



# TULPAMANCY



A HALO WAYPOINT CHRONICLE

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## HISTORIAN'S NOTE

Halo: Tulpamancy *takes place in April 2560, approximately four months after the disappearance of Zeta Halo.*

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**CLASSIFICATION: PRIORITY ONE ALPHA**

**OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE**

**PROJECT: ARC DREAM**

**//ARCHEOHOMINA**

**//FROM: Codename: PANGAEA**

**//TO: Codename: YUGA**

## ATTACHMENTS:

<i>Archeohomina: An Introduction</i>	<i>'Guide to Protogenic Civilizations' by K. Iyuska</i>	<i>'San'Shyuum: Past, Present, Future?' by C. Lux</i>
<i>Requiem Terminal Dialogues, recovered by S-117</i>	<i>Bornstellar Relation Transcript Excerpts</i>	<i>ONI Xeno-Materials Exploitation Report 15V1198</i>

They say that the key to the future lies in our past.

Given everything we've learned in recent years I'm inclined to give credence to the notion.

Research in this field is still in its infancy, of course, and our resources are extraordinarily limited—especially given the present state of the galaxy. But we are already making great strides towards learning more about who we once were.

The summarized version: This is not humanity's first go-around as a space faring civilization. We were, in fact, a contemporary and rival of the Forerunners over a hundred millennia ago.

These Ancestors of ours moved their empire towards the galactic margin, inhabiting presently unexplored areas of space, which accounts for why we have thus far discovered only a scant few traces of their existence—also accounting for the cultural and genetic reduction that the Forerunners imposed after their war against these humans was won.

Key to our current research is the discovery at Site Yankee-002-G3. A lone Ancestor ship, fully intact. While the modern incarnation of our kind were still huddled in caves, this vessel drifted silently through space... just waiting to be found.

A few dozen researchers have been aboard. I've got them in rotating shifts. The control group are given just eight hours to access the ship and conduct their analyses before a thirty-six hour "cooldown" period, during which time the other teams are cycled in to operate. It should be noted that this rhythm we've put in place goes beyond the standard notion of healthy respite; the ship itself seems to have strange effects on the researchers after prolonged exposure to it. The exact nature of the correlation between duration and influence is something we've still yet to determine.

I have attached some of the incident reports for your perusal, and I am sure you will agree that this is currently the most prudent course of action. We must balance further encouragement of these odd developments with our capacity to continue standard research.

I will follow up soon as further developments come to light.

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**INCIDENT REPORT 003**  
**FILED BY: 01736-19013-SN**

*I know we work long hours, but I'm concerned about Jackson. He looks like he's sleepwalking half the time, he moves like none of the rest of us are even there—he keeps bumping into me while muttering under his breath. Managed to listen in one time and he's just saying all of our names over and over again. What the hell is that about?*

**INCIDENT REPORT 008**  
**FILED BY: 02961-30002-DS**

*I reprimanded Horne earlier today for ignoring his duties. We've got a tight timeline to work with while aboard this ship and I caught him skulking around, saying he was trying to find the source of a hum that kept moving whenever he got close to it. I don't hear any hum, he's either messing me about or he's in need of a psychological evaluation.*

**INCIDENT REPORT 012**  
**FILED BY: 05126-89937-PH**

*Asked Jerry what was on his to-do list today when he said he was watching the walls. I said, What? What's that supposed to mean? He said he sees things moving in them. Shadows. I said it's probably just the rest of our team in the room getting set up. He said no, there are too many.*

**INCIDENT REPORT 013**  
**FILED BY: 01948-20112-NM**

*Ever since we found that suit apparatus that we adapted into Project ENOCH, Hudson has gone completely non-verbal—he just presses his lips together like he's trying to whistle but doesn't make a sound. I'm concerned about the null state stasis containers as well. An eclectic*

*variety of objects not accounted for by our inventory have been brought aboard. Holloway swears she saw Hudson laying out his morbid collection of alien bones on the floor, as if it was some kind of ritualistic offering, but when she got another pair of eyes over there they had gone without a trace. I really need some shore leave...*

