

Eric 382  
presents  
A Very Haden Christmas

by  
Zacky



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Brent and Lance walked into the event center and gasped. It's been a while since they had all their guys together at once. Thus, to have space for all 1200+ kids and adults, they had to roll back the large separators between the eating center, and the auditorium.

Odis immediately spotted the co-directors of their division, and roller bladed over to them. "About time you guys got here," 9-year-old Odis said as he handed them each a sheet of paper listing all the holiday foods that each food station had available. "We were beginning to think you didn't love us."

Brent grinned as he looked around at the hundreds of kids all talking together and enjoying themselves. "Are you kidding, we wouldn't miss this for the world."

Lance nodded. "Yeah, if you would have told me two months ago we would ever have this large of a division, I would have said you were crazy. But now, I really couldn't imagine not having all these guys here."

"By the way, has anyone seen Haden?" Brent asked.

Odis took out his PADD and tapped a few buttons. "Hum, nope doesn't look like any of my guys have spotted him yet." Odis then spotted a few more late comers entering through one of the other doors. "Oops, gotta roll." With that, he pushed off and quickly bladed over to them.

"Who'd ever think that this was the same Odis that we first met," Lance mused.

Brent nodded. "Yeah, it's cool seeing him fit in so well now." Brent then tapped his comm badge, "Hey Daileass? Would you mind telling us where Haden is hiding?"

Instead of Daileass's voice responding, the deep voice of Santa replied. "Ho ho ho Brent..." Moments later Daileass's normal voice replied. "Oops, sorry about that, I have 8200 Santa conversations going on right now for some of the younger UNIT kids. Anyway, Haden is still in the new computer core, would you like me to teleport him over?"

"Nah, but go ahead and toss me over to his comm badge," Brent replied.

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Haden was laying on his back under a large rack of servers as he looked up at the video images being displayed on his PADD. "See, I told you the capacitors would be fine there."

Daileass's voice answered him from his comm badge. "Okay, so you're right on that one. Then that creates another mystery as to why I'm showing a 0.04 microvolt fluctuation across that entire board."

Haden pressed a few buttons on the PADD. "Maybe it's the bridge links themselves. Try moving the nano-cam over to board... J-Thirteen junction four."

"Worth a try." Daileass replied as Haden watched the images on his video fly through what could only be described as a computer city.

"There! Right there!" Haden called out in glee.

"One of the solder points is not completely connected," Daileass replied.

"Yup," Haden replied. "But still close enough for voltage pulses to spike."

"Creating the intermittent connection signals I'm getting," Daileass replied. "Are you sure you don't have a positronic brain in that head of yours?"

Haden grinned from ear to ear. "I love you too Daileass."

"That's still not going to get you out of fixing it," Daileass replied. "Should I teleport the entire block out?"

Haden shook his head, "Nah, I don't want to risk any static at this point. I should probably fix it manually."

"Okay, but just so you know, Brent is not happy." Daileass answered.

"Oh crap, I almost forgot." Haden managed to get out just as Brent's voice came over his comm badge.

"Brent to Haden."

Haden began to pull himself out from under the server rack as he hit his comm badge. "Sorry Brent! I'm getting out from under the servers now and I'll be over, promise."

"Okay buddy," Brent replied. "Get here when you can, just remember, you have a bunch of brothers that can't wait to share Christmas dinner with you."

"Alright." Haden replied as he tried to scoot himself out as fast as he could. In his haste, he felt his leg catch onto a wire.

"Oh crap," Haden sighed as he tried to figure out the best way to get himself undone without taking fifteen minutes to do it. "Daileass, what's the safety margin on an under server teleport?"

"Um, Haden, you out of all people should not have to ask that, especially with *these* servers," Daileass replied. "I could probably pull it off, but I would really rather not have to try."

"I just got my foot caught on one of link cables because I was trying to go too fast. At this rate it's going to take me a good ten to fifteen minutes to get out, and by then dinner will be over." Haden pleaded.

"Okay, but please just this once Haden. I don't feel comfortable doing this, especially with you." Daileass replied.

Haden smiled. "Thanks Daileass."

"I'm lowering the power in the entire core down to 75% to cut down on interference as much as possible, while still keeping the core fully functional.... okay.... here goes nothing." Daileass replied. Moments later, Haden slowly faded away from under the servers.

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Brent was talking to a few of the younger kids at one of the tables when both he and Lance noticed Haden briefly flicker into existence a few feet away from him. He was only visible for a brief moment before he was gone again.

Brent was just in the process of lifting his hand up to tap his comm badge when Daileass's voice came out of it in a panicked tone that he had never heard Daileass use before. "Brent, I... I think I lost Haden mid teleport. I don't know how... all redundancies check. I... I need you and Lance over to the C.I.C. as quickly as possible."

Brent and Lance shared a worried look between each other. "We're ready now," Brent replied. "Go ahead and teleport us over."

"Negative," Daileass replied. "Teleporting is currently offline as I run a full diagnostic."

Brent nodded as both he and Lance bolted out of the event center toward the admin building as several worried eyes of the other kids watched them.

By the time Brent and Lance made it to the core C.I.C. three of the four huge screens were showing weird computer gibberish while the fourth screen had a picture of Tyce checking over several server machines.

"What happened to Haden?" Brent asked as soon as he stepped through the door.

As soon as he saw the look on Brent's face, Tristen quickly moved to intercept him. "Brent, we are doing everything we can to answer that."

"What happened to all the backup and redundant systems that are suppose to be in place to prevent stuff like this?" Brent asked with a strong tone of hurt in his voice.

"They were all functional, Brent," Daileass replied solemnly. "The data that I have contradicts itself. Some of it says the teleport was fine, others say it was lost mid stream. Technically, what happened should not have been possible, but yet it did. I'm still working on trying to form a better explanation. I'm... I'm sorry Brent."

Brent clenched his fists and sighed. "Daileass, it's not your fault. I'm sure you have so many safety procedures on top of safety procedures that we don't know about, I'm sure you have done everything you could realistically do."

"Actually, you're wrong Brent," Daileass admitted. "I allowed Haden to talk me into teleporting him from a location that I knew there was a 0.041% chance of there being some type of problem."

Brent nodded. "Just try to get him back Daileass, please."

"They're doing their best, Brent." Tristen answered for Daileass. "If it's possible, they'll do it."

Brent nodded as he felt Lance's warm arms wrap around him in support.

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Haden blinked his eyes as he tried to get them to adjust to the darkness that he now found himself in. He was fairly sure he had briefly seen Brent and the others in the event center, but then they flickered away.

"Daileass, what happened?" Haden asked as he tapped his comm badge and waited for a reply. Noticing that his PADD was off, he tried tapping it, to turn it back on, only to be surprised by a small flashing 'no signal' message.

"Daileass, you there?" Haden asked as he tapped his comm badge again and waited several more seconds without getting a reply. "Haden to Evan," He tried next.

Again, no reply came. He then took off the comm badge, and twisted the middle back portion a quarter turn counter-clockwise until he heard two small chirps. "You have power, so how come no one is answering?" he asked aloud.

As he thought this, he also wondered why all the lights were out, and at the same time he wondered why his PADD was not finding anything to connect to, and then... he grabbed his head in pure horror as he realized he couldn't hear Daileass or any of his other link brothers in his head.

*'Daileass... Logan... anyone?'* Haden screamed in his head as loudly as he could while still getting no reply.

Suddenly, Haden jumped as a loud slamming noise could be heard and a stream of light flooded in from his right. Turning his head, Haden saw the shadow of a large figure standing in a doorway pointing some type of long slender object at him. At the figure's feet was a smaller figure latched onto it.

"What is it, papa?" A young girl cried out.

"I don't know, a daemon perhaps? Go back by your brother." A man's voice replied.

As Haden's eyes began to adjust to the light, he could see that the taller figure was that of a man with a dark black beard who looked to be in his early 40's. The smaller figure attached to his leg was a younger girl maybe five or six. And finally, to Haden's horror, he could make out that the slender object the man was pointing at him was a shotgun.

"No, don't shoot me! Please!" Haden called out as he tried to cover his head with his PADD.

"He sounds like a kid, papa," The girl replied.

"Get back Annabella, he doesn't look like any boy I've ever seen." The man answered as he took a few steps closer to Haden with his shotgun at the ready. "What are you, boy?"

"I'm Haden," Haden began to cry. "Please don't hurt me, I don't know where I am. I think it was a bad teleport but I don't know."

"You're in my bedroom, that's where you are boy," The man replied as he poked Haden's side with his gun which caused Haden to curl up and start crying more.

"Daileass," Haden cried out. "I need help, please."

"Your words make no sense," The man called out angrily. "Your daemon spawn friends can't help you, boy. Prepare to return to all that is unholy."

"Please, no!" Haden called out as he tried to pull himself into a ball.

"Papa, no!" Another voice called out, one that sounded like a boy's voice.

"Paterson, you shouldn't be up son. Get away from him." The father replied.

"Can't you see how scared he is?" The boy's voice called out as Haden felt two small hands touching his back which caused him to tense up even more. The last thing Haden remembered before he blacked out was lifting his head up and seeing the young face of an eight-year-old boy looking back at him. After that, everything went dark.

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Slowly, the world around Haden came back to life. First, he could hear sounds of snapping and popping. Then, his vision slowly came back into focus where he saw the eight-year-old boy he remembered from earlier standing over him. He was wearing a white cotton pullover shirt with a button up brown cotton vest, and tan trousers. As soon as the boy saw that Haden was waking up, he took several steps back.

"Where am I?" Haden asked as his hands went up to his head.

"You're in our house," Paterson announced. "Papa's gone to fetch the pastor."

"Pastor? Why?" Haden asked cautiously.

"To see if we can get the daemon's out of you." The boy answered.

"Papa said not to talk to him," The smaller girl called out from the doorway in the back of the room.

"So? I can if I want." Paterson shout back, causing the girl to disappear back behind his door.

Suddenly, Haden clutched his right arm. "My GEAR! Where is it?"

