. John Sheppard smiled and touched his son's nose, and his lover bolted upright and declared that he was an idiot and a brain-damaged moron, and swore that if he ever pulled anything like this again, he would most surely live to regret it. —Anthenia Micatha, "The Tale of the First Prince"

It is said that John Sheppard doted especially upon the boy called IOANNES or John Sheppard the Younger. It is said that Sheppard felt the loss of his first son's earliest days most keenly, and so made a particular favorite of the boy, who was to be the INCEP of Atlantis, honoring him with a particular affection that was visible to all. —Yuselth Ram, LIBER

ATLANTIADAE There is much that is true and useful in LIBER ATLANTIADAE but it is not so that John Sheppard favored his eldest son. One might as well say that he favored his daughter Jean Louise, the quick-witted child he made with McKay, or their cheerful and reckless son Timothy, whose particularly strong expression of the ATA gene made him a natural INGIN, and whose near-fatal crash while testing the AQUILA spacecraft in the twenty-eighth year of his father's reign was said to have taken ten years off John Sheppard's life.

—Mina Loh, "Loh's Book"

LIBER ATLANTIADAE is right to say that Sheppard the Younger was a highly favored child, but it was not his father who SUUMI AMIET : it was Rodney McKay. McKay had cared for the child while Sheppard lay drifting and lost: I was there and saw this, and also the sorrow on his face. He believed that the child was all he had left of the man HII UTIEM RALIRE, and so OB MULTEM SACEDUS loved him most dearly. In later years, he kept the boy close, and shared with him many of the secrets AD FORMULAS MACHINESQUE SUB QUOCIDES OREKA LAODI. This is how our LUSTRO CAPEN grew so wiseKAE LAPOR, and why he has ruled us so CHTHO SORAE since the time of the KRACITAL. —Matteus Blanct, PRO EGO TUTELA

4.

Sheppard ROSE AD RURSEM and he won many battles; His friends and family willingly obeyed him; his closest friends became famous soldiers. His reign was long and strong grew his city. His children were many, Both natural and

gathered. IOANNES IUVENM whom he called "Kit": Ocean's King, Galaxy's King. JEANLOUISE whom he called "Scout", who led generations to light; And TIMOTHEUS, his youthful mirror, for the gods know their revenge. He loved too his queen's daughters NABIHA and JALIA, two flowers, and her son DALMAR FALLONA, who led men from fear, and KAMARUS DEX, the son of his friend, and the voice of his people. These and many others he loved like his own. —Anonymous, "*The Founder*," circa 136 A.T.

5.

And those who knew him said that sometimes he still grieved for that lost world and its simple pleasures: its county fairs and FERRIS WHEELS, its temples and MOVIE PALACES, its games of chance and its AUTOMOBILES that rolled along the ground. Those days seem impossibly far from us now, swept away by history. Perhaps some day we shall discover EARTH again, but for now, we must make do

with the quotidian realities of Atlantis. —
Hannor Janettan, *Earth: The Lost Empire*

6.

ILLIC ESTUL TUMOB VIUSH BERNA UTEST
VERUD QUODI IOANNES SHEPPARD
MATRIMULIE NOTUS UTCON SENSI SECUS
UT IOANNES SHEPPARD FAUTO SUUSA
FILEO. REGUS QUINI FORTE VIRES PARIR
NARRO LUTIS FAUTO SUUSA JEAN LOUISE
PARVU LUSNO PERSU DILIG ATHOSIANS,
VELSU HILAR QUODI DERAT KAMARUS
DEX CUIUS OPRIE VALID WRAITHPERAT
NOHIM ARECT INGIN UT EARTH. —ELLIA
RATIA, VERUM PRO TOTUS

Bibliography

1. Carroll, Franklin R. *Atlantis Revisited*. New York and London, Routledge, 2011.
2. Chapman, Denise. *Several Kinds of Genius: The Life of Rodney McKay*. NY: Harper Perennial, 2015.
3. Croft, Rosalind. *City of Spires: A Memoir*. Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2009.
4. Dugan, Paul. *A Political History of Atlantis*. Oxford: OUP, 2012.
5. ———. Review of Tina Eber, *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 2* in the *Cambridge Journal of Political History*. Volume 42, Autumn, 2013: 24.
6. Eber, Tina. *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 1*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

7. ———. *The Atlantis Chronicles, Vol 2*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.
8. Ellis, Lisa. *Atlantis: The Complete Interviews*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
9. Fritz, Allison. *Ninth Chevron: The Mysteries of Atlantis*. Tampa: University of Florida Press, 2011.
10. Frommer, Jacqueline. *Cruel Evolutions: A Biological History of the Wraith*. MIT, 2013.
11. Henderson, Christian. *Gateway to the Stars*. New York: Palgrave, 2010
12. Kairn, Stanley. *Flyboy: The Biography of John Sheppard*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 2016.
13. ———. Review of April Martin, *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*, in the

Journal of Political Biography. Volume X, Issue 4, 2012.