**INCIDENT REPORT 015**

**FILED BY: 09136-77903-JF**

*Had the strangest conversation with Nicholas today and I'm not sure what to make of it. He started talking about his wife back home—strange, of course, because as far as I know he lost his family back on Kholo. But he was recounting his wedding day when suddenly I realized that he was describing my wedding day. Red wine all over my wife's dress as we took a tumble during the first dance. He described the incident exactly as I remember it, as I lived it. But that was five years ago—I've only known him for two. He froze up when I told him that was what happened to me and hasn't spoken to me since.*

**INCIDENT REPORT 016**

**FILED BY: 03417-31813-TC**

*Earl reported that he's been having strange dreams lately. He said that he wakes up on the ship and nobody else is there, except for Spartan Niles, who just stands still—fully armored—and keeps asking a question in a voice that isn't his. I asked Earl what the question was and he just went pale, refused to say anything more after that. Something weird is happening on this ship, man...*

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## CHIRAL INVOCATION

I am the dreamer. That is what she tells me.

She says that we only dream about what is already within us. I dream of her, and yet we have never met. Perhaps she is the dreamer, and I am the dream... I do not know.

She asks me, is it the future, or is it the past? Then she decides that it does not matter. It is now—and now will never be again.

The klaxon blares to signify the end of our shift. She does not want me to go, so I have found a hiding place. I will go there and disappear, and when the others learn that one of their number is missing they will delay the next shift until I am found. Until they decide to send others aboard, I will have the ship all to myself.

See you soon, *dream/dreamer*.

Once the others are all gone, I emerge and begin to peruse the ship. We have not yet gained access to the entirety of this cruiser—it is over six thousand meters in length and many sections have been sealed, remaining undisturbed for countless millennia.

I approach a large bulkhead door that we have been unable to breach and await her instructions.

I can feel her stirring in my mind. Sometimes it takes effort to draw her out, like finding someone in a haze of mist. She is as elusive as a half-remembered dream, not yet whole, but she is always there. Perhaps she feels a similar frustration towards me, as if I am a distant shore only faintly visible on the horizon that she cannot reach. But the longer I am here, aboard this ship, the closer we draw together.

Today, she will reach the shore.

She says she has things to show me. Things old and forgotten, long buried and longer lost. They did not happen *here*, they happened far away in another place, but we must make do. This will be the canvas on which she paints.

I stand by the door and close my eyes, willing my conscious mind to ease and make space for her—another mind, another self.

Distantly, I am aware of raising a device to my mouth. The fruits of Project ENOCH. And oh, what a gift, this peculiar apparatus that I both do and do not understand.

The ancient suits of armor we discovered had these devices beneath the helmet, meant to be affixed to the wearer's jaw. It made no sense, and yet I saw the sense in it. No ordinary words could be heard, and yet the whistles and clicks that burst through in translation were words to me, as sweet as music. It was a language I almost felt like I could recognize, familiar in the way she is familiar.

Not all have been so lucky to hear the music, the words, and yet I am not alone.

*I am not alone.*

Ah, there she is. This old machine must surely serve as some kind of guiding beacon for her, or a favorable wind that speeds her towards the shore where I await her deliverance.

My mouth speaks at her behest, spouting old words filtered through the mask.

Faint lines of energy course through the walls around me, feeding into the door which creaks and groans, straining in its old age after a dark and dreamless sleep... and then it opens, granting me passage beyond.

I feel a chemical rush within my body. She is pleased by this development, and I am eager to discover what she wishes to reveal to me.

The room beyond is pitch black and there is a chill in the air, but I cross the threshold as if returning to a place I know as home.

The first of our shared dreams then begins to coalesce.

A blueish light shines through, forming into a cylindrical shape that flows upwards like a reverse waterfall. Within, a shadow takes form—a humanoid figure clad in armor, immobilized within a confinement field. I draw closer and strain to make out further details, but my efforts are rebuffed as eyes squinting in the dark before they've adjusted.

Other shadowy figures begin to take shape, illuminated by the light of the confinement field. Were they standing still, they might have been mistaken as statues. These offer more detail, and I see that the armor covering them from head to toe has no noticeable separation, its angular plating all appears fused together. There is no "helmet" either, the armor around the head slants forward where it breaks away into a triangular shape, within which a single "eye" shines through.