Paterson gave Haden a funny look. "I don't know what that means."

"My arm thing I was wearing." Haden stated as he tapped his arm.

Paterson coughed a few times and walked over to the table, and brought back Haden's GEAR. "You mean this? Papa took it off of you while you were sleeping."

Haden nodded. "Yes, that. May I have it back please?"

The boy shrugged and handed it to Haden. "I've never seen a piece of jewelry like that before."

"It's not jewelry," Haden replied. "It's my GEAR." Haden then took a few moments to look around. "Are you guys Amish?"

The boy tilted his head. "No, we're Cath... Catholic. Why?"

"How come you don't have any electricity in your house." Haden asked curiously.

"What's ele...elec...ricity?" The boy asked clearly confused.

"You know, to power the lights and stuff?" Haden asked as he tried to figure out how a kid could not know what electricity was.

Suddenly, a light went on in the boy's head. "Ah, you mean oil for the lamps?"

"Huh, what? No." Haden answered. It was at that point that a terrible thought came into his head, which could possibly explain why Paterson didn't know what electricity was, and also explain why he seemed to be dressed so funny. "Um, what year is it?"

"The year? How can you not know what year it is?" Paterson asked.

"Just tell me, please?" Haden asked.

"It's the year of our lord... eighteen hundred and four." Paterson stated as if reciting something from a schoolbook.

Haden fell back onto the bed he had woken up on. "That's just wonderful," he mumbled as everything suddenly came together.

"How is that wonderful?" Paterson asked as he coughed again.

Haden shook his head. "It was a joke. It's actually terrible."

"Oh," Paterson replied. "Then how is that terrible?"

Haden covered his face with his arms and sobbed. "I'm stuck 200 years in the past, and I don't know what to do."

"In the past?" Paterson seemed confused.

"Yes," Haden replied in an annoyed voice. "Where I'm from it's the year 2004."

"But... But... That's not possible." Paterson stated in disbelief.

Haden lowered his arms revealing eyes that were still in the process of tearing up. "Normally I would agree with you, but here I am."

Paterson shook his head, trying to make sense of what Haden was saying. "Well, you better not tell the pastor that."

"Why not?" Haden asked curiously.

"Because he'll think you're daemon spawn for sure. Talk like that simply isn't possible," Patterson answered before he ran over to one of the windows. "Here they come now."

Moments later, the front door to the house flew open. Paterson's father walked in followed by two other men, one of whom was wearing a long black robe.

"There he is, over there." The father stated as he pointed in Haden's direction.

The black robed man walked a few steps toward Haden and took out a cross from under his robes. "My Lord, I've never seen anyone dressed like this before."

"You see, I wasn't lying this time. It really is a daemon spawn!" The father announced.

"That remains to be seen," The robed pastor replied. "Well, what say you boy? Are you a daemon, or a spawn of the same? Come now, in the name of God the Father, I Demand you speak the truth."

Haden shook his head.

"Can you speak, boy?" the pastor inquired.

Haden nodded. "Yes, Sir."

The man took hold of Haden's head and tilted it back. "Well, you certainly sound like a boy, and you look like a boy, where did you get these strange clothes boy?"

Haden tried to think of the best answer to give before he shook his head. "I... I don't remember."

"What do you make of it, Fredrick?" The pastor asked the third man who, as of yet, had not spoken.

"I'm not really sure either father," the man replied. "His clothes are of a nature I have not seen before, very intricate in design. Perhaps he is a French boy, I've heard that the Debree group planned on passing through this part of the country at some point."

"Is that it?" the pastor asked as he turned back toward Haden. "Are you a French boy?"

Again, Haden shook his head. "I... I don't know... I can't remember."

"The cross test," The father stated. "Make him hold your cross, father. You've taught us that daemon spawn can't stand *His* symbols."

The pastor nodded toward the father and then turned to Haden as he held out his cross to him. "Well, what say you boy? Will you hold this most holy of holy crosses from our Lord?"

Haden nodded and carefully took hold of the cross as his hands trembled slightly.

"You see! He's trembling, he can't stand holding it!" The father stated.

Paterson coughed as he took a few steps toward the men from where he was on the other side of the room. "Can't you see, he's trembling because you guys are scaring him senseless right now."

"Hello Paterson," The pastor stated as he recognized the other boy for the first time. "Still got that cough have you? I thought you were suppose to be resting?"

"Yes sir," Paterson replied with a slight bow. "But papa hasn't been able to spare me from all the chores that have needed to be done."

The pastor nodded as he took the cross from Haden and turned back toward the father. "Well George, I hate to say this, but it looks like your son has been paying more attention to my sermons than you. This boy is no daemon or daemon spawn for that matter. I shall beg you to not bother me with such nonsense again."

"I'm sorry father, but what do I do with him now?" George inquired.

The pastor looked back toward Haden for a few moments. "I'll see to it that word is passed that we may have a French boy who has lost his memory, and we will see who comes to claim him. In the mean time... He seems like a fine lad, if there are so many chores to be done that you can't let Paterson have a rest to get rid of that cough, I would say your prayers have been answered... put him to work."

George nodded. "Very well father, thank you father."

The pastor nodded and motioned toward Fedrick to follow him. Both men then left the cabin closing the door behind them.

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"French boy, huh?" The father asked as he glared at Haden. "At least you're about Paterson's size, so you can use his clothes."

The man then turned toward his son. "You seem so concerned about him, so I expect you to show him what needs to be done around here." Seeing the boy nod, he continued. "You can start by going and fetching some water so I can start making dinner."

"Yes, sir." Paterson stated as he motioned Haden to follow him out the door, which he quickly did.

Haden sighed once they were outside, as Paterson threw two buckets toward him. "What are these for?"

"Water," Paterson replied. "You do know what water is, right?"

Haden nodded. "Yeah, but what are the buckets for?"

Paterson looked at Haden strangely. "Did you really loose your memory? How else would we get the water back home?"

Haden slapped his forehead. "Right, no faucets or plumbing in the 1800's."

"What are faucets and plumbing?" Paterson asked as they walked down a small dirt path.

Haden began to get a sick feeling in his stomach. "That's how water gets into our houses."

"Water goes right to your houses?" Paterson asked in disbelief. "That sounds weird."

After walking a few more minutes, the two boys came to a rounded out clearing. In the center there was a small well with another bucket sitting on it, tided to a rope that was then tied to the top of the well. Paterson took Haden over to it. "You have well's in the future, right?"

Haden sighed and shook his head.

Paterson nodded and quickly began to show Haden how the well worked, including how to lower the bucket, to use the winch to pull the bucket back up to fill your own bucket. He then let Haden try.

Seeing how easy Paterson was able to work the well, Haden figured it would not be that difficult. But once he started trying to turn the winch himself, he quickly discovered it was not as easy as Paterson made it out to be. "How... do you... turn... this so... easily?" Haden asked as he struggled to get the bucket up.

Paterson giggled as he started to help Haden with it. "That's okay, until I turned eight, it was really hard for me to work the well too."

Finally, all four buckets were filled. Paterson took two, and left two for Haden to take. Haden couldn't believe how heavy little buckets of water could be as he struggled to carry them. He made it a short distance before he ended up losing his footing and tripped over a root. Both water and Haden went falling to the ground, getting Haden both soaked and muddy. Patterson immediately burst out laughing at the sight.

Haden looked up at Patterson briefly before he ran off the trail into the woods.

As soon as he saw how upset Haden was, Paterson stopped laughing. "I'm sorry! Please don't run away." He then set his buckets down and began to chase after him. Paterson didn't have to run far before he found his new friend sitting up against a tree with his hands wrapped around his legs, and his head resting on his knees as he softly sobbed.

Not really sure what to do, Paterson sat down next to Haden.

Feeling a small hand wrapping around his back, Haden looked up toward Paterson before he put his head back down. "I don't belong here," Haden cried. "I don't know how to do anything here. I don't know how to live here."

Paterson said nothing, he just sat there with his hand wrapped around his strange friend. He didn't really understand half of the things that he talked about. But the one thing that he did know is that he seemed hurt, and could really use a friend.

Haden remained there for several minutes sobbing. As he did this, Patterson quietly sat next to him with his arm wrapped around him; only the sound of a cough here and there broke the silence. "Why are you being so nice to me?" Haden finally asked. "I must seem like... I don't know, some kind of freak to you or something."

Peterson shrugged. "You seem lost and alone, like you really don't belong here. I just know that if I was in a strange new place that I didn't know anything about, I would really hope that someone there would try to help me."

Haden leaned in closer to Paterson. He wasn't a Daileass, and he certainly wasn't an Evan or Lance, but he was better than nothing. In fact, given that he was so close to his own size, he also didn't have to be that scared of him.

"I don't think you really understand," Haden finally said softly. "Where I come from, life is nothing like it is here. You do things... so... so differently. I hardly ever went outside, and the only thing I really ever did with my hands has been my electronics stuff."

"What's electronics?" Paterson asked.

"Things like this and my PADD," Haden stated as he lifted up his GEAR.

"You're a jeweler?" Paterson replied.

Haden shook his head. "It's not jewelery." He then pressed two buttons on his GEAR to run a quick systems check which caused it to beep.

"Magic?" Paterson asked with surprise.

Haden smiled for the first time since he arrived. "Not magic, but I guess it might seem that way. Although it's pretty useless now."

"Why is it useless?" Paterson asked as he could not understand how something so wonderful and magical could be useless.

"There's no... oh man, these words aren't going to make sense to you," Haden stated as he couldn't figure out how to word what he wanted to say in a good way. "There are no networks to connect to, there is no internet, the scanning mode on this is useless because there is no electrical devices anywhere around to scan."

Paterson blinked a few times. "That sounds like a lot."

Haden wiped his eyes. "Thanks. But that still leaves me not being able to do anything at all. All the stuff that is really easy for you, I know nothing about."

"That's okay," Paterson smiled. "I'll teach you everything you need to know. Now that I know you don't know anything at all, I'll know to explain things really carefully, like you were my sister or something."