14. Koble, Ronald. *From Rising to Uprising*. Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2011.

15. Lambert, Caroline. *The Politics of Pegasus*. Oxford: OUP, 2012.

16. LaScala, Madeline. "Rereading Atlantis." *A Journal of Feminist Political Thought*. Volume 5, Issue 3, 2014: 42.

17. Leredo, Mark. *The Atlantis Uprising*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

18. Lesso, Thomas. *The Lost City: Atlantis*. London: Cassell, 2013.

19. Martin, April. *Rising: A History of the City of the Ancients*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

20. Pearson, Gabriel. "Forever Looking Toward The Sky: John Sheppard and the Atlantis Experiment." *Cambridge Journal of Political History*. Volume 42, Spring 2014: 44.

21. Severn, Philippe. *Civilisations et mondes perdus*. (trans. by Francine Mercier) NY and Paris: La Martinier, 2010.

22. Summerville, William. "The SGC's Real Target?" *Journal Of Political Diplomacy*. OUP: 2010: 30-42.

23. Walson, Alfred. *Atlantis: Year One*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Index

1. Allard, Sergeant Thomas J.
2. Armitage, Lt. Colonel Lily
3. Beckett, Dr. Carson
4. Bell, Captain Charles
5. Bell, General Zachary
6. Bender Dr. Hans
7. Biro, Dr. Harriet
8. Block, Jeslin
9. Brock, Lieutenant David
10. Brown, Dr. Katherine

11. Brutto, Dr. Mark
12. Cadman, Lieutenant Laura
13. Caldwell, General Stephen H.
14. Carter, General Samantha
15. Connolly, Lieutenant Mark
16. Croft, Dr. Rosalind
17. Davia of Athos
18. Dex, Kamarus
19. Dex, Ronon
20. Eckhart, Major Charles
21. Ellis, Dr. Lisa
22. Emmagan, Dalmar Fallona

23. Emmagan, Jalia Fallona
24. Emmagan, Nabiha Fallona
25. Emmagan, Teyla
26. Ethan, Dr. Christopher
27. Fallona, Naz
28. Faraday, Dr. Richard
29. Faraday-Wilson, Dr. Marcia
30. Feltham, Dr. James
31. Fielding, Dr. Harry
32. Filbey, Lieutenant Andrew
33. Fletcher, Dr. Lisa
34. Galt of Quana

- 35. Giordano, General Anthony
- 36. Guyon, Madame Evelyn
- 37. Hall, Major Grant
- 38. Halling of Athos
- 39. Hamilton, Colonel Paul
- 40. Hana of Athos
- 41. Hansel, Dr. James
- 42. Harrison, Sgt. Theodore
- 43. Heightmeyer, Dr. Kate
- 44. Holland, Captain Richard
- 45. Jackson, Dr. Daniel
- 46. Jefferson, Lieutenant James

- 47. Kavanagh, Dr. William
- 48. Kaye, Julia
- 49. Keane, General James R.
- 50. Keene, Dr. Jeffrey
- 51. Kelly, Dr. Sandra
- 52. Kinsey, Vice President William
- 53. Ko, Yuriko
- 54. Kruger, General John
- 55. Landry, General
- 56. Levy, Dr. Rachel
- 57. Leylana (of Athos)
- 58. Li, Dr. Cheng-Ji

59. Locke, Dr. Christopher

60. Lorne, Lt. Colonel Evan

1. Mahaffy, Sean

2. McKay, Dr. [Meredith] Rodney Ingram

3. McKay, Fiona Ingram

4. McKay, George

5. Merce from Hessaya

6. Merriman, General Alan

7. Miller, Dr. Jeanne McKay

8. Mitchell, General Cameron

9. Morelli, Colonel Jason

10. Nelson, Lieutenant Elizabeth

11. O'Neill, General Jack
12. O'Reilly, Colonel Karen
13. Ostergaard, Dr. Annaliese
14. Paisley, James
15. Palmer, Dr. Eliot
16. Parrish, Dr. David
17. Pirelli, General Joseph
18. Porter, Lieutenant Stuart
19. Porter , Lt. Colonel Richard M.
20. Ransom, Sgt. Major Lisa
21. Reilly, Lieutenant Kristen
22. Royce, Major Hal

23. Severn, Dr. Philippe
24. Sheppard, Colleen Flynn
25. Sheppard, General Henry M.L.
26. Sheppard, Jean Louise ("Scout")
27. Sheppard, John Jr. ("Kit")
28. Sheppard, Lt. Colonel John
29. Sheppard, Timothy Flynn
30. Shokin, Vladmir
31. Simpson, Dr. Rebecca
32. Sloane, James
33. Stackhouse, Lieutenant
34. Stanhope, General Gary

- 35. Staunton, Lieutenant James
- 36. Stevenson, Lieutenant Christopher
- 37. Sullivan, Major Linda
- 38. Sumner, Colonel Marshall
- 39. Takaro, Dr. Tetsu
- 40. Teal'c of Chulak
- 41. Tolen, Major Peter
- 42. Verbeck, Dr. Anna
- 43. Weir, Dr. Elizabeth
- 44. Wesker, General Carl
- 45. Weskett, Sgt. Laurence
- 46. Wick, Major Jane

47. Yamoto, Lieutenant

48. Zelenka, Dr. Radek