

Captain Caspian made several diagrams that explained complex inner workings of the machine. Some she would draw, contemplate, and redraw. The diagrams were also noted in a Moon Shorthand script, that the Captain was fluent in writing. When she was done, she showed them to Gerald. Danny looked on, but he didn't find much of value in them.

"Basically, the way it works is way too complex for this, here, explanation, but I will try to explain what it does," she said, standing up. She thought for a second, then she began, holding up a diagram of the Universe. On the diagram was the moon on the left hand side and Alpha Centauri on the other.

"We are here," she said, pointing at the moon. "And, we want to get here," she continued, pointing at Alpha Centauri. "How do we normally do that? Well, we travel from the left to the right in a Warp-speed cruiser. We travel a safe distance from other objects, hit the Warp drive button, and zoom on over. Still, for vast reaches of space, it takes a while. That, and if you need to carry an entire army, you need many ships all Warp-drive capable. That can get expensive."

Danny asked, "So, how do you shorten that up?"

"I'm glad you asked, Danny. I believe Gerald here already knows, but I'll explain it. We know that Space-Time is fluid. It's fabric, actually, made of time-atoms, and using special string vibrations, we can mess around with this fabric. Now, this can be mucho peligroso, because you can tear the fabric. Essentially, what we do here, is we fold the map," Caspian explained, folding the map so that the parts of Moon and Alpha Centauri were right slam-butt next to each other. Danny, despite himself, gasped at the effective presentation. He felt as smart as Albertus Einsteinus, a much smarter re-clone of Albert Einstein who outlined the complex theories of Starslipping, Stargating, and Tailgating, a popular hangy-outy thing that people do before football games.

"I understand!" cried Danny. But he hadn't meant to, and he felt foolish immediately after. Caspian and Gerald shared a look that looked as flirtatious and knowing as many of the looks Danny had given to sexy-hott female roadies and fans on many occasions. "Hey, what's going on here?" he asked, but neither of them answered him, and Captain Caspian got out another map.

This one showed a vibrating string thing and the Moon and Alpha Centauri shattered to lots of little pieces with a chunk of land in between the two with a group of people on it saying, "Help!" Danny recognized himself on that rock because he had his rock guitar.

"Because of the dangerous nature of Stargating, the Imperial Government only allows certain bodies access to the strings. Essentially, to make it work, each base has to have a part of the big mother string. These strings last a Space Year, which makes the book keeping on licensing pretty easy. Our division of the Space Army has an exclusive use of such string for the purpose of transporting troupes and top-secret personnel to far off places quickly. In a normal situation, your mission would be impossible to complete due to the tight time constraint. You would get to Alpha Centauri roughly six days after the Universe is exploded." Danny gasped again, despite himself. This was complex, frightening stuff. "However," she continued, "this graphic more accurately depicts the kind of problem we come across when there is miscommunication in using the strings or a rogue string interacts with a given string. In those cases, both the sending Stargate and the receiving Stargate will be obliterated, and their respective planets, and the travelers will be stranded in the middle of space to die of Space Suffocation."

"Oh my Space God," muttered Danny. "That's horrible. That's us."

"Hopefully not," she continued yet again. She held up a third diagram that showed a string vibrating two people into little bits. Then, another part of the string hit those parts across the universe to the other string that caught them in a catcher's glove and used it's other part to reassemble the person on the other side. Danny noticed that one person had a rock guitar and looked to be rocking out pretty hardcore. He guessed that was him. "The way the machine works is by instantly vibrating your atoms apart. Essentially, it speeds them up to so fast that they break their bonds. Then the string catches the atoms, most of them, and tosses them in a perfect straight line to the other base. This base's string will catch the atoms and absorb the vibrations, allowing the person to cool down so that the atoms reassemble on the other side. The strings play this catch at sixty thousand times faster than light and sound combined by multiplying. This can be a dangerous process, as the gates are usually really far apart. In fact, the gates were originally called Fargates, not

Stargates, but people thought that that just made them sound like portals, which are entirely different. Others thought that it made them sound like black holes, but we all know that that is preposterous, and black holes have never worked for transporting anything. In any case, if there is just the slightest problem in transporting an object, then whatever is being transported will be irrevocably destroyed, never to exist again."

