

The Crew of The Broya

Chapter 1: Archer Spends A Long Time In The Restroom

Somewhere on this planet is a busy little coffee shop. In one corner of the coffee shop is a table. And sitting at this table is a young man named Archer.

Archer points his head and neck toward his laptop computer like a homing turtle diving for a bit of cabbage. He reads to himself in a strange mumbly language.

ARCHER: Impimimp fupmpise bup pun...

Then he sits back, and looks frustrated.

Just then, a young woman bounces around the corner, smiling with her whole body. She is bold and stunning and wears wildly stylish clothing that floods the brain with color. It's Zowie.

Zowie sits down at Archer's table.

ARCHER: What are you doing here?

ZOWIE: Coffee! I come here all the time!

ARCHER: Oh. I'm creating a description of the sci-fi book I'm trying to write. Does this sound like a good book?

Archer peers into his computer screen and reads.

ARCHER: Infinite Sunrise Book One: It has been a thousand years since Earth was conquered by the Mothrulian Empire and consumed by giant Mandipod Beetles. Humanity survives as a remnant in the vast Mothrulian Empire. Some humans seek to unite their DNA with Mothrulian to no longer be rejected by the empire. Some want to overthrow the empire and use the ancient Mandipod Beetles to excrete Earth back from their giant digestive syst...

ZOWIE: This sounds like a stupid book.

ARCHER: That's not very SUPPORTIVE!

ZOWIE: Why are you GRUMPY?

ARCHER: I worked on that idea for THREE WEEKS!

Zowie slides around and looks into his screen.

ZOWIE: Well, there are too many weird names and stuff.

ARCHER: How about I change Mandipod Beetles to Clob Beetles?

ZOWIE: Still pretty weird. Why do gross beetles eat Earth? And why does Earth always have bad things happen to it? Why can't bad things happen to some OTHER planet? Earth's been through enough already.

Archer thinks for a minute. Then his face twists into despair.

ARCHER: What am I doing with my life?!

ZOWIE: I'da'know.

Zowie flops her arms out from her body in a Y shape.

ZOWIE: Here's my advice: be happy! One day you'll figure out what to do with your life, then you won't have anything left to do!

ARCHER: Your perspective is strange, and also, it is depressing.

Archer slaps his laptop computer closed with a flair of despair.

ARCHER: Ok, I need to go home now.

ZOWIE: Why?

ARCHER: Because...I need to do stuff.

ZOWIE: You always leave cause you're bored, but home won't be less boring. Just stay here and chill.

ARCHER: How do you know? Maybe there is something important happening there now.

ZOWIE: Really?

ARCHER: ...You're right. It's probably even more boring at home. I just thought I had this REALLY GOOD IDEA FOR A BOOK, and you came along and RUINED IT with your COMMON SENSE! And now I'm doubting whether anything I try to do in life is worth all the EFFORT!

ZOWIE: That is just one of many services I offer! You can't get rid of me that easy, buster! You're stuck with me for the rest of the day!

Archer stares at his closed laptop computer.

ARCHER: I feel like my life is swimming in a sea of ambiguity and restlessness.

ZOWIE: Wow, let's not be a dramatic king, now!

Zowe points to Archer's coffee mug.

ZOWIE: You like your coffee?

ARCHER: Dunno. It's what they gave me.

ZOWIE: Can I try it?

ARCHER: You can have it. I've already had enough. If I have a lot of coffee, it gives me all kinds of trouble.

Zowie picks up his mug and drinks.

ZOWIE: Is this from the French press?

ARCHER: I don't know.

ZOWIE: I have a French press at home that does tons of stuff.

ARCHER: I'm very happy for you.

ZOWIE: Do you know what else they make in a French press?

ARCHER: I'm afraid to ask.

Zowie leans over and whispers right into his ear.

ZOWIE: The FRENCH!

ARCHER: That sounds like something I would say.

ZOWIE: Have you tried the Ugandan coffee here? It's different. And super strong. I'll show you.

Zowie heads over to the coffee bar. The young man serving espresso at the bar has a look about him that is one-quarter hair and three-quarters tooth. His name is Hunter.

HUNTER COFFEE MAKER: How may I help you?

ZOWIE: Can you give me a cup of your Ugandan Brew for my friend?

HUNTER COFFEE MAKER: Yes, I can!