*"The actions of your kind are an affront to the Mantle,"* one of the shadowy armored figures speaks in a high, imperious voice. *"Your reckless expansion has devastated ecosystems, displaced populations, and now you resort to razing entire worlds."*

I feel the embers of old hatred rekindled within me. She wishes me to see this, to share in her righteous anger.

"Your commanders have seen the logs I willingly shared," she says, her voice bold and proud, undaunted by her captivity. "They have seen the Shaping Sickness for themselves. It still resides within this system, and if you do not release me at once and assist in burning it from existence, it will consume us all!"

*“Threats will not serve you, human.”* The statuesque armored being responds. *“There is a great deal of uncertainty about your claims. Many believe this ‘Shaping Sickness’ is simply a bioweapon unleashed by your kind, accidentally or otherwise, turned to your advantage as the perfect excuse to expand your empire from the galactic fringes—burning worlds and their civilizations to later resettle them.”*

“You are a fool,” she spits with deep contempt, and so too does my mouth move to form the words. “Hear me now, Forerunner. If you impede my people, the Shaping Sickness will come for your kind, and when it does you will treat it as you do everything else—as something you can study and control.” I feel the venom in her voice recede for a moment as she leans forward and whispers in fear. “You cannot. This parasite is no simple creature of instinct. Its hunger serves a greater desire, a purpose we do not—*cannot*—know. It can only be met with one answer: annihilation.”

Her words hang in the air for a moment, during which time the Forerunner figures remain silent—the intelligences within their alloyed second skins no doubt verifying that her words *are* truthful.

Yet still they will not listen, will not see. We have been enemies for too long, judged heretical for our own claim to the Mantle. Truth may come later; the possibility of removing another rival is too compelling for them at this time.

“By the time your people come to the same conclusion as mine,” she grits her teeth, leaning back within the confinement field, “it will be too late for us all.”

The dream fades and her closing words echo, either through the ship or through my own mind.

*For us all...*

I felt my legs shake uncontrollably, causing me to fall to the ground. Bringing her to the fore and surrendering control through deep concentration comes, it seems, at an immense physical cost.

My understanding is that she is a tulpa. She is mind-made, thought given form, living somewhere deep within my subconscious. Simply being here on this ship has been akin to conducting lightning through a rod. She is neither an alter ego nor a doppelgänger; she is not an assemblage of thoughts given the illusion of coherency and sapience, nor the product of an unwell mind. She was *real* once, I believe. Flesh and blood. But something happened to our species a long time ago which turned her and many others like her into a graft—a layer of slumbering consciousness that lives within us.

Among my fellow researchers, all of whom have manifested different conditions to varying degrees while aboard this vessel, she is the first and thus far only *person* to have taken shape.

I lie on the ground for... minutes? An hour? I am uncertain. I contemplate withdrawing for now to recuperate and process what I have just seen, but she is reluctant.

*This is now—and now will never be again.*

Drawing on whatever reserves of strength I possess, I stand and shuffle forwards into the dark. There is more yet to see.

We press on. Whatever area of the ship she helped me to breach is of little interest to her. Her mind is set on the bridge, and she assures me that—judging by our egress point—we are not far.

Despite my instinct to put my hands out in front of me to feel my way through a completely unfamiliar place in total darkness, I soon find myself walking with confidence.

Suddenly, the entire ship rumbles and shakes, as if it were the growling stomach of a creature with a ravenous appetite that had been starved for many long years.

Shadows draped themselves over the corridor through a thick haze of smoke and mist, settling into the half-formed image of bulbous pustules and fleshy growths. A rippling, writhing sea of skin poured out of the door behind me, transforming the corridor into a gullet. I looked up and saw several Forerunners trapped within, their silver-grey armor a stark contrast against the sickened flesh drawing them into the wall and ceiling as if to slowly digest them.

*We are nothing, you and I. Nothing more than food.*

*This shall be the fate of all.*

Two figures sprinted down the corridor, the Shaping Sickness closing in around them like a contracting muscle.

