

THE calendar at reception says it's the nineteenth. The months have different names here, but Jecht does a quick calculation – it's definitely been over thirty days since he arrived, so that would be right – and by the time the others enter for breakfast, he's sure of it.

"It's my birthday," he says hopefully.

Auron raises an eyebrow. "Birthday? You mean, this is the date you were born?"

"You got it, genius," says Jecht, scowling. Spira just gets bleaker every day: people don't know what birthdays are? Hell, the place really is depressing. "We celebrate them, in Zanarkand," he explains irritably. "We have parties. Eat cake."

"There's no cake here," says Auron, unhelpfully.

"I figured." He turns away, looks back at the calendar. It still says the nineteenth; he vaguely wishes, now, that it didn't. "Never mind."

"You celebrate aging in Zanarkand, then, do you?" says Braska in a conciliatory tone.

"Uh," says Jecht, "not *aging*. More like, it's a day to just be nice to someone, you know? Let 'em call the shots."

"That sounds pleasant," says Braska, while Auron snorts. "I'm sure this can't be the nicest birthday, Jecht – I hope next year's is better."

"Yeah, thanks," says Jecht.