Haden tried to figure out if he was just insulted or not. "Um, thanks. I think."

Paterson stood back up, "Come on, Papa needs the water so he can make us stew to eat for evening meal. How about you start how I started, and just carry one bucket instead of two."

Haden thought for a moment and shrugged. "I think I can do that."

By the time they made it back home, George was sitting there waiting for them. "About time you boys got back. What took you so long?"

Paterson immediately walked over to his father and wrapped his arms around him. "I'm sorry papa, but my new friend needed some private time. He's feeling really bad because he's so far away from home."

Haden smiled, he did not expect Paterson to cover for him like that. 'Maybe, just maybe I might be able to survive here if I have to,' Haden thought to himself as Paterson waved him over to the stove to show Haden how he put wood into it to keep the fire going.

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After dinner Paterson found Haden sitting near the fireplace messing with his arm band.

"You look tired out." Paterson grinned as he sat down beside him.

Haden nodded. "I can't believe how much stuff you guys have to do just to get dinner on the table."

Paterson grinned. "I bet in the future, food just magically prepares itself out of thin air."

Haden giggled a little. "Actually, we have things called microwave ovens, and frozen meals that we can buy from the store and cook in like four or five minutes."

Paterson blinked as he tried to figure out what Haden was talking about. "It sounds like there are going to be a lot of things in the future that I've never heard of before."

"Yeah, but not everything's going to be for the better. Lots of bad things happen in the future as well." Haden replied.

Paterson nodded and continued to sit quietly next to Haden for several minutes listening to the crackling of the fire as Haden continued to fumble around with his GEAR. Finally, Paterson's curiosity got the better of him. "So what all can that thing on your arm do? It seems like it's something really important to you."

Haden nodded. "It protects me, from people that might try to hurt me. Although, here it can't do much of anything. I can't even tell what time it is because I was stupid and tied the time display into the GPS satellites."

"And GPS satellites are bad?" Paterson asked.

"No, normally they are good," Haden replied and then sighed. "It's just, they don't exist here."

Paterson moved himself a little closer to Haden. "I wish I could learn all about where you come from. It sounds like there is so much cool stuff to learn."

"I wish I could show you," Haden answered. "Especially with as nice as you've been treating me. I think you'd like it, especially with all the new friends I've been meeting."

"Wow, I bet everyone must like you where you're from." Paterson yawned as he leaned against Haden.

Haden sighed. "Not really, no. I... well, I'm not really that good at anything where I come from. The only thing I'm really good at is electronics, which is useless here. Doing other things, like physical stuff is hard for me. And until about three months ago, my only real friend was my... my brother. And now I lost him and everyone else." A single tear began to trickle down Haden's cheek as he began to realize just how much he had really lost.

"I hope one day you're able to get back home. I've never had a brother before, just a little sister. But I know if I did have one, I wouldn't want to lose him." Paterson stated.

"Thanks." Haden replied.

"Maybe I could be your friend for now?" Paterson asked hopefully.

Haden nodded. "I think you already are."

The two boys remained quiet again for several more minutes until Haden found himself yawning as well.

"So what are your other friends like?" Paterson asked.

Haden shrugged, "There are all kinds of different kinds. Some of my new friends are really special too, like there is one that lives in...." Haden suddenly sat straight up and his eyes went wide. "Paterson? You're brilliant! I almost forgot about him!"

"Huh? What?" Paterson asked as he sat back up and looked oddly at Haden.

"Ordith! I forgot about him, I'm not really alone here!" Haden said excitedly as he stood up and started looking around.

"What's an Ordith?" Paterson asked as he tried to figure out the reason for Haden's sudden excitement.

"He's... well... it's complicated... um... where do we sleep?" Haden asked.

Paterson scratched his head. "Normally I sleep here in the main room, so I can keep the fire going. But I'll probably sleep in my old bed in Annabella's room and you can sleep out here."

"Okay, come on, we both need to lay down in the bed out here." Haden stated as he walked over to the bed he had woken up on earlier.

"Both of us?" Paterson asked curiously. "Why?"

Haden jumped up on the bed, and turned back toward Paterson, "Because you're totally brilliant, and maybe, just maybe I can show you a little bit of my world."

Paterson blinked in confusion, as nothing Haden was saying was making sense, but then again, a lot of what his new friend said was strange to him. With that being said, however, he hesitantly walked over to the bed and laid down beside Haden. "This is weird," Paterson commented once he was laying down and partially touching Haden due to the small size of the bed. "I've never... um... have laid in a bed with another... well, another boy."

Haden grinned. "Don't worry, I don't bite."

Paterson turned his head slightly toward Haden. "Bite? You better not. Friend or not, if you bite me, I swear I'll punch you, really hard too."

Haden swallowed hard. "Um, sorry. That was just a joke where I come from. I would never try to really bite you. Now, hold my hand."

"No!" Paterson asked as he leaped out of the bed. "Haden, boys don't hold hands! Why are you trying to do this to me?"

Haden sat up looking confused. "Huh? What's wrong?"

"That's what a boy and a girl do when they are courting, or after they have been wed." Paterson stated.

"Oh, it's nothing like that at all. Sorry, I didn't realize how different customs would be here," Haden said as he tried to organize his thoughts. "I need you to hold my hand, because I need to be touching you, or at least I have every time this has happened in the past, although I've always had help then; I think, and now I'll have to do it on my own and..." Seeing the completely lost expression on Paterson's face, Haden took a breath. "Paterson, I don't know how to explain it right. Please just trust me on this, I promise I won't do anything else weird to you."

Paterson stood there for several moments thinking until he finally shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I guess it's no big deal. But you better not tell anyone else that you made me do this."

Haden nodded. "I promise."

"You give your word?" Paterson asked seriously.

Haden nodded, "I do. I give you my word that I won't tell anyone else unless you tell them first."

"Okay," Paterson stated as he walked back to the bed and got back on it. Once both boys were laying back down, they moved their hands next to each other, and clasped them together. "Your hands feel soft like my sisters."

"Is that good?" Haden asked.

Paterson shrugged his shoulders. "Donno, it's just how it feels."

Haden nodded. "Okay, I've never tried this on my own before, but I think it should work, Actually I really hope it works."

"What's going to happen?" Paterson asked with a small tone of worry starting to creep into his voice.

"You'll see, but I need to concentrate, so don't talk for a few minutes." Haden replied.

Paterson nodded. "Okay."

Haden could feel Paterson's warm hand touching his. Even though they were close to the same size, he was surprised how strong of a grasp his friend had. Knowing that Paterson wasn't going lay there holding his hand forever, Haden closed his eyes and began concentrating as hard as he could on going to his special room in his head, and bringing his new friend with him. He had done it by mistake the first few times when he pulled Evan in his head with him, but this time he needed to pull Paterson with him. He wasn't sure why, but for some reason, it felt important that he brought him.

"What are you concentrating on?" Paterson whispered.

Haden sighed and squeezed Paterson's hand tighter, which for Haden, was not really that much harder than what he was already doing, but it seemed to be enough for Paterson to get the hint. "Sorry," he quickly replied.

"It's okay," Haden whispered as he tried again to concentrate on pulling himself and Paterson into his room.

For several long moments nothing seemed to happen. However, just as he was about to give up, he felt something in the back of his head. A few moments later his body began to feel like it was floating, and the sound of the crackling fire faded away in the background.

"Haden!" Paterson screamed as he threw his arms around Haden's waist. "Where in the Lord's name are we?"

Haden opened his eyes and smiled as he saw the all-too-familiar small, pale green walled room with the occasional lines of brighter green energy streaks traveling along the floors and walls. "I did it, I really did it!"

"Did what?" Paterson cried as he tightly gripped Haden.

"Oh! Crap, this is probably scary for you, because you don't know what computers are." Haden said as he wrapped his arms around Paterson and leaned his head next to Paterson's. "Just a moment, and I'll try to make it go away."

A few moments later, the pale green walls were replaced by more neutral brown walls, and a small amount of light coming in from the ceiling. "There, is that better?"

Paterson opened his eyes and looked. A few moments after that he released his grip on Haden, and the two boys broke apart from each other. "Is this Heaven? Or maybe... maybe... Hell?"

Haden grinned. "Nah, this is my room inside my head."

"Huh?" Paterson asked as he looked at Haden strangely.

"Right now you're inside my head with me." Haden stated cheerfully.

"I'm in your head, what about papa and Annabelle?" Paterson asked worriedly.

Haden was momentarily confused, "No, you're not physically in me, we are both still laying on the bed, but your brain is linked to mine."

"My brain?" Paterson repeated, still very much confused.

"What he means to say, is that your spirits are closely linked together right now, which allows you to experience some of what Haden is experiencing." A smaller boy about six or seven years old who looked very similar to Haden, stated as he walked toward the center of the room.

"Oh, okay that's pretty cool!" Paterson replied as he looked at the new comer. "You must be Haden's brother?"

"Ordith!" Haden called out as he ran over and lifted the smaller boy up and twirled him around before he set him back down. "No, no, he's not my brother, he's... well... he's like another spirit that is a part of me."

"Wow," Ordith grinned. "I don't think you've ever done that to me before Haden. That actually felt interesting."

"A spirit?" Paterson asked with concern. "Are you like a daemon? Possessing Haden?"

Ordith shook his head. "I guess, the best way for you to think of me, would be as an angel inside Haden, but that is still not really accurate. I do not possess Haden, all the choices that Haden makes are his own. I simply observe and sometimes provide my opinions or advise on things."

Paterson nodded his head, although he only partially understood what the smaller boy, Ordith, told him. Although, it was enough to convince him that he wasn't a daemon or some other daemon spawn.

"Did you do this?" Haden asked seriously. "Did you somehow send me back two hundred years in the past?"

Ordith shook his head. "No, I told you before, since it's not within you to be able to travel in time, it is not something I can do for you. No, this trip was arranged by a power higher than myself. However, I did pick the destination."