Hunter Coffee Maker steps across the room to a giant coffee-making apparatus. He places a cup and goes to work spinning, pushing, and pulling controls. A few seconds later, dark, dark liquid drips into the cup. When it is complete, Hunter Coffee Maker takes the cup over to the counter.

HUNTER COFFEE MAKER: Enjoy!

Zowie takes the cup back to Archer. Archer gulps it down like he wants the situation over.

ZOWIE: Well?

ARCHER: I don't know. It's strong.

ZOWIE: Yeah. It has twice the caffeine. Very woody, too. Did you notice hints of floral?

ARCHER: I DON'T KNOW! I am having an existential crisis here! Stop inflicting your extroverted sensing on me!

ZOWIE: Can't you forget about the meaning of life for the time being?

ARCHER: For the what?

ZOWIE: For the time being?

A sly smile creeps up the corners of Archer's mouth. He reaches out and flips open his laptop again. He begins to bang away on the keyboard.

ZOWIE: What are you doing?

ARCHER: Shhhh! That coffee got my brain going! I have an idea.

ZOWIE: Oh great, here we go again.

After a few seconds, Archer reads what he wrote.

"The Time Being Book 1: The Time Being appears exactly as a man in every way, but he is a made being. An android. A creature made to travel through the very fabric of spacetime. The Time Being can rip apart spacetime's fabric by..."

ARCHER: How should the Time Being rip open spacetime to travel around?

ZOWIE: I don't know.

ARCHER: What is the first thought that occurs to you? The Time Being walks into the room and rips open spacetime by...what?

ZOWIE: I don't know.

ARCHER: You're no help.

Archer scans the room. The only person he sees is Hunter Coffee Maker over at the bar.

ARCHER: Whatever happens, Hunter-the-coffee-maker would be the first to die. He seems expendable.

ZOWIE: That's terrible!

ARCHER: Hey, I don't make the rules.

Archer thinks for a minute about what to write next. He stares out the window. Suddenly, he looks back at Zowie.

ARCHER: Now that I've drunk all your coffee, I have to go!

ZOWIE: Poop?

ARCHER: I have to use the restroom! What happens in the restroom is deeply persona...oh dang, somebody else just went in there!

ZOWIE: There's another one in the back.

ARCHER: Where?

ZOWIE: Go down that little hallway.

Archer dives down the little hallway but returns after a bit.

ARCHER: I can't find your room in the back. I think you imagined it.

ZOWIE: You didn't LOOK! I'll show you. Follow me.

ARCHER: I don't want to leave my computer here. There's valuable information on it.

ZOWIE: It'll be fine.

Archer follows Zowie down the little hallway. After a little way, the hallway splits left and right. Zowie turns right, and they squeeze down a passage stacked high on each side with giant bags of coffee—guarding the way. After the coffee, a door. Zowie points.

ZOWIE: See! There it is!

ARCHER: That door was NOT there a minute ago!

ZOWIE: What do you think? It's some room that pops into existence just for me?

ARCHER: ... yes. Stuff pops in and out of reality all the time.

ZOWIE: Well, you pop your butt down and have your little poo!

ARCHER: You're making me self-conscious.

Archer heads into the restroom and closes the door.

ARCHER: Where's the light? It's dark in here!

ZOWIE: It's behind the door.

ARCHER: I can't find it!

ZOWIE: Here, I'll show you.

ARCHER: You CANT COME IN!! This is a sacred spot in SPACE AND TIME!

ZOWIE: I want to show you the light switch. It's not a big deal!

Zowie opens the door against Archer's will. She steps inside and reaches over to flip on the light.

ZOWIE: See there! It wasn't that bad!

ARCHER: You are very much violating my personal space right now. The repercussions in the fabric of reality could be monum...

ZOWIE: Wait, this isn't the...

Stars all around. A thousand years with only blips of light in the black. And Archer and Zowie are falling.

They feel their bodies accelerate like a car from a stoplight, but down. Panic. Total loss of control.

Now, all around is blackness as they fall through thick air. It vibrates against them like the raspy ring of a distorted guitar chord. It hammers through their bodies and rips their screaming voices away, traveling down, down.

Then, silence. Time stops.

ARCHER: Zowie, are you there?

ZOWIE: I've been screaming in the dark for hours!! Where have you been?

ARCHER: It's only been dark for two seconds?!

