

Once Upon A WASTELAND

Season Two: "Broader Lands and Better Days"

Episode 4
"Great and Distinctive Changes"

by

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"GREAT AND DISTINCTIVE CHANGES"

FADE IN:

INT. EMERALD CAVERN - NIGHT

ODESSA

Look! Is that...

CINDY

It's not a Scorchbeast! It's a person! Someone's coming through!

The sound and light from the portal reach a crescendo. A figure appears in silhouette.

BETH emerges from the portal. The sound and light subside as it closes.

ODESSA

Beth?! Is... is it really you?

BETH

(counting to herself)

One, two, three, four, five, six...
Good. You're all here.

(beat)

Alright, everyone. Here's where things get complicated.

AMANDA

Uh... things are already pretty complicated.

BETH

(surprised)

They are? What did I miss?

RAHMANI

Quite a bit, actually...

The cavern begins to shake. Debris falls from the walls and ceiling.

ODESSA

I don't like the sound of that.

BETH

These portals work like a pickaxe. They use weak points because those are easier to punch through, but that can introduce...

ODESSA
Instability in an already unstable
environment.

BETH
Precisely.
(beat)
I missed you so much.

The cavern continues to shake. Debris falls.

AMANDA
Uh, guys?

BETH
What happened while I was gone?
Anything juicy?

CINDY
Um... well...

BETH
What are you not telling me?

A large section of the wall begins to collapse.

ODESSA
Beth! Look out!

DEREK springs into action and tackles BETH out of the way.

DEREK
Are you okay?

BETH
I am. Thank you. Would've been a
bit disappointing to finally get
here and immediately get crushed by
a collapsing wall.
(beat)
Thank you, handsome. New in town?

DEREK
Um... yes.

BETH
Why did you look at Odessa before
you answered? What's going on?!

ODESSA
Let's get back upstairs to the bar
before there's another collapse...
we were lucky that one didn't block
the door.

(MORE)

ODESSA (CONT'D)

(beat)

And I think we're all going to need a drink.

BETH

That suits me. That portal takes a lot out of you. Wish they'd warned me about that...

ODESSA

You wish *who'd* warned you?

(beat)

Sorry. Let's get out of here.

The group leaves the cavern and goes into the basement, closing the door behind them.

BETH

Wait. There was never a door here...

AMANDA

There wasn't, but it's... appeared twice now.

BETH

Appeared? Like the portals?

AMANDA

No. It's been much less dramatic. Both times, we just came down here and... there it was.

BETH

And disappeared just as mysteriously, I presume?

AMANDA sighs.

AMANDA

I think it'll be gone next time anybody comes down here.

(beat)

Hope, too. I don't like the idea of my bar being some kind of hub for... whatever the hell's going on here. I thought the worst-case scenario was that I'd eventually find a pile of bodies buried down here or something.

ODESSA

You said "weak points," but you also implied that you weren't talking about the *physical* structure of that cavern.

BETH

I was not. It's... hard to explain. I'm not even sure I understand it.

RAHMANI

Do you know why we were brought here?

BETH

Not specifically, at least not yet. I don't even know why I'm involved.

RAHMANI

What about in the abstract?

BETH

The person I was with was... frustratingly cryptic.

RAHMANI produces her envelope.

NAVIA

Does this look familiar?

BETH

Let me see that.

RAHMANI hands the envelope to BETH.

BETH (CONT'D)

I take it all of you received something similar?

CINDY

Yes. We all got an envelope with a different symbol on it, and there was a card inside with coordinates here.

BETH pulls a card out of her pocket.

BETH

I didn't get coordinates because I was led directly to where I needed to go, but I have a symbol, too.

ODESSA

Any idea what they mean?

BETH

No.

BETH sighs.

I'm sorry that I don't have
answers.

(getting woozy)

I want to get to the bottom of this
as much as... oh dear...

BETH collapses to the floor.

ODESSA

Beth!

ODESSA runs to BETH.

ODESSA (CONT'D)

No no no, Beth, wake up...

CINDY

I know I've got a Stimpak on me
somewhere...

(beat)

Here!

CINDY tosses the stimpak to ODESSA.

ODESSA injects BETH with the Stimpak.

BETH wakes up, groggy.

BETH

Ugh.

ODESSA

Are you okay? You passed out!

BETH

"Okay" is relative.

ODESSA

I guess the portal took more out of
you than you thought.

BETH

It just... hit me all at once. I
thought I was fine, but then I
wasn't.

(beat)

Not a bad thing to wake up to,
though.

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA

I agree.

(beat)

Let's get you upstairs to the bar.
Are you hungry?

BETH

No, strangely. Just tired, mostly.
I can feel a hell of a headache
coming on, though. They warned me
about that.

DEREK

Let me help you up the stairs.
Can't have you taking a tumble.

ODESSA

(glaring at Derek)

I've got it from here.

DEREK

Okay. Just trying to help.

ODESSA

(curt)

Thank you.

(beat)

You guys go up first. We'll be up
in a minute, okay?

AMANDA

Okay.

The group ascends the stairs.

ODESSA

Are you really okay?

BETH

I'm finally back with you.

BETH and ODESSA kiss.

BETH (CONT'D)

Why did Amanda say that things got
"complicated" while I was away?

(beat)

And who's the handsome stranger?

ODESSA

Those two things are... related.

BETH

Oh. Well, whoever he is, I'm glad he was there. I was still a bit... disoriented; I had no idea that wall was about to come down on me.

ODESSA

It's Derek.

BETH

What?

BETH laughs.

BETH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I thought you said he was Derek.

ODESSA

Um... I did.

BETH

The Derek?

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA

The one and only.