"But why?" Haden pleaded. "This is like the absolute worst place I could ever think of to go. There are no computers or technology or anything here."

"Exactly!" Ordith smiled.

Paterson took a step forward. "Okay look. I might not understand all the words that Haden is using, but I know when someone is being mean to someone else. And right now, it looks like you're trying to be real mean to Haden."

Ordith shook his head. "Oh no, in fact it's the exact opposite."

"Then why? Why bring me back here?" Haden demanded.

"Okay, I'll tell you," Ordith began. "The first reason has to deal with my observations. Over the last several days, I've been learning a lot about the custom that you call Christmas. What I've been learning from the other kids that you had been around, as well as from the wealth of information that has been flowing through the link you share with your link brothers has been astounding. It's way different than the Christmas that your father had allowed you and Evan to experience in the past."

Haden nodded. "Yeah, if you mean he never let us experience it at all because he didn't believe in it."

Ordith agreed. "Exactly. One of the things I've observed is that people give gifts to the people they care about. Since I'm only a spirit inside you, I can't go out to a store and buy you a gift, so I've done something better. I guess you can say, that this is my gift to you."

"How is this a gift?" Haden asked. "This is... This is terrible. I can't function here at all."

Ordith nodded. "If you still feel that way at the end, then I promise I will find a way to make it up to you, but you need to get through it first."

"Fine." Haden stated grudgingly, knowing that it was pointless to try to argue with Ordith, or he would just up and disappear for a few days like he did in the past. "You said that was one of the reasons."

Ordith nodded. "I did. The other reason is because of Paterson."

"Me?" Paterson asked with surprise. "I don't know anything about any of this stuff. I've never seen Haden before today."

Ordith looked toward Paterson. "What you say is true. However, before I made the choice to join with Haden, I spent a really long time observing things here, around the world. You were one of the people that caught my attention Paterson, because

se of your unique way of thinking about things. And well, I guess I just wanted Haden to get to meet you, which is why I chose this time and place for Haden's gift."

"I'm not special," Paterson protested. "I'm just like every other kid around here. I don't even understand half of the stuff Haden talks about."

"You're wrong, Paterson Forrester," Ordith replied. "How many of the kids that you run around with in the village would have done as much as you have for someone like Haden? Haden's arrival has challenged just about every belief that you have, but yet you still choose to befriend him, and take him under your wing as if he was your own brother."

Paterson lowered his head, and kicked an invisible rock. "I guess... I... I always wished I had a brother."

"It's nothing to be ashamed of Paterson," Ordith stated as he walked to stand in front of the taller boy. "In fact, it is a very rare quality that very few people in this time have. Actually, it's a rare quality that very few people in any time have. You should be proud of yourself."

Paterson nodded.

"Okay," Ordith clapped his small hands. "I think my part here is done, I'll leave you two alone. However, know this. Although time here usually goes a lot faster in here than in the real world, after you two leave here, I'm going to make sure both of you fall asleep. Haden, you don't know this yet, but they get up very early here, and it would be a long time before either of you would get to sleep with all the questions you will have for each other, if I allowed you to wake up normally."

Haden nodded, and although Paterson didn't completely understand what the smaller boy was talking about, he did know that he told the truth about getting up early.

"Okay, but before you go, how long do I have to stay here? When do I get to go back home?" Haden asked.

Ordith tilted his head. "Actually, I don't really know. I have no way to get you back, so I guess you will go back when the time is right."

"No!" Haden replied. "That's not a good answer! Ordith!"

Ordith waved at both boys as he slowly faded away.

"No!" Haden cried out as he deflated.

Paterson walked up behind Haden and hesitantly wrapped his arm around him. "In church, we learn that God often does things in his time, not our time. If your friend really is like an angel, I bet that time will be whenever you learn whatever it is he was telling you about."

Haden sighed and leaned into Paterson.

"So... What all can you do in this place? It looks kind of... well... empty." Paterson asked.

Haden looked up toward Paterson. "Anything I want, I guess. Oh, like this." Haden then walked a few steps away from Paterson, and concentrated. A few moments later, the image of an 11-year-old boy with medium tan skin, short black hair, and light brown eyes appeared standing in the middle of the room.

"Who are you?" Paterson asked with concern as he tried to size up the new arrival. "Are you another spirit?"

Haden giggled. "That's just a picture of what my big brother looks like. If you look closely, you will notice he's kind of see-through, and he's floating about two inches off the ground."

"Oh... I knew that," Paterson grinned as he looked closer at the image of the older boy. "He looks like he would be a really cool big brother."

"He's the best. Ever since I was a little baby, he's been there protecting me from my father. I don't think I could possibly have asked for a better big brother than him." Haden agreed.

"Why would you need protection from your father?" Paterson asked curiously.

"That's one of the not-so-good things about the future. It's not uncommon for some parents to hurt their kids." Haden stated, and then decided to try to change the subject. "You want to see what where I live looks like?"

"Haden?" Paterson said seriously. "Why would a father hurt their own flesh and blood? That makes no sense."

Haden sighed and shrugged. "I guess they have different reasons. Like mine beat me because I was different from the other kids."

Paterson gasped and shook his head. "Your father beat you just because you were not the same as the other kids? If that were to happen around here, and pastor found out about it, the entire village would probably flog that father."

"Really? Why would they do that?" Haden asked curiously.

Paterson blinked. "Because everyone in the village looks out for each other, especially us kids. Don't villages do that in the future?"

Haden shook his head and turned away from Paterson. "Maybe showing you my world isn't such a good idea."

"Why?" Paterson asked as he walked behind Haden and put his arm around Haden's shoulder, causing Haden to shiver for a moment.

"Because the more I'm learning about here, the more I'm seeing how bad the future has turned out. Maybe it's not such a good thing to see after all," Haden replied. "There aren't really any villages anymore. Most people live in huge cities. And they don't look out for kids, most people are taught to fear kids that are not their own. In fact, sometimes people get thrown in jail and punished really bad for trying to be nice to kids."

Paterson slowly shook his head. "But... but... that makes no sense at all Haden."

Haden shook his head as well. "No, it doesn't."

Paterson stood next to Haden for several moments, as both boys thought about what was just discussed. "I'll tell you one thing," Paterson finally commented. "If I ever do get to visit the future with you, one of the first things I will be doing is paying a visit to some of those adults who like hurting kids, then I'll show them what it feels like to be hurt, and see if they still want to hurt kids after that."

Haden looked toward Paterson and grinned. "Actually, that's kind of what the clan does."

"What clan?" Paterson asked.

"Clan Short of Vulcan. It's... well... it's a long story. But the short of it is, that is where my brother and I stay now, and that is where I've met all my friends at. It's mostly kids that have gotten fed up with always being hurt and abused by adults, and they are standing up to do something about it."

"Good for them!" Paterson nodded. "That sounds like something I wouldn't mind doing for a living."

Haden smiled. "You would probably make a great UNIT member or something. They do most of the fighting."

"That sounds cool. Is that what you are in?" Paterson asked.

Haden shrugged his shoulders. "Kind of, but I don't really do much fighting. I'm not good enough."

"If you hang round me and the other kids in our village a bit, I'm sure you will learn how to stand on your own." Paterson nodded.

Haden shook his head. "I've had some of the best people ever try to help me. But I'm just not... physically conditioned enough to be able to do much."

"We'll see," Paterson grinned. "So you going to show me where you live now?"

Haden nodded. "Sure, but it might freak you out a little. Houses have changed a lot in the future, and where my brother and I live is... well, kind of unique."

Paterson nodded. "Okay."

Haden concentrated for a few moments until the room that they were standing in disappeared and they were standing in a small patch of grass between the event center, pool center, and admin buildings on the Las Vegas compound.

"My Lord!" Paterson gasped. "They're... huge."

Haden pointed toward one of the Cynthitech towers. "When we first moved here, my brother and I lived in that tower over there. But now, we stay in that round building over there. If you look through the trees in that direction, you will be able to see the quads. Those are like huge apartment buildings where just about nine hundred kids and a few adults live."

"Nine hundred? How can there be so many? There are only five other kids my age in our village." Paterson stated.

"Well, there are a lot more kids than that," Haden continued. "Those are mostly the kids that we've rescued over the last month. Although about one hundred fifty are UNIT kids who help to keep us safe from the people that want to hurt us." "This is... it's truly amazing Haden. Thanks for sharing it with me." Paterson replied.

Haden nodded as he rubbed his head. Moments later, the image of the compound faded away and they were standing back in the small room. "Wow, projecting something that huge takes a lot out of you. I've never tried that before."

"Are you okay?" Paterson asked with concern.

Haden nodded. "I think so. I just don't think I'll be doing any more huge projections for a bit."

Paterson nodded as well. "I'm kinda tired, so maybe we should leave here?"

"Yeah, me too," Haden agreed.

"Haden?" Paterson asked hesitantly.

"Yes?"

"I never had a brother before, and with mama dead, I don't think I'll ever get one," Paterson tried his best to word his question as best as possible, but in the end the only thing he could think of to do was blurt it out. "So, um, do you think I could pretend you were my brother? I know it sounds silly and all but..."

Haden placed a finger on Paterson's mouth which caused him to stop talking. "Yes."

Paterson blinked. "Really? You won't think that it's too strange or something?"

Haden shook his head. "Since I first arrived here, you've showed me things, and have been looking out for me. You've done all the things that brothers do. So if you really want someone like me as a brother, I would be honored to call you brother as well."

A huge smile came across Paterson's face as he gave Haden a hug. "Thanks, brother."

The two boys spent several long moments hugging each other and thinking about how lucky they were. Although Paterson loved his little sister, he had always wished for a brother. Haden was surprised that he was able to find someone as nice and special as Paterson who didn't care who he was, but only cared about trying to help him, and who had taught him so much in such a small period of time.

Finally, the hug broke. "Um, how do we leave this place?" Paterson asked curiously.

"Oh, I have to push us out," Haden grinned. "I guess this is good night then?"

