

They woke late the next morning, partially because very little light seeped in from the opening of the musty cave, so the morning light hadn't wakened them as it did the day before in Benjamin's home.

When the first couple of squad members did finally wake, they prepared breakfast near the entrance of the cave, rousing the rest of the squad with the aroma of a well-cooked breakfast.

They sat virtually in silence, except for a few comments here and there, or a compliment on the cooking.

They had set up their flashlights around their makeshift kitchen, so they could see better while cooking and eating. The meal didn't take long, and they were soon on their hike to the crashed shuttle to salvage what they could.

They emptied the packs Benjamin had provided them, only taking water so they could pack as much into their packs as possible and take fewer treks to the craft.

They left Kyle in the cave, mainly because of his leg, suggesting that he explore the cave if he wanted something to do.

It was a two-mile hike, and they were all well-fed and healthy, so it didn't take them long to reach the crashed shuttle, unlike when they crash-landed. When they finally reached the shuttle, they immediately started salvaging for supplies, starting with the weapons, medical kit, and any other smaller items they could find. After that, they moved on to some of the larger items, filling their packs to the brim.

While the rest of the squad was scavenging, Jessica began dismantling the consoles, searching for anything useful. After she dismantled the consoles, she found the shuttle power

source, hoping to find a way to recharge it and supply their new secret base with some measure of power.

Before they left, they camouflaged the shuttle, hoping to keep any N'Roth from finding it. They moved as much fallen brush around it as they could and covered the crash landing trail with branches, as well.

They knew that within a few days, the brush would be dead, so they made as many trips as they could before night fell and brought back with every trip more and more supplies, even dragging full sections of consoles that Jessica thought might be useful.

On their second trip, they dismantled much of the seating and hauled them to their base for Kyle to reassemble.

Jessica had even instructed the squad to gut the shuttle of all wires and circuitry so that she could repurpose them.

Kyle had spent most of the day exploring the cave. He scraped along the cave walls and carved arrows in the softer ground of the cave, indicating which way he was going so all he needed to do was follow the arrows in reverse to get back to the entrance. He kept an old-fashioned spiral of notepaper with him, scratching down a crude map of the halls and rooms he explored.

They all went to bed that night exhausted but not before discussing the next day's plans.

The next day, they scouted the nearby town, noticing almost no security. It seemed like any other small country town the five of them would have visited before they had gone into

stasis, with the exception that it looked more outdated and rundown, almost as if the city itself was a village from ancient times.

“Okay, so we are looking for power supplies and converters,” Jessica explained. “For now, the smaller, the better.”

“And if ya’ll happen to come by some weapons, don’t hesitate to snatch ‘em,” Kyle added.

“If you find anything that might be useful, then see if you can acquire it, but our first priority is the power supplies and converters,” Aurik said.

Everyone nodded in understanding.

“Kyle, Yin, and Jessica, you three will take the North side of the town, and Sarah and I will take the South side. Don’t get caught; remember what Benjamin said.”

They all nodded again.

Aurik tapped Sarah on the shoulder and began South.

Aurik and Sarah knelt low, circling the town until they came to a housing section. They kept to the cover of clusters of trees that grew sporadically around the housing section of the city, then darted to the nearest home. It looked much like Benjamin’s but much larger.

They kept close to the wall, hoping to keep from being noticed by any occupants who may be in the large cabin.

“Stay close to the walls,” Aurik said. “If you see any N’Roth, stay clear of them. Try not to get noticed.”

Sarah nodded in reply.

Aurik stepped out from the cover of the cabin and casually walked down the side of the yard and into the housing section of the small town.

Kyle, Jessica, and Yin casually made their way to a large grove sectioned off from the city. Once they neared, they snatched up baskets other workers had set down, trying to blend in. They worked their way through the grove and found their way into the city without a problem.

The town wasn't gated or guarded, so they had no problem getting in. There was an N'Roth patrol here and there, but the N'Roth didn't seem to notice or care that they were wandering the town.

They tried to stay inconspicuous, keeping near small pockets of citizens as they went about their business.