BETH

(shocked)

What... what is *he* doing here?! Are you alright? I'm so sorry, I...

ODESSA

(interrupting)

Beth... I'm *okay*. I was... not okay when he showed up, but Amanda was right there and...

BETH

(interrupting)

I should've been there!

ODESSA

All that matters is that you're here *now*.

BETH

(gathering herself)

When you said that name I thought... I was afraid that he was here to... take you away from me. To take you *home*.

ODESSA

This is home. With you.

(beat)

And nobody is going to "take me away" from you. I get a say, too, you know?

BETH

I do.

(beat)

I'm starting to wonder if traveling through those portals has side effects other than a headache and lightheadedness.

ODESSA

What do you mean?

BETH

It's hard to put into words. I just feel... off.

ODESSA

When Amanda and I were down here a couple of weeks ago, we felt "off," too.

BETH

"Off" how?

ODESSA

Things just felt... unreal, like we were halfway inside a dream. I was me and Amanda was Amanda, but we felt *different*. Like we were living a different life. We chalked it up to exposure to Hallucigen gas, but it's nagged at me ever since... it felt more real than that.

(beat)

I see what you mean about it being difficult to put into words.

BETH

I think I'll feel better after a good night's sleep in my own bed. Hex is a gracious host, but the accommodations there were *not* exactly five-star.

ODESSA

Do you want to go straight home?

BETH

I do, but I think we all need to talk about what I learned while I was in the Pitt first. It affects all seven of us.

(beat)

It's so strange that Derek, of all people, is among The Seven. None of the rest of us was a surprise, but... well, I knew these people worked in mysterious ways, but I suppose I underestimated just *how* mysterious.

ODESSA

We should join everyone upstairs in the bar. They're all probably hoping for some clarity. I know I am.

BETH

Speaking of clarity, did our friend Craig provide any?

ODESSA

He did provide some background. He's studied the Order of the Emerald Pike since he was a kid, and I hope that research can at least provide some context.

(beat)

I presume the they're involved in this, somehow?

BETH

They are. That's why the Sentinel asked me to point you in Craig's direction.

ODESSA

A "Sentinel?"

BETH

Yes. That's how the person I was with in the Pitt, the one who led me to the portal, identified himself.

ODESSA

(remembering)

I thought it was a dream, or a hallucination, but Amanda and I ran into someone identifying herself as a Sentinel when we had our little... adventure down here. But I was thinking about what she told us - we weren't supposed to be there yet, and that it wasn't supposed to be just the two of us.

(beat)

At the time, we thought she was talking about you, but it must've been all seven of us.

BETH

Possibly. I've learned very quickly to not jump to *any* conclusions when dealing with a Sentinel.

ODESSA

It's strange, though. We were just sort of... *there* when the portal opened. We didn't *do* anything. Why go to all the trouble of assembling us in one place?

BETH

The Sentinel seemed... cagey whenever I asked him direct questions. Sometimes downright evasive. But one thing he kept referring to was "The Seven." It seems that we're kind of a package deal.

ODESSA

Including Derek.

BETH sighs.

BETH

Yes. Including him.

(beat)

Does he... know? About us?

ODESSA

Of course. I even showed him pictures. Whatever ideas he might have had about me leaping into his arms and traveling back to California with him...

(MORE)

ODESSA (CONT'D)

well, I wanted to make sure that I quashed those.

BETH

He could've let that wall collapse on me, so you must've said very nice things.

ODESSA

I did. Nothing that wasn't true, of course. But I knew that as soon as he saw us together... that's when he'd really understand.

BETH

I hope you're right. As cagey as the Sentinel was, he made it clear that each member of The Seven has a role to play.

ODESSA

A role to play in *what*, though?

BETH sighs.

BETH

I guess we're all going to find out together. But whatever it is... it's beyond anything I've dealt with.

ODESSA

I've never seen anything like that portal you came through.

BETH

You should try passing through one. And reading between the lines, that's just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

ODESSA

What do you mean?

BETH

The Sentinel let it slip that these portals... well, they don't just allow travel between Pittsburgh and Appalachia. I wasn't able to tease any additional context out of him, but it's something we should keep in mind as we try to suss this out.

AMANDA opens the door and calls down to BETH and ODESSA.

AMANDA

Hey, I know you two miss each other, but people are starting to get a little... restless up here. You coming?

ODESSA

Yes, sorry, we're on our way.

AMANDA

Okay. I guess we'll just have to have another round without you...

AMANDA closes the door.

BETH

I don't think anyone's going to be satisfied given how little I know, but... it's a start. *Then* we can go home.

ODESSA

Wait. Before we go up there.

ODESSA kisses BETH.

BETH

Thank you. I needed that.

ODESSA

So did I.

ODESSA and BETH climb the stairs

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. FORT ATLAS, DAY**

ODESSA enters. Knight MERRIWEATHER greets her.

MERRIWEATHER

Scribe Valdez! I didn't expect to see you today. Is Beth okay? Since you are here, I expected to see her, too.

ODESSA

She's fine, thank you for asking. She wants to jump right back into things, but I put my foot down and told her that she needed to rest for at least one day.

MERRIWEATHER

(playfully)

Be careful... she's a spy, remember? She might sneak out while you're here.

ODESSA

She'll listen. Trust me.

MERRIWEATHER

Okay. I'll take your word for it.

ODESSA

Besides, I think she might already be sick of me doting on her.

MERRIWEATHER laughs.

MERRIWEATHER

I'd milk that as long as I could.

(beat)

You just missed Scribe Navia.

ODESSA

Aw. I was hoping we could catch up. Where did she go?