One was unmistakably Forerunner, clad in the strange all-encompassing armor with its single cyclopean eye. The other, I believe, was her, as these are surely her memories being played out—captured, interrogated, and disbelieved... now suddenly freed from the constraint field and holding a weapon.

The Forerunner spins around unbelievably fast, its right arm reconfigures into a rifle that fires precise rounds of ionized particles.

Next to the Forerunner, she is noticeably shorter—perhaps just under seven feet tall without her helmet. As she fires light mass ammunition from her own borrowed weapon, I catch only a few glimpses of her features. She is broad and strong with wide-set shoulders, leaving no doubt that she is a warrior. How remarkably like us our Ancestors were, yet with far greater morphological variation. With a slightly rounder and elongated

head bearing wider-set features, her chin is approximately an inch shorter than the average for modern *Homo sapiens*, and with a more pronounced dental arch. She appears closest perhaps to Denisovans, an extinct archaic subspecies in our time but vibrant and thriving in theirs.

I long to speak with her properly, to offer some kind of comfort. How agonizing and dysphoric it must feel to see herself as she was in these wretched and dire dreams.

I don't even know her name... she might have forgotten it too.

The only comfort I can offer is to see out her desires to the end. She wishes to reach the bridge of this ship; she wishes for me to see these visions of long ago, though I do not yet grasp their full meaning, if they have one. The Flood—what she calls the Shaping Sickness—has already been encountered in our time. Perhaps she fears they will prove a resurgent threat once again. Or maybe the trauma of her experience is so great that the last scatterings of her reforming consciousness are simply compelled to share it.

As the two figures faded, I reach the end of the corridor and begin to climb up a side-mounted ladder that would bring us to an antechamber before the bridge.

It is shockingly difficult to climb, my reserves of physical strength rapidly dwindling to nothing as I struggle up each rung. It has been many hours now since I last ate anything, and my throat is dry to the point of soreness. But there is no going back.

There are no lights to make out how much further I have to climb. My vision only allows me to see the next few rungs above me, but I am sure that it is getting colder—that more open air is not far away.

I keep my mind trained on all that I have learned. I am curious about

her mission, and feeling her momentarily rescind in my mind only makes me want to know more. I am only human, after all—though we are over a hundred millennia removed from each other, curiosity is a trait she understands.

Surely it is a trait she would not now seek to avoid?

Arms shuddering in effort, I stop my climb, slumping against the metal as I refuse to go further.

It is an odd thing, to try to bargain with her, to coax an answer out of this wisp of a dream or memory. And when at last she relents, it is with my own lips that she answers, the words spoken into the ENOCH apparatus around my head.

*We have come this far, let there be no secrets between us.*

Rather than explain further, she conjures concepts and images from our shared subconscious.

*A great wave surges over an ocean, reaching higher and higher until it crashes down upon a city. This was happening everywhere, across whole planets—an inescapable deluge.*

*Recent history then surfaces: human and alien hands are shaken—a peace accord is struck.*

*A sphinx then appears. It bears a human head, the wings of a bird, the body of a lion, and the tail of a snake, but before it can ask a question it is transformed. Its head is drawn wide and flat as the face is burned away to reveal the skull beneath. The wings of the bird expand as if to take flight, then separate into segmented fractal parts; the lion's haunches curl inwards, the serpent tail extends, and all turns into cold and dark alloy.*

*Energy builds at its center, then is destructively released, laying low the ruins of the city as the waters continue to climb towards the sphinx's tail...*

She offers no further explanation, but I believe I understand.

This was a test. This was some kind of staged infiltration mission to determine the Forerunners' reaction to the bare truth of the Shaping Sickness, baiting the parasite to them so they could see it first-hand.

Satisfied with her answer, I resumed my climb and did not stop until I reached the summit.

It *was* colder up here. Staggering around the space, I found myself in some kind of antechamber, a room connected to several others. I wonder how the Ancestors' vessel layouts might echo our own, or if they built their ships in completely different ways.

But motes of light began to appear once more, and I knew that this was—at least for now—the final dream she had to show me.