Some held baskets as the three of them did, so they started following them until they reached a secluded area and darted into an alleyway between two buildings.

Aurik and Sarah stayed close to the walls of the houses, trying to act casual. As they neared the center of the village, they noticed the neighborhood housing becoming livelier. Young children played in the dirt street, while an occasional adult worked outside their house.

Soon, they reached what appeared to be the market. Farmer's produce booths lined the edges with simple overhangs and crates of various produce. Beyond the produce were stores and shops with solid structures.

The two strolled along the street, observing the produce as if they were customers and taking note of the layout of the area. After a few minutes, they made their way to the shops,

casually perusing the shelves, again observing the layout of the shops themselves, looking for any power sources or converters.

They had scanned three shops for power sources, finding none, when they decided to try outside around the back. They ducked into an alley between two shops and found the power generator.

“I knew we should have tried the back first,” Sarah said.

“Okay, well, let’s be quick. How are we going to get this out?”

“That’s easy,” Sarah replied. “Watch.” She knelt down beside the waist-high, cylindrical power generator, opened a panel, revealing three smaller cylindrical devices about six inches tall and three inches in diameter. She yanked out the first as hard as she could, ripping it from the wiring. The hum of the generator lessened as the power supply diminished.

“Here.” She handed the cylinder to Aurik and yanked out the other two, and the generator fell utterly silent.

“Now, we had better get out of here,” Sarah said.

The two hurried back through the alleyway, only for Aurik to smack hard into someone rounding the corner.

The two tumbled to the ground, Aurik almost knocking Sarah over as she barely stopped in time to avoid the collision.

“Hey!” the man hollered as he scrambled back to his feet, noticing the power supplies.

“Give those back!”

Sarah grabbed the man and shoved him further into the alley as Aurik scrambled to his feet, as well.

The man stumbled several feet, then caught himself on the wall and spun around.

“Thieves!” he yelled, darting out of the alley after the two.

Aurik and Sarah raced down the street, no longer concerned with being inconspicuous. The screaming of their victim bringing every eye in their direction and a pair of patrolling N’Roth soldiers in pursuit.

Kyle, Jessica, and Yin found the generator quickly.

“Well, that was easy,” Kyle said as Jessica knelt down, opening the panel.

“Three, good,” she said and began unhooking the first of the power supplies.

“Okay, let's go,” she said, closing the panel.

“Wait, we’re not going to get all three?” Yin asked.

“No, this way, they hopefully won’t discover it’s missing until we are long gone,” Jessica replied. “The generator is still getting power this way and will give us time to get more.”

Yin nodded.

“Well, to the next one, then,” Kyle said.

Five generators later, there was still no sign that any of the missing power supplies had been discovered. They had stayed along the backside of the buildings, moving from generator to generator. They were easily hidden as there was a tall concrete wall opposite the buildings, and unless someone rounded the corner to the back, they were in no danger of being discovered.

“Alright, I think that’s enough for now,” Jessica said as she stood up, shutting the panel of the generator.

The three casually made their way down the street, noticing a flurry of commotion ahead. They hid the power supplies in a pack, so it wasn't apparent that they had any contraband; however, they all noticed to their dismay that several N'Roth soldiers were snatching up any possessions citizens had and searching them.

Jessica nodded to a nearby alley, and they darted into it. They made their way back to the dead-end wall, taking cover on the back wall of a shop, out of sight.

"Might as well get a power supply from this one while we are here," Jessica said as she knelt to retrieve a power supply.

"We're stuck. It's only a matter of time till we're discovered," Kyle said. "We've got to find another way outta here." Kyle waved for Yin. "Let's see what's over this wall," he said.

Yin nodded as she saw Kyle entangling his fingers together, making a foothold with his hands.

She used his makeshift foothold as a stepping stool onto his shoulders and grabbed onto the edge of the wall. She pulled herself up just enough for her to see what was on the other side and quickly lowered herself, stepping off Kyle's shoulders.

"It looks like an N'Roth compound," she said. "There are several vehicles and crates. A large building on the far side."

"So that way's outta the question," Kyle replied.