MERRIWEATHER

Scribe Hargrove wanted to see Morgantown, so she and Knight Carlson decided to take him on a field trip.

ODESSA

I'm glad Greg is with them. He knows all the trouble spots, and Jess can get a little... enthusiastic sometimes.

MERRIWEATHER

Always rushing in where angels fear to tread?

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA

Something like that. She has such a passion for discovering new things that she can forget herself.

(beat)

Sometimes I wonder if I was ever that young.

MERRIWEATHER

I always assumed you just sort of *appeared*, fully formed as an adult.

ODESSA

I wish. Avoiding those awkward teenage years would've been nice. At least my experiments never judged me.

MERRIWEATHER

No kidding. Living in the Wasteland is bad enough, but bullying? Bullying never changes.

ODESSA laughs.

MERRIWEATHER (CONT'D)

As nice as it is to see you, I assume this isn't a social call.

ODESSA

It isn't.

MERRIWEATHER

What's up?

ODESSA

Have you learned anything about the messages that we received?

MERRIWEATHER

No. Knight Carlson and Scribe Navia have been heading up that effort.

(MORE)

MERRIWEATHER (CONT'D)

Nobody saw anything out of the ordinary around the time they appeared. It's like a ghost dropped them off.

ODESSA

A ghost...

MERRIWEATHER

You don't... really think it was a ghost.

(beat)

Do you?

ODESSA chuckles.

ODESSA

No. But that makes me wonder...

(beat)

I've always been interested in discovering scientific explanations for things that people think are supernatural.

MERRIWEATHER

Like ghosts.

ODESSA

Like ghosts. Most of the potential explanations for those phenomena are still theoretical, but *someone* put those messages where we found them, and it wasn't some kind of... spectral letter carrier.

MERRIWEATHER

Oh! That reminds me!

ODESSA

What is it?

MERRIWEATHER

That was one of the things Scribe Navia was working on before she left for Morgantown. I'll be honest, I understood maybe every third or fourth word, but she was so excited that I would've felt bad about making her stop.

(beat)

Hopefully I'll get this right...

(MORE)

MERRIWEATHER (CONT'D)

she said she performed a spectral analysis on the messages that the people here at Atlas received? Scribe Hargrove helped her with it.

ODESSA

That was a good idea. What did she find?

MERRIWEATHER

You'll have to ask her for all the specifics, but she seemed pretty excited.

ODESSA

Excited, or "Jess excited?"

MERRIWEATHER laughs.

MERRIWEATHER

It was above and beyond her normal level of excitement.

ODESSA

I wasn't even sure that was possible.

MERRIWEATHER

I'm not sure I would've believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. And Scribe Hargrove seemed kind of excited, too.

ODESSA

Then it must've been a significant discovery. Dave doesn't really do "excited."

MERRIWEATHER

I noticed that. I'm usually pretty good at getting a read on people, but he's inscrutable.

ODESSA

That's a good word for it. But it's not malicious. He's a good person, just a little... hard to read sometimes. Well, all the time.

MERRIWEATHER

You trained him, didn't you?

ODESSA

Scribe Takano had already started to scale back her workload by the time he joined, and we were bringing in *so much* technology that she didn't have time to give the newcomers the kind of attention that she'd given me.

MERRIWEATHER

So you became a teacher.

ODESSA

I did. I felt so... unqualified at first... who was I to teach anybody about anything? I didn't have a fraction of the knowledge or experience that Hailey did.

MERRIWEATHER

But she believed in you.

ODESSA

Yeah. So I just decided to... do it, the best I knew how.

DEREK approaches.

MERRIWEATHER

Well, you've done a hell of a job with the Junior Scribes.

DEREK

That she has.

MERRIWEATHER

Paladin Hewitt!

DEREK

Can I... steal Odessa for a minute, Knight Merriweather?

MERRIWEATHER

Of course. I need to finish some after-action reports for Paladin Rahmani anyway. I'll be in my office if you need anything.

MERRIWEATHER leaves.

DEREK

Want to talk in your lab? It's a little more private in there.

ODESSA

(wary)

Sure.

ODESSA and DEREK go to Odessa's lab.

ODESSA (CONT'D)

What's going on?

DEREK

Nothing. Well, nothing *new*. I just wanted to see how Beth is doing. And how you're doing.

ODESSA

You couldn't do that in front of Rob?

DEREK

I just thought it would be easier to talk if it was just the two of us.

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA

You're probably right. It's been hard, pretending. It was easy to just... not talk about that part of my life before you got here, but now that you are here...

DEREK

Hey, hey...

ODESSA

I really thought that being around you was going to be the awkward part.

DEREK

It isn't?

ODESSA

It was at first, but that melted away pretty quickly. A little too quickly, to be honest.

(beat)

But I catch myself kind of falling into our old dynamic and I keep wondering if people know that there used to be an "us." If they can sense it.

DEREK

I don't think they do. At least I haven't seen any indication of it, and no one's said anything to me.

ODESSA

Do you really think they would? You're kind of intimidating.

DEREK

Intimidating? Really?

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA

How many times have we had this conversation? Yes, Derek, you're here to evaluate everyone here and everything we do for the home office and you look like you just walked off the cover of Backwoodsman Magazine. That's pretty intimidating.

DEREK

I love it when you tell me I'm pretty.

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA

Try not to let your head get *too* big. You need to make sure your helmet still fits in case you get into any combat while you're here.

DEREK

I'm a little surprised that hasn't happened, to be honest. It's surprisingly peaceful around here. Not that I'm complaining.

ODESSA

Super Mutants are still a problem, and so are the Blood Eagles. But we've managed to keep the peace here in Appalachia, even if it's still kind of an uneasy peace.