ZOWIE: What?! I've been in this dark for so so long! I didn't know where you went, or if I was dead!

Light, like smoked glass.

ARCHER: What is that light?

ZOWIE: Where is it coming from? Why can't I see you with it?

Archer tilts at an angle as he reaches to touch the light. The light breaks like a bubble and their bodies crash onto a floor. They are in a narrow corridor, just wide enough to walk through. It is dimly lit and reaches into darkness on either side.

Archer and Zowie stand up and look at each as if they had not seen the other for a very long time.

ARCHER: I'm sick. My head hurts and I have spots in my eyes.

ZOWIE: That must be a migraine! People get those from stress.

ARCHER: Ya think? I can't remember how we got here. I can't remember anything, except you.

ZOWIE: Well, that's good. I remember you, too.

ARCHER: It's like when you wake up and can't remember where you are. I can't get to my memory.

ZOWIE: Same here.

Archer and Zowie walk together down the corridor. The walls, floor, and ceiling are smooth as glass. Light comes from above. As they walk, lights behind fade to dark, and lights in front light up—revealing more of the corridor. Each step echos away as they continue for a long time.

Now, they are at the end of the hallway. There is a smooth panel in front of them—a door. There is a large dial on the wall next to the door. Archer heaves his body onto the dial. The door slides away, revealing another room. They step inside.

The minute they leave the corridor behind, the lights go out. Now, all is black, except in the middle of the room is a podium with a button beckoning a slight orange.

Slowly, as their eyes become accustomed to the dark, they see a faint light coming from all around. They are in a window room, looking into the vast expanse of space. But not space with millions of bright stars shining as pinpricks in the night, like it is on Earth. Dark space. Just a few blurry galaxies burn far, far away. The rest is blackness.

Zowie steps over to the podium and mashes the orange button with a palm.

A slamming noise comes from far away and echoes into the room. "Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" Looking into space, several streaks of yellow light come from somewhere below the window room and fly out into space at random, each headed for somewhere else. They disappear into the black.

ARCHER: I don't understand what is happening. And I need to use the restroom!

ZOWIE: Hey, there's a ladder in the middle of the room! It goes down a tube—a tube ladder.

ARCHER: Oh, there's light down there. Should we go?

ZOWIE: I don't know. What's the worst that could happen?

ARCHER: Nuclear war! Nuclear war is always the worst that could happen!

They start climbing down the tube ladder.

It goes and goes and goes.

ZOWIE: It's getting cold in here!

ARCHER: Yea! It is! A LOT colder than it was a minute ago.

ZOWIE: YAWWWWNN! My ears just got plugged up, too!

ARCHER: So are mine.

ZOWIE: Yeah, it's like driving up in the mountains.

The ladder ends on a shiny black floor in a dark room. A ways away, a doorway beckons with light.

They fumble through the dark toward the light.

ARCHER: AHRRRRCH!!!! What the hey! That HURT!

ZOWIE: What?

ARCHER: There's something sharp here, like a countertop. It got me right in the gut!

ZOWIE: Where?

ARCHER: Right here in the gut.

ZOWIE: No, where is the countertop?

ARCHER: Oh, avoid where I'm at here. Man, getting hit in the GUT is NOT something I need right now!

ZOWIE: Why?

ARCHER: You know!

ZOWIE: You gotta poop?

ARCHER: Can we do stuff without the detailed questioning?

ZOWIE: I'm starting to need to pee, too.

ARCHER: This is stressing me out. Maybe this place was built by aliens that don't...you know!

ZOWIE: Hmm, doubtful. Everyone Poops. I have a book at home, literally called that.

ARCHER: You would. Shhh. Quiet for a sec.

Utter quiet presses into their ears. The doorway is closer now. It beckons with light. They continue.

ARCHER: Never mind, I thought I heard something. ZOWIE: Oh. I hope it wasn't one of the Poopless Aliens. The idea scares me now.

ARCHER: You afraid they'll eat us?

ZOWIE: No. A Poopless Alien couldn't eat us. Then he'd have to poop.

ARCHER: You know what, Zowie? You are making more and more sense all the time.

ZOWIE: Thank you!

They step into the light. They are now in a control room--what's left of it. The room is long and narrow. Consoles run along the walls like an arcade. Each console is a computer with a screen, knobs, buttons, and a giant lever on the side. Each one is different. But they are all broken, smashed, and lying on their side.