Paterson nodded. "Goodnight."

Haden concentrated on pushing them both out of his head. A few moments later, Paterson faded away, but Haden remained. "Hum, guess I need to try harder."

Ordith appeared in front of him. "Actually, there is one more thing you need to be aware of before I send you to sleep."

"What?" Haden asked curiously.

"Paterson." Ordith replied.

"What about him?" Haden asked again.

"That cough he has? Well. It's only going to get worse. And, well, in a few weeks, he will be dead." Ordith stated.

"What? Ordith? Why?" Haden replied, not really sure if he could believe what Ordith was telling him. "What kind of Christmas gift includes going to visit a kid that's going to die in a few weeks?"

"Everyone dies Haden." the six year old looking Ordith replied.

"But... he's a kid, like me. That's not right!" Haden protested. "How can we cure him?"

"The antibiotics that he would need simply do not exist in 1804. I'm sorry Haden." Ordith said as he took Haden's hand to try to comfort him.

Haden immediately pulled his hand away. "No, Ordith! This is wrong. First you send me two hundred years back in time, and then the only friend that I've made so far you tell me he's going to get sicker and sicker and be dead in a few weeks? It's... it's... wrong! Why would you do something like this?"

The smaller boy shrugged. "I figured that before he died, it would be good for him to be able to meet someone really special, like yourself. Kind of like a gift for him, just as this is a gift for you."

"But I'm not special!" Haden slammed his foot on the ground. "I keep trying to tell you that."

"And I keep telling you that you are wrong," Ordith replied. "One day, you will realize that. One day, you will understand just how special of a person you are."

Haden stood there shaking his head, tears beginning to run down his face.

"Good night Haden." Ordith said softly.

"I'm not tired!" Haden cried out. "I don't want to go to sleep yet."

"I know," Ordith nodded. "But tomorrow will be a long day for you, and you are going to need to be rested both physically and mentally. I'm sorry, but we can talk more about this tomorrow if you would like."

"No! We will talk about this now!" Haden cried in protest. Already, however, he could feel it getting difficult to think. He could feel reality starting to slip away from around him. "Ordith?" Haden sobbed as his eyes became too heavy to keep open.

"Good night Haden, I'm sorry." Ordith whispered as both he and Haden faded out of Haden's room. Moments later, Haden was in a deep dreamless sleep.

Although neither boy realized it, Haden and Paterson continued to hold each other's hand throughout the night.

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"Wake up," George shook his son's shoulder. "Wake up boy."

Haden woke up startled and sprang to a sitting position. "Huh?"

Paterson mumbled something and lazily sat up.

"Why were you two in the same bed, boy?" Paterson's father demanded. "Answer me."

"Papa?" Paterson asked sleepily.

"There's an extra bed in your sister's room, why didn't you use that?" George continued. "You know it ain't right for two grown boys to share the same bed together. This would be the devil's seed."

"I..." Paterson started to say as he struggled to find the right words.

"I think it's my fault, sir." Haden said softly.

"What do you mean, boy?" George asked as he looked directly at Haden.

"Last night, I was feeling alone and I couldn't get to sleep, I was crying and Paterson said he would lay next to me while I fell asleep. But I guess we both fell asleep by accident." Haden stated feeling uncomfortable under the man's gaze.

"Is that true?" The man asked with a little less anger in his voice.

Paterson nodded.

"Well," The man turned around and walked over to the table. "That's different then, isn't it? My boy is growing up already. Your mother would have been proud of you."

Paterson nodded again.

"Alright. Enough sitting around. If you want breakfast, there are chickens to tend to. You can bring some eggs back with you." The man stated as he walked over to the stove.

"Yes, sir." Paterson replied as he motioned for Haden to follow him outside.

"Chickens? You have chickens here?" Haden said excitedly once they were walking down the small path.

"Yeah, don't you have them in the future?" Paterson asked curiously.

"No. Well, yes, we do. But I have never really gotten to see them, other than pictures of them." Haden answered.

"How do you get eggs then?" Paterson asked as they approached a small red painted building.

"We get them from... stores. And they get them from huge chicken farms, and the eggs get shipped all over the country and ... yeah, this is getting complicated again." As the chickens came into view, Haden became more distracted.

Paterson grabbed some chicken feed, and began to spread it around on the ground. "Thanks. I mean, for sticking up for me back there."

"No problem," Haden replied as the first chicken he tried to pet didn't seem to like the idea much, "You stuck up for me yesterday. I think that's what brothers do, they help stick up for each other."

Paterson looked toward Haden and nodded. "Yeah. But about that. Umm, I don't think Papa would really understand. About us agreeing to be brothers and all."

Haden nodded. "Okay, I won't say a thing about it."

"Thanks." Paterson replied.

Haden looked over toward Paterson as he spread the feed. "That doesn't look too hard."

"I'm just feeding the..." Paterson smiled as if Haden just told a joke, but the smile quickly went away. "I keep forgetting, you don't know things that are normal for kids around here. I can show you how to spread the feed for them if you want?"

Haden bounced up. "Yes, please."

Paterson gave Haden the small bag of chicken feed, and for the next few minutes, walked him through how to throw and scatter the feed so it lands where you want it to land, how to not let it get bunched up, and what areas needed feed and what areas didn't.

Once they were done, Paterson took a step back and grinned. "I don't think I've ever met another boy that liked feeding chickens as much as you."

"Why not? This is cool. Look at how they all start flocking around us," Haden said with a smile as he finished the last area that needed feed. "I think I finally found a job that I'm good at."

"Well, if you like that, then maybe you will also like getting a few eggs from the roost before we go back home?" Paterson asked.

Haden nodded. "How?"

Paterson motioned for Haden to follow him to the other side of the small building. Once there, he took off a loose log from the back, exposing a portion of the inside. From there, Haden could see that it was split off into several small sections, each which seemed just large enough for a chicken to comfortably sit in. In fact, two chickens were still sitting there when the log was removed.

"Reach in and grab an egg." Paterson stated.

Haden looked in, and just as he was about to ask where they were at, one of the two chickens that were there, left, and in the nest it was sitting on, was a small brown egg. Haden picked up the egg to show it to Paterson. But, to Haden's surprise, the egg was warm, so he dropped it causing it to crack and splatter on the ground.

Haden froze in place, looked at the egg and then at Paterson in horror. "I'm sorry," He squeaked out.

Paterson, on the other hand, looked at the egg, and then at Haden's face, and had to fight to resist giggling.

Haden stood there looking at the egg and then Paterson looking at him and how he was starting to giggle. The expression on Paterson's face alone, and how hard he was struggling not to laugh caused Haden to begin to laugh. After a few more moments of exchanging glances, both boys erupted in a fit of giggles.

Both boys continued to stand there giggling at each other and the egg. This lasted for a good thirty seconds before Paterson began wheezing and coughing while holding his ribs. Suddenly, Haden remembered the conversation he had with Ordith last night, and all the giggles were gone.

"We should get back up to the house." Paterson stated as he grabbed a few eggs. Haden nodded and put the log back into place before both boys walked in silence back up the path toward the cabin.

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Breakfast consisted of eggs, porridge, bread, and strawberries. Although Haden would not have thought that to be that good of a combination, it was surprisingly good.

"So tell me, boy. Do they have schools where you come from?" George asked as they were beginning to finish up breakfast.

Haden nodded his head. "I think so."

"Good," George replied. "Paterson, you can take Haden to school with you, when you get back, you will need to pick your sister up from Miss. Simpson's. I need to head over to Hudson to get another ox for the plow. I'll leave some fruit and bread here for all of you to have for lunch."

"Yes sir." Paterson replied.

George then looked toward Haden, and when Haden didn't answer, he corrected him. "It's proper for a boy to show respect to his elders by answering 'yes sir' or 'no sir' when spoken to."

Haden nodded. "Yes, sir."

"I go to school too papa?" Annabella asked as she climbed off her chair.

"No little one, you still have one more year to wait until you will start school.

"I'm a big girl, papa." the five-year-old stated.

"Yes, you are. Which is why you are going to be a big girl and help Miss. Simpson this morning." George stated as he took his and Annabella's plates to the dish box.

Annabella nodded.

"Well, what are you two waiting for? I'm sure Mrs. Meadows will want to see Haden before class starts." George stated as he looked at the empty bowls and plates of both boys.

"Yes, sir." Both boys said in unison. Haden mimicked Paterson, and took his dirty dishes to the dish box, and then both boys headed out the door.

"Do you have to bring a book bag or anything with you?" Haden asked as they began walking down a new path that Haden had not taken before.

"Why would I do that?" Paterson asked curiously.

"Don't you have school books and stuff?" Haden answered.

Paterson shook his head. "Nah, all our books are at school. So I guess they still have schools in the future?"

Haden nodded. "Yeah, I think there are some things that will never change with time."

Paterson started to laugh and then began coughing.

It took the boys about 10 minutes to walk to the school. In doing so, they also entered a portion of the village, and passed three other cabins as they got closer.

Before they reached the building, Paterson stopped Haden. "Just so you know, Mrs. Meadows is really big into religion, so you might want to be real careful about taking about any kind of future stuff. She might label you a daemon for sure, and then the whole town will hear about it."

Haden nodded. "Okay, I will."

"Hey Patty, Who's your friend?" A lanky 11-year-old, short brown haired boy said as he ran up behind Paterson and Haden.

"I said not to call me that, Steven," Paterson replied as he gave the taller boy a swift punch in the arm. "And his name is Haden. He doesn't remember a lot of his past, so you better leave him alone."

"Oh," The other boy said as he looked closer to Haden. "Pastor was telling my dad about him earlier. He says he might be from France? I'm thinking they might be right, because he looks way too pale to be English."

"He might be, but until he can remember more, just leave him alone for now, okay?" Paterson answered.

Steven immediately switched sides and started to make his way next to Haden. Paterson, for his part swirled around, and pulled his arm all the way back as if to sock Steven again."

"Alright Paterson, I'm just introducing myself," Steven stated and once Paterson backed down. He held out his hand toward Haden, "I'm Steven."