(beat)

Beth and her mother have been vital in making that happen. Amanda's been a big help getting the Raiders on-board, too... and keeping them there.

DEREK
She's a peacemaker.

ODESSA
Amanda? I don't know about that,
she likes a fight as much as
anybody I know.

DEREK chuckles.

DEREK
No, I meant Beth. But I'll be sure
to stay on Amanda's good side since
you said that.

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA
Good plan. But I think you're good.
She likes you. It helps that you
got off on the right foot.

DEREK
Yeah, that was lucky. We weren't
even going that way originally. We
were trying to get to Atlas but got
turned around.

ODESSA
You? Turned around?

DEREK
Something was going on with the
compass, and...

ODESSA
(interrupting, teasing)
Derek. How many times did you tell
me "a good craftsman doesn't blame
his tools?"

DEREK chuckles.

DEREK
I know, I know. Whatever it was,
Dave couldn't figure it out. He
said there must've been some kind
of localized anomaly.

ODESSA
We haven't encountered that,
specifically, but there have been
phenomena that interfered with
instruments in other ways.

(MORE)

ODESSA (CONT'D)

But Appalachia is full of surprises, scientifically speaking, so I guess I can take your word for it.

DEREK

That's very kind of you.

ODESSA

This time.

DEREK laughs.

DEREK

But if that hadn't happened, we never would've come across Amanda and Mrs. Kirby and the people who were trying to kidnap them. It was a very lucky detour.

ODESSA

I'm not sure who it was luckier for, though... Amanda and Elise or those kidnapers.

DEREK

I heard about the team Beth put together when you were taken. The whole thing is practically legendary around here. Especially that speech.

ODESSA

I heard about the speech! I wish someone had recorded it, but that kind of thing was my job and, well, I was unavailable.

DEREK

She must've been terrified of losing you. I know I would've been.

ODESSA

(a bit ruefully)

It's a feeling I'm very familiar with.

DEREK

(tenderly)

I know. And it's something I never had to deal with. I always knew you were back at Lost Hills, safe.

(MORE)

DEREK (CONT'D)

And when the time came for you to start going out in the field, I'd be right there with you, and we'd have each other's backs. Like we always did.

ODESSA

Until we didn't.

DEREK sighs.

DEREK

Yeah.

(beat)

Look, I know you don't want to talk about this...

ODESSA

I don't. But maybe we should. Hell, maybe we *need* to. I just don't know if I can.

(beat)

I *missed* you. That made me even angrier with you. Every victory on that march, I caught myself looking for you so we could celebrate it together. Every tragedy, it was *your* shoulder I wanted to cry on. I hated you for that, and I hated feeling that way. You were *part* of me, and you ripped that away.

(beat)

I'm glad the march was as long as it was, because you screwed me up for a *long time*. Not just what you did, that was bad enough, but remembering who you were before that. The person I was never, ever going to get back.

(beat)

This is the closest I've felt to being *me* since I left Lost Hills. And now I don't know what to feel. I thought I did, but I don't.

DEREK

What are you saying?

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA

I'm not even sure.

DEREK

I'm sorry.

ODESSA

That's all you have to say? That you're sorry?

DEREK

I thought about what I'd say to you the whole way here. How badly I wish that I'd realized in the moment that the pain in your gaze was a test of me... of us. How I should've been able to see past the end of my own stupid nose and understand that this expedition could've been... *should've* been the start of the next chapter of our lives together, not a roadblock.

(beat, wistful)

How I wish we would've danced more.

ODESSA

Derek...

DEREK

But when I saw you... I was overwhelmed. I was so happy just to finally know you were *alive*, I stopped thinking about everything else.

ODESSA

The slap probably didn't help.

DEREK chuckles.

DEREK

It did, actually. Kind of brought me back to earth. But the truth is that I don't know what to feel, either. You found someone else, and you're happy with her. And I want you to be happy.

ODESSA

But...

DEREK

But I'd be lying if I said that I didn't still want you back, and I'm done lying.

(MORE)

DEREK (CONT'D)

Losing you made me realize that I wasn't always honest with myself about things - important things - and that meant I couldn't be honest with you. And you deserved a lot better than that.

(beat)

But wanting you back does *not* mean that I'm going to do anything, intentionally or otherwise, to get in the way of your relationship with Beth. Remember when you first told me about her and I said that you being happy is the most important thing to me?

ODESSA

Yes, I do.

DEREK

I meant that. And that's not going to change. Ever.

ODESSA

Thank you.

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA (CONT'D)

In the spirit of "semper veritas" I'm not going to pretend this doesn't make things awkward. Well, *more* awkward. But I'm glad we're being honest about it. That elephant was going to be in the room whether we wanted to acknowledge it or not.

DEREK

We're adults. We can work around a little awkwardness.

(beat)

Um, do you want to... grab dinner in the mess while you wait for Scribe Navia to get back? Totally as friends, nothing more.

ODESSA

Actually, I need to get back home. I was just going to check in with Jess and then head right back, and since she's not here... Can you tell her I stopped by?

DEREK

Of course. I'll see you later.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

EXT. MORGANTOWN, DAY

Knight CARLSON, Scribe HARGROVE and Scribe NAVIA walk along the outskirts of Morgantown.

HARGROVE

So, *this* is Morgantown. I thought it would be...

CARLSON

Bigger?

NAVIA

Busier?

HARGROVE

No. Nicer. I guess I was expecting more from the home of the region's largest research university.

HARGROVE sighs.

HARGROVE (CONT'D)

But I suppose that was an unrealistic expectation. I suppose I was hoping that I'd be able to dig into some of Vault-Tec's research while I was here.

CARLSON chuckles.