Utter quiet presses into their ears, now with an intensity. One of the consoles remains upright on the other side of the room. Further, the room leads away as a long hallway.

They walk across the room toward the upright console.

When they reach it, they stop. There is a dead man on the other side of the console. His arm is caught on a lever, and his body hangs to the floor. He wears a solid blue uniform covered in blood. In the cold air, steam rises off the body.

ARCHER: There's a big hole right there under his arm!

ZOWIE: That must be how he died. What should we do?

ARCHER: I don't know. It looks like he was doing something on the console. It couldn't have been very long ago he died.

ZOWIE: What is this place? Are we in danger now?

The console is damaged. Lines of black carbon coarse across it as if struck by lightning. On one side is a large handle. Above the handle are the words: "Ship's Log."

ARCHER: Let's find out.

Archer steps to the Ships Log and heaves the handle on its side. It swings in an arc of eight feet. The screen flickers into color, and a series of images parade. A story is told, strangely perfect in its clarity.

Streaks of starlight flash past, pulling us backward through time. Then a sliver of light jumps into view. Starlight highlights its form as it grows large. It is a flat circle of man-made complexity—a spaceship with the name "Breya" on her side.

Then, like in a dream, the image zooms inside this spaceship where we see the control room. It is full of men and women in blue uniforms, each at a console, ready and prepared for action. All the screens flicker with life.

Then, the scene is pulled outside again as darkness solidifies in front of the Breya—another ship. This ship is a twin to the Breya in body but not in spirit. It approaches on a boarding vector.

The rail gun on the side of the Breya turns to point at the enemy. But it's too late. The rail gun is blasted away by this ship's gun.

The enemy ship collides with the Breya and a giant corkscrew on it's side begins to burrow its way into the Breya's hull. Shards of material fly outward.

Inside the Breya, the crew gather and prepare for battle—weapons held in chilled hands. The tip of the turning corkscrew appears through the side of the hull breaking its way inside.

Then, the tip blasts away, revealing a tunnel. A man emerges from it's depths. Not a man, a giant. Its hands are fists of fire. It stands and it's lips move, uttering brutal words that know despair. Behind him are men with thick rifles.

This scene suddenly cuts and the man in the blue uniform stands before us--the last drops of his blood dripping to the floor. His face is pale but very kind. And also at peace. He opens his mouth to speak to us, but the screen goes blank.

Reality slowly collects around Archer and Zowie. It's as if they have just been in the strongest dream.

ARCHER: We're on the spaceship, Brea.

ZOWIE: Something happened here.

ARCHER: That machine is the weirdest. It affected our consciousness somehow. ZOWIE: I don't know why I'm crying. Just emotional.

ARCHER: I know what you mean. That machine must be the way of conveying what happened. But parts of it were missing.

Silence. Utter quiet presses into their ears.

ARCHER: I know why our ears keep popping. This ship is losing air pressure.

ZOWIE: Why!?

ARCHER: Dunno, but it's dropping all the time. I don't know how long we have.

ZOWIE: We could find the ship that boarded the Brea!

ARCHER: You're a genius! We could swap ships! Is it still there?

ZOWIE: Dunno.

ARCHER: Well, where is that giant corkscrew that busted through the hull?

ZOWIE: It's down this big hallway! I saw it in the movie! Just follow me.

ARCHER: Why am I following YOU around?

ZOWIE: Cause you can't think straight cause you have to poop. Come on!

As they pass down the hallway, they see doorways to other rooms. In each room, all that remains is a blackened jumble of equipment and furniture. The walls, floor, and ceiling are black glass--chipped and broken. The floor is slanted ever so slightly to the left.

Now, they are in a large room with a high ceiling. Possibly a loading dock. The corkscrew is on the far side of the room, lying like a giant worm on a pile of broken glass. The violence of its entrance is clear to see.

A battle has happened in this room. Bodies are scattered where they fell. They hold thick rifles. The barrels and stocks are ripped apart from the force of battle. The weapons become more basic as they weave across the room through the bodies. Homemade spears and halberts, the shafts carried by some and emerging from the bodies of others. Blades are the same black translucent glass. Shattered bits lie on the floor and impale the bodies from the force of an explosion. They move faster and faster, trying to get past all of this.

ARCHER: Stop! Shhhh!