Haden hesitantly took the offered hand. "Hi. I'm Haden."

Steven took a look at Haden and smiled. "You have girl hands!" Steven then pulled his hand away and ran off shouting, "Patty's new friend has girly hands! Har Har!"

"Ignore him." Paterson said with a sigh as he turned and continued walking toward the school with Haden following close behind.

As the two boys made their way closer to the school, they saw several other kids playing in the areas in front of small building. Standing at the top of the steps in a rather nice dress and wearing a flowered hat was a tall woman.

"Good morning, Mrs. Meadows," Paterson called out as they reached the bottom of the steps.

The woman immediately took interest in both boys, and walked down the small number of steps to reach the bottom. "Well good morning Paterson, who is your new friend?"

"Mrs. Meadows, this is Haden. He doesn't remember a lot of his past, but we think he might be a French boy. May he join our class this morning?"

"A French boy?" Mrs. Meadows said as she looked Haden up and down. "Bonjour Haden. Êtes-vous faire bon aujourd'hui?" (Good morning Haden. Are you doing good today?)

Haden tilted his head, and answered using a perfect French accent. "Je fais très bien. Merci Mme Meadows." (I am doing very well. Thank you Mrs. Meadows.)

"I see," Mrs. Meadows replied. "You certainly have a very nice French accent. The pastor might have been right about you after all. Yes, you may attend class this morning as long as you stay on your best behavior."

"Okay, thanks." Haden replied as he was very grateful for the full language dump he had received several months ago from the clan telepaths.

"Although, we normally do not allow jewelery in the classroom. It's a distraction to the other students." Mrs. Meadows stopped the boys as they started to walk in, and eyed up Haden's GEAR arm band. "Why don't you give that to me, and I'll give it back to you at the end of school."

Not willing to give up his only means of protection, Haden shook his head and took a step backward.

The teacher spent several long moments looking at Haden. Perhaps it was the fear and terror that she saw in the boy's eyes, but whatever the reason, she backed down. "On second thought, I'll let you keep hold of it for today. Just remember to leave it at home before you come tomorrow."

Haden nodded and let out a sigh of relief as he and Paterson walked into the building. A few moments after they did, Mrs. Meadows began ringing a bell outside, which immediately caused all the other kids to start running toward the building. Within minutes, nearly every seat in the school room was filled with boys and girls who appeared to range in ages from six to fourteen.

A few seats away, Haden saw Steven sitting down next to two older boys. "Hey girly hands?" the older boy stage-whispered. "Can I see that thing on your arm? I want to look like you."

Haden shook his head and did his best to ignore the older boy just as Paterson had suggested.

"No? Well then maybe I'll just take it from you instead." Steven stated causing the other two older boys to giggle. He then started to get out of his seat, but quickly changed his mind when he looked back and saw Mrs. Meadows watching them from the back of the room.

Once everyone was in their seats, Mrs. Meadows walked to the front of the room and began with a prayer. One of the older students then read a short bible verse, after which Mrs. Meadows introduced Haden to everyone. After that, the school day officially started.

At first, Haden did not see how it would be possible to teach a class with such wide range of students in it. But to his surprise, it ended up working rather well. She first started the younger kids off with quietly quizzing each other on their spelling words. Since Haden did not have any spelling words assigned to him, he was allowed to sit quietly while she then worked with some of the older kids, getting them started on more difficult assignments. After that, she came back to the younger kids, and began talking about parts of speech before she started them working on their various readers, each according to his or her current skill.

Since Mrs. Meadows did not know what level Haden was at she decided to allow him to share Paterson's forth level reader.

Given that he was accustomed to reading cutting edge technical manuals for computer systems, he didn't expect to have any issue with any level of reader, but when he began reading along with Paterson, he found that in 1804, some of the words and the dialect that were used was unfamiliar to him. More times than not, Haden found himself having to stop Paterson and ask him what a word meant, so he could try to figure out what the modern equivalent was. Another hurdle for him was the fact that the particular story they were reading talked about a money system that was totally unfamiliar to him, involving pounds, shillings, and pence.

Since different students were working on different assignments, as each finished up whatever they were working on, Mrs. Meadows allowed them to go outside for some fresh air. With Haden struggling through his reading as much as he was, both he and Paterson were one of the last kids to make it outside.

"You did pretty good." Paterson suggested as they walked around the side.

Haden shook his head. "For being English, there were a lot of words I've never seen before. I guess they don't get used much anymore two hundred years in the future."

Paterson shrugged as they walked back around to the front of the building. "You might think you didn't do well, but for seeing these words for the first time, once I told you about them, you picked up on them really fast."

"Hey guys." Steven grinned as Paterson and Haden stopped in front of him and his two older friends. "You seem to be getting really close to Frenchy, aren't you Patty?"

"Leave us alone Steven," Paterson sighed.

"Have your Frenchy friend give me that arm thing of his, and maybe we won't bash your faces in quiet as hard." Steven grinned as his two friends laughed.

"Is there a problem, boys?" Mrs. Meadows asked as she stepped outside of the building.

Steven quickly looked up toward the teacher, and took a step back from Paterson. "No ma'am."

Mrs. Meadows nodded. "Good, in that case everyone can come back inside so we can continue class." A few moments later, she began ringing the bell which informed all the other kids to return to class as well.

So far, Haden did not have to worry about hiding any of his future knowledge, since he was getting so tripped up on dialect. To everyone else, including Mrs. Meadows, he had tripped up just as bad, if not worse, than Paterson did in his reading. However, after everyone had spent time working on reading, or letter writing in the case of the older students, it was time to begin working with numbers.

"Over the last week, we have been learning how to use tables to help us solve difficult number problems," Mrs. Meadows began. "Today, we will be using them to solve just such a problem. For this exercise, we will pretend that we are at the top of a hill, and that we have a ball with us on the hill. When we push the ball down the hill, it is going to roll such that every second it will move two feet faster than the previous second. Now, for the younger children, I would like you to use tables to figure out how far the ball rolled after three seconds and five seconds. For the older children, I would like you to use tables to figure out how far the ball rolled after seven seconds, ten seconds, and twelve seconds."

Haden raised his hand.

"A question Haden?" Mrs. Meadows asked.

"No, I have the answer." Haden replied.

Mrs. Meadows looked oddly at Haden. "How could you? You didn't have time to create your tables yet."

"After three seconds, the ball will be nine feet away, and after five seconds, it will be twenty-five feet away." Haden answered.

Mrs. Meadows nodded. "I see. Perhaps you did this in your old school. In that case, you may create tables to solve the older kids problems."

"Forty-nine feet, one hundred feet, and on hundred forty-four feet." Haden answered.

"In that case, tell me how far it would be after twenty-one seconds." Mrs. Meadows stated.

"Four hundred forty-one." Haden answered, which caused a few giggles to be heard from around the classroom.

"Don't be absurd. It could not have gone four hundred forty-one feet in twenty-one seconds." Mrs. Meadows replied as she picked up one of the slates and chalk, and began drawing out a table. Given that she already had the twelve second answer worked out, she was able to expand her table from there. A few minutes later, she looked up at Haden in astonishment. "How could you have possibly known that without working it out?"

"Easy," Haden began. "You said the ball's speed increases by two feet for every second that goes by. That's describing acceleration over time, which is a second degree derivative, the anti-derivative of that would be two times time, which would give velocity. Taking the anti-derivative of that would give you time squared which would give distance traveled. Thus, for any time you give me, I can take the square of that number to give you distance."

Several students in the class simply stared in awe as they waited for the teacher to reply.

"Very good, Haden. I'm guessing that your father was more than likely was a university professor," Mrs. Meadows replied. "However, the purpose of the problem is academic. As such, it is intended to teach the creation of tables. As such, I would like you to use that method to figure out the answers."

Realizing that basic calculus was probably not something taught in the schools in 1804, Haden nodded and sat down. "Yes, Ma'am. Sorry, Ma'am."

The teacher nodded. "It's not a problem Haden. This is your first day here, so I believe it would be proper to provide some allowances in adjusting to the way this school works." With a quick glance around the room, she quickly put all the rest of the students to work.

Since Haden knew nothing about tables, he had to have Paterson explain them to him. By the time Paterson had done this, and both boys managed to draw up the tables to solve the problem given for three and five seconds, it was nearly lunch time, and time for the school day to end.

As all the students were leaving, Mrs. Meadows stopped Haden on the way out. "You are certainly an interesting student, Haden. I look forward to seeing you in my classroom more often."

"Thank you." Haden replied as he nodded.

Steven, who had managed to be standing right behind Haden tried to sneak out and leave right behind him. However, Mrs. Meadows stopped him as well. "Steven, you and I need to talk about the poor work you did on your writing earlier."

"Um? Can it wait?" Steven asked anxiously as he was really hoping to have another shot at Paterson and Haden.

Mrs. Meadows shook her head, shooting down any hopes of that which Steven might have had.

"Hey Paterson, you want to play tag with us?" Another moderately tan boy around his age with short dark brown hair and dark green eyes called out as they were walking away from the school.

"Nah, I can't today. I need to go pick up my sister," He replied and then turned toward Haden. "You can stay and play if you want?"

Haden quickly shook his head. "No thanks."

Paterson nodded and called back to the other boy. "We'll play tomorrow."

The other boy nodded his slightly freckled face and ran off with a few of the other school kids while Haden and Paterson made their way back to their cabin.

---

When the boys were about half way back to their cabin, Steven, the eleven-year-old boy they met earlier in the day, walked out from the woods. "Hey Patty. You too good to hang out with us now? Going to become a Frenchy by hanging out with your Frenchy friend?"

"Leave us alone, Steven." Paterson said as he tried to walk around the taller boy.

Steven quickly blocked his path. "Or what? There is no teacher around. No one to see that pretty face of yours get pounded to the ground."

"We don't have time for this, Steven." Paterson stated as he tried to walk around the boy again. "We need to go get my sister, and then we have chores to do."