CARLSON

You should've seen it a couple of years ago. It was totally overrun by Scorched.

HARGROVE

What about the vaccine? Didn't that address the issue?

NAVIA

It helped immensely.

CARLSON

But we still had to deal with the *previously* infected. And there were a lot of them.

NAVIA

And there are still people who are reluctant to take the vaccine.

HARGROVE

There are? Why?

NAVIA

You'd have to ask them.

CARLSON

Which is difficult, given that most of them end up getting infected and then the most you get out of them is hisses and creepy lines like "not us."

HARGROVE

It's unfortunate that the Responders weren't able to complete and distribute the vaccine before they were overrun. Perhaps if we'd arrived sooner...

CARLSON

Or perhaps if they'd listened to Paladin Taggerdy about the threat that the Scorched posed.

HARGROVE

One of the hardest lessons to learn out here, I've found, is that asking "what if..." Well, it can rapidly become unhealthy.

(sotto)

I keep trying to tell Derek that.

CARLSON

It's something most of us struggle with. You're in good company.

(beat)

But the good news is that *most* people are happy to take the vaccine. It doesn't hurt that it comes mixed with Nuka-Cola.

NAVIA

And it tastes good! It's like... Nuka-Cola with a twist of lemon.

CARLSON

Though it *does* have a hint of "old penny" in it as well.

HARGROVE

I noticed both of those things. But I agree with your assessment, Scribe Navia - I've certainly taken medicine that was *less* pleasant. I certainly can't fault the presentation... the custom label was a nice touch.

(beat)

On the way here, we saw... oblique references, shall we say, to a research hub here in Morgantown, or at least nearby. Not directly associated with VTU, but owned and operated by Vault-Tec.

CARLSON

Ah. Yes. *Flagrante Bello*. We're actually not far from it right now.

HARGROVE

"*Flagrante Bello*?" That's an odd name for a research facility.

CARLSON

I don't know that Vault-Tec even had a name for it, but that's what locals called that part of town. There was a *lot* of fighting there over the years. It was a hot commodity for Raider gangs and factions even though none of them had any idea that the facility existed, much less that it was right under their feet. But they just seemed... drawn there.

HARGROVE

How did you find out about it?

CARLSON

There was... an *incident* last year involving a former Vault-Tec intelligence operative who went rogue. He learned about the facility on an op near DC and leveraged some of the technology down there as part of a big power play.

HARGROVE

Isn't Miss Kirby an intelligence operative that was trained by Vault-Tec?

CARLSON

She is. But I know where you're going with this, and she wasn't involved in his plans. In fact, he tried to talk her into joining him, but, well... no way that was happening.

(beat, reflective)

We barely got out of there. She saved a lot of people. Including me.

HARGROVE

She sounds like a remarkable woman.

CARLSON

She is.

HARGROVE

So, this... Flagrate Bello complex. How close is it?

CARLSON

Very. But...

HARGROVE

But what?

CARLSON

Well, if anything we might be a little too close to it for our own good. It's overrun by Super Mutants. We haven't been able to get near it. It's on our to-do list, but it's going to take a lot of firepower and a lot of manpower to retake it. Plus, our suspicion is that they've destroyed at least some portion of the tech and research down there, maybe most of it.

HARGROVE

Oh. I see. That's disappointing.

CARLSON

Yeah. Scribe Valdez said she'd have loved to have a crack at that tech. It's too bad those Mutants got loose.

(beat)

I can get us close so you can at least get an idea of its location.

(MORE)

CARLSON (CONT'D)

But don't worry. I'll keep you out
of harm's way.

HARGROVE

Thank you, Knight.

HARGROVE, NAVIA, and CARLSON walk for a bit.

CARLSON

(sotto)

Keep your head on a swivel. The
Mutants tend to stay close to home,
but let's not take any chances.

NAVIA

(sotto)

Understood.

The group walks a bit farther. HARGROVE stops them abruptly.

HARGROVE

(sotto)

Look. About a hundred yards ahead.
Those bodies... are they...

NAVIA

Just a sec, I have my binoculars.
(beat)

Good eye, Scribe Hargrove. Three
Mutants. But I think we're safe.
They aren't moving.

CARLSON

That's strange. Nobody's made a
move on this location since they
got a foothold. There's just too
many of them and they're completely
entrenched. Even the Blood Eagles
haven't been crazy enough to try.

NAVIA

Should we... take a closer look?

CARLSON sighs.

CARLSON

Yeah. We should. This isn't one of
their main patrol routes, and they
rarely change them. They must've
seen something.

(beat)

Before we do, do you see anything
else? Any other hostiles, or
obvious traps?

NAVIA looks around.

NAVIA
Nothing out of the ordinary.

CARLSON
Alright. Let's move in, *slowly and carefully*.

The group moves toward the bodies.

HARGROVE
This is... hmm.

CARLSON
What is it?

HARGROVE
There are no signs that they were involved in combat. No gunshot wounds, laser burns, cuts or bruises from hand-to-hand weapons...

HARGROVE turns a body over.

CARLSON
This one bled from all its... er, "face holes?" Nose, ears, mouth, even its eyes.
(beat)
But other than that, yeah... no signs of foul play. Is there anything about Super Mutant physiology that would make it look like they weren't in a fight even though they were?

HARGROVE
They're stronger and tougher than humans, so things that bruise and cut us might not do the same to them. But any kind of *fatal* wound or injury would have some external indicators. I don't see any.

CARLSON
Let's check the other two.

NAVIA and HARGROVE check the other two bodies.