Somewhere far away, a tinkling metal sound shimmers. It hangs in the air for a minute, then collapses into their ears in a high roar. A jolt and everything drops a few inches. Now, Archer and Zowie are walking downhill.

ARCHER: This whole place is falling apart!

ZOWIE: We should hurry up!

They start to run, but running is hard. Breathing is getting harder and harder. The oxygen is disappearing.

Now, they stand before the tunnel. The tip of the corkscrew lies blasted 50 feet away on the floor. What remains is the exit tunnel. About 20 feet wide. And beyond that, darkness. This tunnel is where they least want to go. But, through this tunnel lies the other ship.

They climb the pile of glass and stumble over the lip of the tunnel. Then darkness envelopes them again.

Now, they are groping through the dark. The ground is getting steeper and steeper downhill.

Now, they are sliding through the black. It's getting narrower.

They hear the sound of an accelerating engine as if some giant machine somewhere on the other ship is desperately trying to keep up. It reaches a high whine and stays there.

They can see a flashing red light around a corner. They slide toward it.

Now, they have reached a machine door. It's completely open. Red lights are flashing and an engine whines somewhere around the corner.

They cross over the threshold of the door.

THIS MUST BE THE AIRLOCK OF THE OTHER SHIP!
WE HAVE TO CLOSE IT!
OK. HELP ME!
THERE! I THINK ITS CLOSED NOW!

The groaning and cracking sounds are deafening now. Everything shakes. The ship they came from is falling apart. And this new ship is in danger.

ZOWIE! WE HAVE TO EJECT THE OTHER SHIP!
WHAT?
THE OTHER SHIP IS DESTROYING THIS ONE NOW!
WHAT? HOW DO WE DO THAT? I DON'T KNOW! WE HAVE TO GET RID OF THE CORKSCREW TUNNEL SOMEHOW!
THERE SHOULD BE SOME CONTROLS FOR THAT!
OK! LET'S LOOK!
WE HAVE TO DO IT FAST! I CAN BARELY HOLD ON!!!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
HERE! HELP ME WITH THIS LEVER!
WHAT DOES IT DO?
I DON'T KNOW!
IT'S NOT MOVING!
I'M ABOUT TO FALL!
YOU GOT TO HANG ON!
IT HAS A CATCH ON THE SIDE. WE NEED TO FLIP THIS FIRST!
FLIP IT NOW!!
NOW! THE LEVER!!!

Heavy engines vibrate, then thud. The floor levels. Complete silence. The ships are disconnected. Archer and Zowie watch through a window on the closed airlock door as the ship they came from drifts away before them, revealing more of herself in each moment.

They see scars from the force of the corkscrew tunnel, windows, and more of the structure. Then they see the entire ship.

She is a flat circle of man-made complexity. Beams and exostructures bulge like branches from a main structure, supported by a stubby trunk. From this trunk, a root of red light stabs down through the dark. The ship slowly turns as she falls away, revealing the opposite side. Here, the name "BREYA" is written on the side.

Then she breaks apart.

One piece becomes two. Then two burst silently into thousands. Each piece moves at its own speed--drifting, spinning, and falling.

But, as the trunk cracks, it reveals a spinning and spitting entity inside. Fierce and feigning life. Black, orange and yellow. It morphs the very reality around as it rotates. It reaches out to each ship piece and pulls them to itself, spewing off multicolored radiation.

The Brea consumes herself and falls away below.

ARCHER: Ok, I still have to use the restroom!

ZOWIE: Yup, I still have to pee.

ARCHER: Let's find the lights.

ZOWIE: What about over here? HA! It's a switch.

ARCHER: Flip it.

All the lights go on.

ZOWIE: This ship isn't all busted up inside.

ARCHER: Yeah, the other one was in trouble. With all those dead people.

ZOWIE: I don't want to think about that.

ARCHER: Yeah, this ship gives me way better vibes than the last one.

ZOWIE: Here is the restroom!

Archer opens the restroom door. It is all shiny and clean and makes a slight popping noise as he opens it.

ARCHER: I'll be right back.

Archer goes inside and closes the door. Zowie sits down on the floor and waits.

Zowie waits for a long time. Then, she waits even longer. Then.

ZOWIE: What is he DOING in there?! I gotta pee bad now!

She bangs on the door. No answer. She bangs again.

ZOWIE: ARCHER, YOU HAVE SPENT A LONG TIME IN THE RESTROOM!