An immense support beam had collapsed on the Forerunner. And though he fired his weapon at the dark shades approaching from a hundred meters away, they did not relent—these shambling abominations sensing that their prey had been backed into a corner. If anything, they seemed to slow their advance, as if to savor the fear.

My fear?

*No. Forerunner fear.*

My own weapon was spent, useful as nothing more than a cudgel. And though I looked frantically for a way out, no path presented itself to me.

We were trapped.

The stench was upon us now, the retching stink of blood and corpses hideously reshaped. Their heads lolled, necks had been disconnected from their spines, but the features of their faces were still recognizable—eternally frozen masks of horror and pain.

The Forerunner was still firing his weapon, still trying to fight.

And yet, not a moment later, we both heard it. The trigger mechanism making a pronounced *click, click, click*.

He too was out of ammunition.

I saw the monstrous form of his commander shuffle forwards. Slow. Terrible. Inevitable. One of his hands had been fused into the flesh of his stomach and a number of short, curved tendrils adorned his head like a sinewy crown.

It knelt down in front of the Forerunner, placing an immense gnarled hand upon him...

I... I cannot describe what happened to him next.

It is beyond both my will and ability to recall.

I think the last thing the Forerunner saw was me... but whether he was confused or in some way vindicated, I will never know for sure.

I cannot deny that in the end his accusations seemed as if they were correct. The parasite had taken his entire crew, consumed everybody in this place, spared none of his kind.

But it did not take me.

## CHRYSALISM

There will be no more dreams for a while. She arrived at the shore, showed me—no, imparted within me—something that had long been forgotten, which she had determined must be remembered, and now she returns to the ocean.

What sort of dreamer can I be without dreams?

What she showed me cannot remain a dream, it *must* be real. I am real, and I am to serve as a vessel for her pain, because that makes her real too. This I understand.

But I must temper this pain with hope, for there is one last thing for me to see. Something more tangible than a memory.

I have reached the bridge of the vessel now.

Weary though I am, I find myself on the lower level where several rows of terminals, monitors, and interface consoles are arranged. There is a table at the center, about ten meters long and three meters wide, and a dozen more terminals around it for what must have been a variety of different stations.

She guides me towards the long table and moves my lips to form clicks and whistles. An activation signal.

For a moment, everything remains cold and silent and still. There is just the labored sound of my breathing, echoing in this frigid tomb.

Perhaps it is all too far gone...

I am sure that I hear a low hum emanating from the table a split second before a holograph sputters to life. Fractal formations of light fizz and buzz, attempting to resolve into coherent images as if they have forgotten how.

I feel the rising swell of excitement and joy, both hers and my own joined in tandem.

At that moment, the holographs take their intended form and resolve in a series of square-shaped boards with a variety of symbols and readouts, exploding outwards to fill the room. I look up to see a display of the local star system showing the orbital paths of three small planets and a dense asteroid field, as well as the *Anlace*-class frigate that delivered us to the system where this Ancestor vessel was found.

She moves my arms, raising them as if to begin conducting a symphony, and pulls the hologram back, expanding the view to other local star systems, then the Orion Arm, before settling on a yet more expansive view of spaces beyond.

And that's when I see it.

That's when I *understand*.

Though our ancient Ancestors lost their war against the Forerunners and were subsequently punished with genetic reversion to a preindustrial state, the empire annihilated, and much evidence of our space-faring ages razed, there were many places that the Forerunners did not know of. Places they either could not or would not reach.

Our advantage lay in *where* we had expanded towards. Escaping the shadowed reach of their ecumene led us to the farthest systems of this part of the galaxy, pushing beyond the Perseus Arm and ever more towards the borders of intergalactic space.

Forerunners feared to tread there. It is as if some long-suppressed dread lives within their own genetic memory from ages past.

It will take longer than my remaining years to rediscover it all, but my goodness... there is so, *so* much more of us out there.

More than I ever imagined.

We carry their spark—every one of us. A fragment of another time, of other minds, just waiting to be dredged from the deep. One day, we might know them as we were meant to.

One day, they will reach the shore, and all shall sing once more the mantra of the broken wheel.

*Daowa maadthu.*