NAVIA
One has a bruise on the side of its face, like it got punched.
(MORE)

NAVIA (CONT'D)

But other than that... it's the same thing. No obvious injuries and bleeding from the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

CARLSON

Wait. Could it be disease? If it is, we need to get out of here.

HARGROVE

Good call. We can return with a team that's properly outfitted to deal with an outbreak. The good news is that diseases that affect Super Mutants often do not affect humans, and vice-versa.

NAVIA

That's true. There may have been some sort of disease research going on down there that they got into, but we just don't know.

CARLSON

Your plan is the smart play, Scribe Hargrove. We'll head back to Atlas, brief Paladin Rahmani, and figure out next steps. Limiting our exposure...

A loud pulsing noise, seemingly coming from nowhere and everywhere, begins.

CARLSON and HARGROVE wince in pain. NAVIA is unaffected.

NAVIA

That sound! It's similar to what we heard when the portal opened under Amanda's bar, but it's... different somehow.

CARLSON

My head! It feels like something drilled inside my skull and started scrambling...

NAVIA

Scribe Hargrove, are you alright?

HARGROVE

(trying to maintain)
I'm afraid not. I'm experiencing exactly what Knight Carlson is describing. Are you feeling it?

NAVIA
No! Whatever it is, it's not
affecting *me*.

CARLSON collapses.

NAVIA (CONT'D)
Greg!

HARGROVE
He's already bleeding from his
nose.

NAVIA
So are you!

HARGROVE
But you're still *not*. Jessica, help
me drag Knight Carlson back in the
direction we came, quick as you
can.

NAVIA
I've got Greg! If you go down I'm
going to have to come back to get
you, and I don't know how long...
whatever this is takes to become
fatal. I am *not* letting either of
you end up like those Super
Mutants!

The sound quickly grows quieter and then stops entirely.

NAVIA (CONT'D)
Scribe Hargrove, are you alright?

HARGROVE
I've certainly felt better. My head
is killing me and I'm a bit...
wobbly.

NAVIA
You should sit down.

HARGROVE
Yes, you're right.

HARGROVE sits on the ground.

CARLSON stirs.

CARLSON
Urgh... what the hell happened?

NAVIA

I... I don't know. We were checking out the dead Super Mutants, and there was this...

CARLSON

Sound. And light.

NAVIA

(confused-ish)

I heard the sound, but... I didn't see any light. Scribe Hargrove?

HARGROVE

I did. The sound was a... pulse, at first, then there was a piercing high-pitched whine that kept getting louder.

CARLSON

And more painful. I must've passed out.

HARGROVE

You did. I was close, but fortunately, it stopped before that happened. I don't know why it stopped, but I'll take it.

NAVIA

Um...

HARGROVE

What is it?

NAVIA

The noise I heard... well, I heard the pulse. But no high-pitched whine, and I didn't see any light.

HARGROVE

Interesting. You were right next to us, so it wasn't a matter of proximity to whatever the source was.

CARLSON

We should clear out and get back to Atlas. We still don't know everything that Vault-Tec had in that complex, and who knows what those Super Mutants might have set off.

HARGROVE

I knew that Vault-Tec had all manner of... secret experiments, but this... I've never experienced anything like it. And I hope to never do so again.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. BETH & ODESSA'S HOME, AFTERNOON**

ODESSA opens the door. CHARLES and BETH are sitting in the living room.

CHARLES

Hello, Odessa! I trust you had a productive day at Fort Atlas?

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA

That's one word for it. Thank you for asking.

(beat)

How are you feeling, Beth?

BETH and ODESSA kiss.

BETH

Better now that you're here. Charles and I have been going over some new intel.

ODESSA

Anything interesting?

CHARLES

Interesting indeed. I had a conversation with your friend Craig. I showed him the symbols that each of you seem to have been... assigned.

ODESSA

Did he tell you what they mean?

CHARLES

He did not. However, we *did* glean some context after Craig had a bit of an "a-ha" moment.

BETH

What Craig realized is that the various points when the Order pops up in historical accounts, they're accompanied by... others.

ODESSA

Don't tell me. *Seven* others.

CHARLES

Yes. And he found anecdotal references in some of the texts to symbols very much like the ones that you all received.

BETH

They seem to correspond to archetypes.

ODESSA

Archetypes?

BETH

Yes. Craig is continuing to look into it, but we don't know what all of those archetypes are, or which correspond to which symbols.

ODESSA

But you know what some of them are?

CHARLES

We do. The one that turns up most consistently is "The Key."

ODESSA

"The Key." That's not very descriptive.

CHARLES

It isn't. However, translations can be a bit like a game of telephone, especially when they span centuries and multiple languages. Of the ones we've discovered, that one leaves the most room for interpretation.

BETH

I would caution us to be careful about drawing firm conclusions about any of them without more context.

ODESSA

What were the others that Craig identified?

CHARLES

There were four. The Sage. The Warrior. The Ingenue. And The Heart of Fire.

ODESSA

It sounds like a tarot deck.

(beat)

Well, Derek fits as The Warrior,
and...

BETH

(interrupting)

Perhaps not. Based on what Craig
told us, the archetypes are more
about their *role*, not who or what
they were going in.

ODESSA

So any of us could be any of those
archetypes.

BETH

Yes. The stories indicate that the
people themselves didn't even
necessarily know they had a
specific part to play. Even
afterward.

ODESSA

Then how do we even know about
them?

CHARLES

The Order kept meticulous records.
They seemed to be fully aware of
this construct and recorded things
thusly.

ODESSA

There's another possibility, you
know.

BETH

What is it?

ODESSA

Pattern recognition. When I talked
to Craig, I noted that humans tend
to try to identify patterns to help
understand and process information
and events.

BETH

And?