"Oh my Space God," muttered Danny. "That's- hold on. What do you mean the string passes MOST of the atoms?"

"Captain," said CICERO. He had rolled up to the Captain as she was explaining that which she had explicitly said she wouldn't explain, that is, how the Stargate worked. "Engineer Roberts says that he is ready for the cargo."

Danny's eyes got big. Were they the cargo?

"Let's go, cargo," smirked the Captain. She gathered up her pictures and started to walk along with CICERO. "I have this other diagram about how to save yourself if your atoms go missing, but I'll explain that at the gate."

"Wait, what?" said Danny, panicked. "Can't you explain now?"

"Of course not. How am I supposed to gesture when I'm walking in front of you? And don't you be checking me out when I walk," she added with a toss of her hair.

"Why would I be-?" Danny started, but Gerald put his hand on Danny's shoulder.

"She means me, bro," Gerald told him. Danny rolled his eyes and scoffed.

They walked around the pie until they came to the Stargate, the SG-24 Danny had seen in the monitors. Inside his head, he heard, once again, the voice of Magnolia saying, "Something terrible is going to happen. Twenty-four, Danny!"

"Here you are, boys. Our beautiful, full-functioning SG-24," said the Captain. Inside his head, Danny heard Magnolia's voice saying, "Something terrible is going to happen. Twenty-four, Danny!"

“Alright! I get the point! Something terrible is going to happen! I get it! And you know what else? I see nothing but twenty-four since you gave me that stupid prophecy, and I’m getting sick of it! Oh, and another thing! You seem less and less urgent every time you say it, so it’s pretty hard to take you seriously anymore!” Danny finished his screaming and looked around. Everyone was staring at him.

Then Gerald grabbed Captain Caspian and they began to kiss passionately. Danny and the rest of the group turned their faces away, feeling awkward. CICERO, the robot, was the only one to not really care that much, just like we wouldn’t care that much seeing a robot tightening his screws. Of course, I don’t know that for sure. I’m just guessing.

“Did you guys test this thing?” Danny asked. He saw a strange man with large, thick glasses step out from behind the Stargate. He had a large mustache, which was red-colored, and he wore a beret. The Stargate was circular with all sorts of drawings and markings on it. In the middle of the gate-frame was a moving, oozing liquid seemingly suspended in mid-air.

“We just tossed a dog in there about five minutes ago. Seemed to go alright,” said the engineer. “Hi, I’m Jamie Hyneman Roberts. I’m a trained professional; do not attempt this at home.”

“I reject your reality and substitute my own,” came another voice. Another red-haired man stepped out from behind the Stargate. He had a mostly bald head and goatee with thick, black-framed glasses.

“What?” asked Danny, but suddenly a switch was flipped, and the Stargate became bright glowing with energy. The frame started to creak and shake and shudder. Some of the liquid was spilling out onto the ground in front of and behind of the frame, making the ground black and scarred.

“Rock stars, first,” said Captain Caspian, but Danny dug his heels in and resisted. Instead of pushing him, she gently pushed Gerald into the Stargate, and there was a strong hissing as his clothes caught fire. There was a brief screaming (the loudest Danny had ever heard his brother yell), and then there was silence.

“What happened? Where did he go?!” demanded Danny. His brother was

not only gone, but he was most likely hurt or even murdered. How could they have done this to him? Was this all a cruel trick? This was the terrible thing that was going to happen! Magnolia was right! "You guys are criminals! You've murdered my brother!"

"Alpha Team! La'chonno de'literato!" With a rush of human movement, the soldiers lined up single file, and then they plunged, one by one, into the Stargate, each screaming and bursting into flames as they did so.

"I wanna try!" yelled Adam Savage, the other man with red hair. Then the other man, Jamie, slapped him on the head and everyone laughed.

"After you, rock-star," said the Captain. Then, Captain Caspian pushed Danny Foster full on into the Stargate. For a second he felt excruciating heat and pain, then the world went black, and Danny felt consciousness slip away.