"Well, make time," Steven replied as he pushed Paterson down to the ground hard. "Or maybe I'll just take that fancy arm band from your new friend."

Haden took a step back from the taller boy.

"Leave him out of this." Paterson demanded as he coughed a few times and got back up to his feet.

"What? You're going to stand up for this... outsider now?" Steven asked as he walked up to Paterson. "He's not one of us, and you're going to take his side? Look at him, look at how he dresses."

"So? He's my friend." Paterson answered.

"Wrong answer." Steven said as he punched Paterson in the stomach, knocking the breath out of him and sending him to the ground coughing.

"Why did you have to go and do that?" Haden thought to himself as he sighed. 'Why did you have to go and try to hurt my friend? Now I have to do something about it, because if I don't, your going to keep bullying him and others around.' Haden didn't like what was most likely to come next, but he also knew that when the line get's crossed, something has to be done, and Steven had just crossed that line.

"Leave him alone." Haden stated with a gentel yet firm voice just as Steven was about to land a kick to Paterson.

Steven stopped and looked toward Haden. "Don't worry Frenchy, you'll be next after I finish with this traitor."

Although Haden could put up with a lot, one thing he couldn't put up with is bullies, especially bullies picking on people smaller than they are, especially bullies picking on people smaller than they are who are his friends. Seeing the older boy getting ready to land his kick on Paterson, all the training he had on the training planet two months ago, as well as some of the other training a few of the UNIT guys had helped him with since then, kicked in.

Knowing that Steven was not only older and stronger than he was, but also taller, Haden knew that he would have to not only have to do something that used the older boy's weight against him, but he needed to win fast without him having a chance to retaliate. The first thing that Haden spotted was the fact that Steven was planning on using his right leg to kick Paterson. In doing this, he had shifted all his weight to his left leg, which is what Haden decided to take advantage of.

Quickly running up behind Steven, Haden landed a firm kick to the back of his leg, causing the older boy to lose his balance and fall backward. As Steven was falling back, Haden grabbed two of his fingers and wrenched them backwards causing them to snap and dislocate. Then he jumped up, and timed his fall perfectly so that about a half second after older boy landed flat on his back, Haden came down, and slammed his elbow firmly into the boy's throat causing him to be unable to breathe.

Satisfied that he had executed his move properly, and seeing that Steven was dazed and gasping for breath, Haden ran over to check on Paterson. "Are you okay?" he asked as he helped the boy stand back up.

Paterson coughed a few more times while brushing himself off. "Wow, how did you do that?"

"Training... UNIT Training..." Haden answered.

"What's wrong?" Paterson asked as he looked at the slightly trembling boy.

Haden shook his head. "Don't like fighting."

"For not liking to fight, you sure put him in his place." Paterson grinned.

Hearing noise behind him, Haden quickly swiveled around and saw Steven slowly standing back up. Although he said nothing, he gave Haden a dirty look which clearly indicated that Steven didn't feel that this was over. Instead of doing anything, however, the older boy ran off as best as he could.

"Will we get in trouble?" Haden asked worriedly as he turned back toward Paterson.

"Nah, he's eleven and we're only eight. There ain't no one who's going to take his side on this," Paterson shook his head. "Besides, would *you* want to go around telling people an eight-year-old just kicked your butt?"

Haden nodded.

"Come on," Paterson stated between coughs, "We need to go get Annabella."

---

Haden and Paterson managed to collect Paterson's little sister from Miss. Simpson's without any additional problems. Then they all went back to their cabin where Paterson made lunch for everyone, while at the same time showing Haden how he was cutting the fruits up.

After lunch, because it was such a nice day out, they decided to let Annabella run around and play in the front yard. Of course, neither Haden nor Paterson could let Annabella have all the fun, so all three ended up running around playing 'tag'. This went on for a good fifteen or twenty minutes until Paterson's coughing and breathing got too bad, and he had to stop.

Haden continued playing with Annabella a bit longer. Although his physical running stamina had come a long way over the last two months, thirty minutes of running around was about all that he could take so he, too, ended up going and sitting under one of the large trees next to Paterson.

"That was a really brave thing you did with Steven... sticking up for me and all like that," Paterson said after Haden had sat down.

Haden shrugged his shoulders. "We're friends, and friends stick up for each other."

Paterson nodded, and remained silent for several long moments. "She really likes you." Paterson commented as Annabella continued to run around and play in the yard on her own.

"She's pretty cool." Haden agreed.

"I... I like you," Paterson stated. "As a friend, I mean."

Haden nodded as he looked toward Paterson, "I think you're probably one of the first people that I can honestly say that I think I like. I was totally scared and freaking out when I first got here, I had no clue how in the world I would manage to survive, and without even knowing me, you made me feel like a part of your family, like I actually belonged, like I was actually worth... worth something."

"Aww shucks," Paterson blushed as he kicked some dirt around. "That's what brothers are for," he replied a bit softer so only Haden could hear him.

Haden turned away as he felt a tear trickle down his cheek as he remembered what Ordith had shared with him last night about Paterson's fate. "Why does fate have to be so cruel sometimes?" Haden muttered, not thinking that anyone else heard him.

"Because, sometimes it's part of God's plan." Patterson replied.

Haden looked at Paterson in surprise. In surprise, both because he heard him, and by the answer he gave. Although, Haden was pretty sure that the answer would have been different if Paterson knew what Haden was referring to.

Haden had toyed with the idea of telling Paterson, but every time he considered it, he decided against it. What good would it do, after all? There was nothing Paterson could do about it, so it would just end up making him more miserable, which Haden didn't want to do.

Both boys continued to sit next to each other as they watched Annabella decide to start pulling weeds and helping in the garden. Of course, the weeds were not really considered dead until she stomped up and down on them several times first.

'Beep Beep.' came a sound from Haden's GEAR.

"What's that?" Paterson said as he was startled out of his thoughts.

Haden looked at his GEAR and pressed a few buttons. "It was my GEAR I must have pushed it into passive scanning mode when I was fiddling with it earlier because... wait a minute... this can't be right..."

"What's wrong?" Paterson asked as he looked at Haden's arm band nervously as if it might be a rabid animal preparing to attack him.

Haden double checked the display, and the power, but everything on his GEAR checked out. "This is saying it's picked up a highly localized energy field."

"Oh, okay," Paterson replied. "Umm... Is that good?"

Haden shrugged as he shook his head in disbelief. "It could be either, since in my time lots of things can create them. But nothing should be creating one in 1804."

"Do you know where it is, or how far away it is?" Paterson asked curiously. Haden stood up and began turning himself in a circle as he watched the display on his GEAR. "It's fairly close by and... oh... it's coming in the direction of your cabin."

Both boys exchanged a glance with each other, and then ran toward the door. As soon as they opened it, they ran in and looked around. Everything seemed normal.

Haden looked at his gear again, and then pointed toward the back of the cabin. "It's coming from behind that door."

"In Annabella's room?" Paterson asked curiously.

Haden nodded and walked toward the door. Just to be on the safe side, he also powered up the defensive module on his GEAR, which would allow him to activate a shield if needed by a single button press. Carefully opening the door, he looked in.

In the center of the room, between the two beds stood an eight-year-old red head boy with freckles who looked strangely familiar to Haden. Directly beside the boy was a small glowing disc on the floor.

"Luke?" Haden asked hesitantly.

"Hiya Uncle Haden! Hiya Paterson!" the red head replied.

"How do you know my name?" Paterson asked and then gasped as he saw a purple halo appear over the boy's head. "Are you an angel?"

"Don't let the halo fool you," Haden grinned. "He's just a Mikyvis."

"Why do you have to ruin all my fun Uncle Haden?" Luke pouted. "Okay fine, I'm not really an angel, but I got permission from one."

"What are you doing here?" Haden asked.

Luke looked at his watch. "It's been twenty-four hours. I've stopped by to take you back to your normal time."

Haden looked lost for a few moments, and then it hit him. When he first arrived yesterday, he would have been begging to leave, and now... now he wasn't so sure. "Do I have to... go now?" He asked as he looked back at Paterson. "I just met Paterson and... well... he's really cool."

Luke shook his head. "Sorry, but you can't stay in this time Uncle Haden. It would mess things up really bad."

Haden sighed and nodded. "Can I stay a little longer?"

Luke closed his eyes for a moment as if trying to remember something, and then slowly shook his head. "You can't stay too much longer because even as we speak, that Steven kid is in the village getting a bunch of the other older kids, and they are coming to beat the crap out of you for what you did to Steven. I don't think you will want to be here when they get here."

"Argh!" Paterson moaned. "Steven can be such a dunce sometimes. But he's right Haden. Unless you can fend off three or four older kids, being here wouldn't be a good idea."

"Actually, he's also talked the Gentry brothers to join them." Luke added.

Paterson's eyes went wide as he shook his head. "Okay, then that's going to be even worse."

Haden looked back and forth between Luke and Paterson. "Then can Paterson come with me?"

Luke sighed and slowly shook his head. "I'm sorry Uncle Haden, but that's beyond my power to decide. Besides, he would be out of time even worse than you were here."

"But if he doesn't, he'll..." Haden began to say before Luke stopped him by putting a finger up to his mouth and slowly shaking his head.

Haden deflated, turned around, and slowly walked in front of Paterson. "I'll... I'm...", he said as he struggled to find the right words. "I'll really miss you, Paterson."

Paterson softly wrapped his hands around Haden's back, just as he had done to comfort Haden last night. "I'll miss you too Haden. I've never met anyone as special as you before, and I doubt I ever will again."

Haden squeaked as he struggled to prevent himself from crying.

"Wait here," Paterson said he broke the hug and disappeared into the other room, only to come back in a few seconds later holding a small brown egg, "It's one of the extra eggs from this morning. It's not much, but it's a little something to remember your trip by."

"Thank... you..." Haden said as he accepted the egg, and gave Paterson one final hug. "Thank you... for everything."

"Thank you... Brother." Paterson whispered.