ODESSA

I'm not convinced that these
"archetypes" are a real thing.

(MORE)

ODESSA (CONT'D)

They could just as easily be the Order fitting major events and the people involved in them into a narrative that aligns with their worldview. And Derek just showed up a couple of days ago. That seems a little too convenient.

BETH

I see your point. So these symbols and whatever archetypes they supposedly correspond to could simply be a red herring.

ODESSA

Given what you experienced in the Pitt, and what we all saw in that cavern... well, I think we might all be a little more inclined to believe something like this since none of us have the ability to process something like that directly.

(beat)

I'm not suggesting that we reject the *possibility*, just that we understand and evaluate the possibilities appropriately.

CHARLES

An astute assessment as always, Odessa. I have to admit, I was quite enthralled both by Craig's research and by his enthusiasm for it.

ODESSA

There's nothing wrong with a good story, and even if it's been embellished there may still be valuable insight to be gained.

BETH

And who knows, maybe it's all true?

ODESSA

That *is* a possibility as well.

(beat, playfully)

I hope I'm The Sage.

BETH laughs.

BETH

Can I be the Heart of Fire?

ODESSA
I was thinking Ingenue...

BETH
Ooh...

ODESSA giggles.

CHARLES
Odessa, is there anyone at Fort Atlas who might be able to provide some additional insight into Craig's research?

ODESSA
Knight Carlson is probably your best bet there. I've seen a few books about mythology on the shelf in his office. It's a start, at least.

CHARLES
I'll go and talk to him right now.

ODESSA
And, um... Paladin Rahmani might have some ideas as well. You should talk to her.

CHARLES
I'll do that as well. Ta very much.

CHARLES gathers up his papers.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
We'll talk soon.

BETH
Goodbye for now, Charles. Tell mum and dad I'll be by soon.

CHARLES
I will. Goodbye.

ODESSA
Bye!

CHARLES leaves.

BETH
Saved a spot on the sofa for you.

ODESSA sits next to Beth.

ODESSA

I've been looking forward to this all day.

BETH

Me too. How are things at Atlas? Any insight into what Derek's thinking? When we talked about his reason for being here this morning, well... I'm glad he wasn't just planning to hoist you over his shoulder and carry you back to Lost Hills, but I'm still concerned.

ODESSA

I am as well, but he seems impressed so far. He and Knight Merriweather have been spending a lot of time going over field reports and that kind of thing.

BETH

Rob is certainly the right person to put in front of someone you want to impress.

ODESSA

I wish Alan were still around. As great as Rob is, Alan has this way of... disarming people and putting them at ease - the old "Knight Banks Charm."

BETH

Don't forget that "big brother" energy.

(beat)

I miss him too. And I know it's hard, but we have to respect his decision and maybe hold out a little bit of hope that we'll see him again. Paladin Rahmani made it clear that he'd always be welcome.

ODESSA sighs.

ODESSA

I just hope he's okay.

BETH

I'm sure he is. He's with family, and you know how important that is to him. And besides, Erika's there to keep him out of trouble.

ODESSA laughs.

ODESSA
That she is. They're good for each other. That kind of thing is important.

BETH
It is.

BETH kisses ODESSA.

ODESSA
What would you like me to make you for dinner? Or are you feeling up to going out?

BETH
I'd like to stay here with you. But you don't have to cook.

ODESSA
We can make something together.

BETH
That sounds lovely. And then a nice, relaxing evening right back on this sofa.

ODESSA
I'll even let you pick the music.

BETH sighs happily.

BETH
You know, it doesn't matter if it's mysterious portals, mind control devices, rampaging Super Mutants, even ghosts from the past... as long as we're together, there's nothing we can't overcome.
(beat)
I love you.

ODESSA
I love you, too.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

INT. THE SPIDER'S WEB, EVENING

AMANDA and BONES are at the bar.

BONES

You okay, boss?

AMANDA

You've asked me that like thirty times tonight.

BONES

Well? Are you?

AMANDA sighs.

AMANDA

I guess. I mean, I've more or less gotten used to all the weird shit that happens around here. Wendigoes, Mothmen, Flatwoods Monsters... and it's not like it's just cryptids. People swear they see aliens. Aliens! And half the time I'm actually believe them. Like, why not?

BONES laughs.

BONES

I get it, boss. I kinda wonder if it's like this everywhere, or if Appalchia is just "special."

AMANDA

It's probably the same no matter where you go. Maybe a different kind of crazy, but still crazy. And now there's some *new* kind of crazy? With magic green portals and mysterious strangers, and *why* does it have to be in my basement?

(beat)

I need a drink.

Paladin RAHMANI enters.

BONES

Looks like somebody else does, too.

RAHMANI approaches.

AMANDA

Hey, Paladin.

RAHMANI

At this point I think we've been through enough together that you can all me Leila.

AMANDA chuckles.

AMANDA

Okay, Leila. Can I get you something?

RAHMANI

That would be lovely. Make it something strong.

AMANDA

I feel that.

BONES pours drinks.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

So what brings you to the Web? Not that I'm complaining. It's nice to see you.

RAHMANI

Thanks. It's nice to see you, too. I guess I'm taking a cue from Odessa. Getting out and being more social has done her a world of good, and I think I could use a little of that myself.

AMANDA

Well, you came to the right place.

RAHMANI

How are you holding up? We're all dealing with whatever this is, but you're the one whose business is on top of what seems to be the epicenter.

AMANDA

Well, the good news is that it doesn't seem to be a problem unless there's a... flare-up. And there have only been the two.

RAHMANI

You're sure about that?

AMANDA

Pretty sure. Nothing's really been out of the ordinary outside those two, uh... "incidents."

RAHMANI

That's good. Beth mentioned that the portal opened where it did because of a weak point. I was concerned that there might be more... subtle effects.

AMANDA

None that we've noticed so far. Odessa and I are *intimately* familiar with what it feels like, and we haven't felt it.

RAHMANI

That's good. I'd prefer not to experience that again. It was... unsettling, to put it mildly.

AMANDA

I thought Odessa and I were the only ones who felt it... Derek asked and nobody spoke up.

RAHMANI

Yes. I was... less than forthcoming in the moment. Sorry.

AMANDA

No, I get it. Odessa and I... well, let's just say that it was very difficult to process, especially in the moment.

RAHMANI

What happened?

AMANDA

I... um... I don't think I should talk about it until I talk to Odessa. It was... ugh. I'm sorry.

RAHMANI

I understand, it's fine. My experience didn't involve another person, so it's a little less awkward.

(beat)

Well, that's not entirely true, I suppose.

AMANDA

What do you mean?

RAHMANI

I felt like I wasn't supposed to be there. And I don't just mean in that cavern. It was like I wasn't supposed to *exist*.

AMANDA

What? Really? That is *not* what we felt. Not even close.

RAHMANI

Beyond that, there was also the matter of who I felt *should* be there.

AMANDA

Who?

RAHMANI

Danny. Knight Shin. Amanda... I *saw* him. He wasn't there, but I saw him.

AMANDA

Odessa and I... saw things, too. Not people who weren't there, but...

RAHMANI

But the kinds of things you need to discuss with her before you talk about them with anyone else.

AMANDA

Yeah. But the way you're talking about it... the vibe feels kind of similar.

RAHMANI

Similar? In what way?

AMANDA

We didn't feel like we weren't supposed to be there, but we felt like... different people. Well, the same people, but different... uh, versions of us? But it didn't feel different, it felt like that's who we've always been.

(beat)

(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm not great at explaining this. It's more of a *feeling*, you know? Hard to put into words.

RAHMANI

I do know. We may get some clarity when you talk to Odessa about it.

AMANDA sighs.

AMANDA

Yeah. I've kind of been avoiding it. It's... well, I feel like it's going to turn into a *thing* and she's got enough on her mind with Derek suddenly being back in the picture on top of all *this*.

RAHMANI

I'll defer to your judgement on that. Beyond that conversation, though, we should also check with everyone else who was down there. This is no time to be taciturn.

AMANDA

Uh, yeah. Definitely don't want to be "taciturn" right now.

The SENTINEL approaches.

BONES

What can I get you, sir?

SENTINEL

Bourbon, rocks, please.

BONES pours a drink.

SENTINEL (CONT'D)

Thank you.

(to Amanda)

Hello! It's nice to see you again!

AMANDA

Hey, you! I guess you decided to stick around town for a little while?

SENTINEL

I did. It's a nice place. And the people are wonderful. Very helpful.

(MORE)

SENTINEL (CONT'D)

You don't see that everywhere these days.

AMANDA

Where are you from?

SENTINEL

Lots of different places.

AMANDA chuckles.

AMANDA

I hear that a lot.

The SENTINEL chuckles.

SENTINEL

Where's Scribe Hewitt tonight?

AMANDA

(momentarily confused)

Scribe Hewitt? Oh! You mean *Paladin* Hewitt. Tall guy, stupidly good-looking, built like a brick shithouse?

SENTINEL

No, no, his wife. You were with her back when you gave me directions, and she was here with you the other night, so I thought I might see her tonight as well.

AMANDA

Oh, you mean Odessa? Odessa *Valdez*? She's not his wife. She's not even married. Well not yet at least...

SENTINEL

Oh, I see. My mistake. Well, hopefully I'll see Scribe *Valdez* again. It's always nice to see friendly faces.

AMANDA

Definitely. And hey, don't worry, it can be hard to keep names and those friendly faces straight. You'll get it.

The SENTINEL chuckles.

SENTINEL

I'm sure I will. I'm going to grab a table. Nice chatting, as always.

The SENTINEL leaves.

AMANDA

Do people know about Odessa and Derek?

RAHMANI

No! They've both been *extremely* careful about that. I've been monitoring chatter at Atlas very closely and nobody there thinks they've ever been anything more than good friends.

AMANDA

None of us have said a word, I know that much. There are two things about this that don't make sense.

RAHMANI

Only two?

AMANDA

Well, two *main* things. I know how the rumor mill works around here, and everybody knows that Beth and Odessa are together. Even if a rumor did get started, it'd get drowned out.

RAHMANI

That makes sense. What's the second thing?

AMANDA

He said they were *married*. If it somehow got out that they used to be engaged, or even if there was a rumor that Odessa was cheating on Beth with him, it might make sense. But it's like he thought they never broke up.

RAHMANI

Hmm. If they *hadn't* broken up, they *would* be married right now. The wedding was about a year off when we left.

AMANDA

Huh. You know...

RAHMANI

I think I see where you're going with this. I felt like I wasn't supposed to be there but Knight Shin was. You and Odessa felt... well, whatever it was, it was similar.

(beat)

And our friend seemed to be operating under the assumption that something that was supposed to happen but didn't *did* happen.

AMANDA

Do you think he's involved in this?

RAHMANI

Can't hurt to talk to him about it.

AMANDA

Yeah, you're right. I'll buy him another drink and --

RAHMANI

What is it?

AMANDA

He's gone. Again! The same thing happened when he was here the other night!

(beat)

Ugh. Next time he shows up I'm cuffing him to the bar.

RAHMANI

Good idea. We need answers.

AMANDA

And it finally feels like we might have an idea where to get some.

END OF EPISODE 4