Haden turned away, knowing that he could not hold the tears and crying in much longer. "Okay, I guess.. I guess I can... I'm ready." Haden stated as he looked at Luke.

"Hold on," Luke replied as he caused the egg to float a few inches above Haden's hand, and then about an inch of glass surrounded it before it floated back down into his hand. "Okay Uncle Haden, just step in the disc, and it will take you home." Luke replied.

Haden nodded and walked toward the disc. Before he reached it, he turned back around to look at Paterson one final time before he took a step backward onto the disc. Moments later he disappeared.

"Will he... be alright?" Paterson asked as he looked toward the red head.

Luke nodded. "In time, he will. And in time he will realize that he learned a lot more than he might have thought during his trip here."

Paterson nodded. "I hope so."

"That just leaves one last thing," Luke said sadly. "During his stay, Uncle Haden gave you a bit more knowledge of the future than anyone living in this time should have."

Paterson nodded. "Don't worry. I promise I won't tell anyone anything that I learned."

Luke sighed. "Actually, I think it would be best if your memory was erased of his visit. It might be for the best."

"What? No!" Paterson said in shock as he slowly began to back up.

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"Actually, you're wrong Brent," Daileass answered. "I allowed Haden to talk me into teleporting him from a location that I knew there was a 0.041% chance of there being some type of issue."

Brent nodded. "Just try to get him back Daileass, please."

"They're doing their best, Brent." Tristen answered for Daileass. "If it's possible, they'll do it."

Brent nodded as he felt Lance's warm arms wrap around him in support.

As both Brent and Lance watched everyone else continue to run diagnostics and check systems, Haden suddenly appeared in front of them.

"Haden! You guys did it!" Brent called out.

"We didn't do anything over here," Justin informed. "Did you guys do something over there?" He asked the boy on the screen, who shook his head in response.

"Hi..." Haden began to say before the object in his hand fell to the floor with a thud, and he clutched his head in pain.

"What's wrong with him?" Lance called out.

"On it." Dailess replied, as he did so, Haden almost immediately seemed to relax. "Haden's mind was not used to the full force of the link, similar to what happened two months ago when he returned from the training planet the first time."

"Why would that be an issue?" Brent asked. "He was only gone for what? Five minutes?"

"One day." Haden replied with tears in his eyes.

"How could that be?" Brent asked

Seeing how hurt Haden was, Lance immediately went to scoop the small boy up. As he tried, however, Haden pushed him away. As he did this, Lance saw a look of hurt that he had never seen in Haden before, which scared the crap out of him. But knowing how much more it would hurt Haden if he tried to pick him up anyway, he backed off.

"I'm not sure, exactly." Dailess replied. "But, there is at least a day's worth of new memories in his head."

"What's wrong, Haden?" Lance asked softly.

Haden crawled on the floor to grab his egg which, despite being dropped, did not have a scratch on it. "Doesn't matter." Haden answered as he used one of the tables to steady himself as he tried to stand back up. "He's been dead for two hundred years now."

"What?" Several of the kids in the core C.I.C. room asked.

Haden stumbled a little as more tears began to come out.

"Preparing to pull Haden into the mental scape. Hold on guys." Dailess stated.

"No!" Haden screamed as he looked toward the nearest camera he could find. "Please Daileas, not yet. Please."

Dailess hesitated for a few moments as he tried to calculate what it could possibly mean since this was the first time Haden had openly refused to let him and his brothers comfort him in the mental scape. "Okay Haden. We won't do it."

Haden stood up and looked towards the Colonel. "Permission... to... to go to... my room... sir?" Haden asked through sobs.

"Dailess?" Justin asked, knowing that out of everyone in the room, Dailess would know Haden's mental state the best right now.

"I think it would be for the best, sir." Dailess replied.

Justin turned back toward Haden and nodded, immediately causing Haden to clutch the glass encased egg in his hand and walk out the door.

As soon as the door was closed, Brent turned toward the nearest terminal. "Okay Daileass. I need answers, and I need them now. Why the hell was Haden like that?"

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Even before Haden made it out of the core C.I.C, it was hard for him to see through his eyes. Fortunately, where he was going, he could practically do it with his eyes closed. It took less than a minute for him to make it to his bedroom, where he promptly flung himself on his bed with his face buried in his pillow.

"Okay Daileass." Haden replied, after he had been laying on his bed for a few seconds. Within moments, Haden felt himself being pulled. He didn't have to worry about seeing everything fade away and re-focus, because his eyes were already closed while his head was in the pillow. But when he opened them, he saw the very loving and caring face of twelve-year-old Daileass looking down at him.

Immediately Haden leap into his arms, and hugged Daileass tight. "We're not in Logan's head?" He asked.

Daileass shook his head. "No Haden, we're in mine, and it's just me. I didn't think it would be a good idea to get the others involved until I had a better idea of what was troubling you."

Haden nodded as he buried his head into Daileass's shoulder and began to softly cry.

Daileass held Haden tight and gently rocked him back and forth. "It's okay, Haden. Let it out."

Once Haden's crying began to calm down after what seemed like several minutes, Daileass used one of his hands to gently brush Haden's hair. "Would you like to tell me why you feel so hurt, or would you prefer I just look for myself?"

Haden used one of his hands to tap his head.

"Okay," Daileass replied. It was only a few moments later before Daileass's grasp on Haden tightened. "Oh god Haden, I'm so sorry. So so sorry."

"Why Daileass? Why?" Haden asked through small sobs.

"I don't really have a good answer to that. I'm sure this wasn't the result Ordith was expecting when he set this up for you." Daileass struggled to answer.

Haden pushed himself away from Daileass a little, and Daileass in turn gently lowered Haden back down to the ground so that he could walk. "It wasn't right. Nothing about the trip was good." Haden said as he began to walk around the small room that he was in.

"Give it time, Haden. You might not realize it now, but I think you will come away from this with more than you realize." Daileass carefully replied.

"But he was... he was... special... to me." Haden said as he hit his chest with one of his hands.

"I know." Daileass answered.

Haden walked over to the small window that he knew overlooked Daileass's city. As soon as he looked out, he gasped. "Daileass... what's wrong?"

Daileass grinned as he walked over to Haden. "Nothings, wrong, why?"

"You don't see that?" Haden asked with concern as he pointed out the window. Instead of seeing the small car lights going up and down the streets, and small helicopter lights going up and down from the ground, the entire city was a huge solid blur.

"I do, and that's normal when we are in real time."

Haden turned around to look at Daileass. "Real time? What do you mean?"

"Normally, when we are in the mental scape, time here goes a lot faster than time in the real world, since we can work at the speed of thought. But right now, we are running in real time speed, so as much time that passes by here also passes by in the real world." Daileass answered as he watched the completely lost and confused look form on Haden's face.

"But, why?" Haden asked.

"So that they would have time to get things ready for when you wake up." Daileass smiled.

"Get what ready?" Haden seemed more confused especially with the way Daileass was smiling at him.

"I love you, Haden. Never change who you are." Daileass said. Seeing 'the look' already starting to form on Haden's face, he continued before Haden had a chance to say anything. "Perhaps it would be best to leave the mental scape so you can see for yourself."

"They're all going to probably try to cheer me up or something," Haden sighed. "Okay, I guess I should get this over with. Go ahead and send me back."

Daileass nodded. "Okay, here we go..."

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Haden saw Daileass, his city scape, and the rest of his room disappear into darkness as he felt his consciousness being pushed back into his body. Before his vision re-focused, Haden felt something warm and soft on his back and around him. As his vision re-focused, he saw a smooth, smiling face looking down at him.

"Paterson?" Haden slowly whispered.

"Hi Haden." Paterson smiled as he wrapped his arms tighter around Haden. "I was beginning to think you would never wake up, but that voice in the air was pretty insistent that you would."

"Paterson!" Haden gasped as he forced himself to sit up breaking Paterson's hug. He frantically looked around him. He was still in his room, and still on his bed. Although his back had been laying on Paterson's chest. Also, several others were in the room as well, including Brent, Lance, Evan, Jimmy, Kent, and the red headed Mikyvis who was now in his ten-year-old size. "How?"

"It was that purple halo'ed red head," Paterson began. "After you left, he was talking like he was going to erase my memory and all, but he was really just trying to see if I would ask to be able to go back with you."

"Purple halo'ed?" Evan asked as he eyed up Luke.

Luke just shrugged and grinned.

"But... But.." Haden struggled to find the right words. "What about messing up the time lines and all?"

Luke grinned. "Well, you see. It turns out that Ordith was right. Paterson's condition would have continued to get worse, until finally he would have died a week and a half later. So technically, nothing has been altered by him coming back. And don't worry, I had my other brothers help me check to make absolutely sure."

"Won't he still die here as well?" Haden asked with concern.

Luke shook his head. "Nah, Aunt Janet will just need to give him some antibiotics, and he should be fine."

"So..." Haden looked between Luke and Paterson. "He can stay? Here? With me?"

Luke grinned. "Are you kidding. With as close of friends as you two became over the last day, I don't think he could exist anywhere else."

Both Haden's and Paterson's faces lit up, as they each wrapped their arms around each other.

"See, I told you that you would eventually find someone special of your own." Evan said as he wrapped an arm around Jimmy.

"Thank you." Haden said as he looked toward Luke while still hugging Paterson. "Thank you. This is the best christmas ever!"

"Yeah." Paterson nodded in agreement as the two boys continued to hug each other.

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Thirty minutes later, with Haden sleeping peacefully, Paterson quietly closed the door to Haden's room. Standing in the hallway patiently waiting for him was a multi-colored hair, purple eyed boy. "Okay, I'm ready." Paterson said to the boy, who only nodded in response.

## THE END?

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Editor Notes:

And Ordith is hanging out in Haden's head with a grin on his face, anticipating when Haden will realize what else he learned during his day in 1804. What a Christmas gift! I wasn't sure when this started how it would turn out, but it appears Ordith gave Haden a pretty good Christmas lesson and present after all.

Cynaira