

THE COMMON GROUND OF JEJUNON JOJUNEN

It was the first time in the history of the planet Jejunon Jojunen that the world's whole population was united in such an anxious stillness.

The seventh planet from the brown-dwarf sun Jejunon, one of twenty-two planets in its system, had made some thirty-thousand full orbits since the ancient epoch when near-mythic historical figures first discovered that their species' males possessed some fragment of sentience, a revelation was generally agreed upon by historians to be the dawn of civilization (though, since the planet was tidally locked, those thirty-thousand orbits were a single day).

Twenty-nine thousand orbits had passed since legendary scientists found utility in the male drones' intellect, heralding the dawn of their age of agriculture, geometry, and nation-scale war. The female tribes of Jejunon Jojunen's sun-baked inner face vied frantically to control territory of the twilight belt where grown males from the starlit outer face, driven by animal instinct, would purposefully wander out of the darkness to their death by either successful copulation or roasting under the endless sun.

Twenty-two thousand orbits earlier saw the end of a brutal age of strife and instability, as the main noble houses of the inner face settled into mutually-agreed divisions of the vital mating grounds of the twilight belt. The following peace nurtured an era of flourishing growth, where the arts and engineering rose to great heights, and Jejunon Jojunen's light and dark faces both enjoyed comfort and abundance beyond their ancestors' fantasies.

Sixteen thousand orbits prior was remembered by historians as the dreaded collapse for the first era. Generations living and dying in decadent luxury had led to a culture of indolence and degeneracy, creating a population of dysfunctional and hedonistic nobles with absolute control over a disaffected and apathetic working caste. The tipping point was a well-documented mass suicide of the agricultural caste, driven by their circumstances to the spiteful choice of letting the world starve among its opulent splendor.

Nine thousand orbits had rolled by since the ground-breaking of the first cathedral-lab, marking the triumphant emergence of an inquiry-based religious movement ending centuries of poverty, ignorance and discord. Within this enlightened era, <priest/engineer/explorer>s pioneered the science of genetic modification. Their communication once limited by monochrome vocabulary of exoskeletal bioluminescence, the new breed of citizens capable of fluorescing entire rainbows of color led to a paradigm shift in expression and communication, remembered as the species' single greatest quantum leap. Within four generations, for a child to be born without the genetic pre-programming for an intuitive and objective knowledge of language and culture was regarded as shocking negligence.

Four thousand orbits passed since the branded outcasts of the <scientist/compass/priest> caste demonstrated immaculate proofs of electromagnetic radiation invisible to their organic senses, making a long-persecuted heresy a sudden orthodoxy. The discovery of radio waves shook the church to its foundation, but its renewed faith grew back stronger than ever to bolster a new age of exploration and discovery of the surrounding cosmos.

It was only in the last seven hundred orbits that all of this prior history became seen as an irrelevant footnote of an irretrievable before-time. In that year of the endless day of Jejunon Jojunen, a group of astronomer-shamans discovered patterns of radio frequencies that could only be explained as produced by an intelligent, intentional creator. They had discovered sentient alien life.

Six hundred orbits passed since a sect of religious fundamentalists, against consensus of the ecclesiarchy, resolved to send a signal to the nearby star-system in return, in an effort to communicate.

four hundred orbits ago, the signal was answered.

three hundred orbits ago, a crude parlance was established, allowing a rudimentary communication between the two worlds. For the first time, the populace of Jejujon Jojujen began to learn of their alien neighbors.

By two hundred orbits ago, the aliens revealed, amid details of their baffling mindsets and impossibly harsh environment, that they were capable of achieving (with considerable difficulty) that which the denizens of Jejujon Jojujen presumed an absurd impossibility; the aliens could travel between planets.

From there it took one hundred orbits to plan the journey from the aliens' homeworld to Jejujon Jojujen, laden with valued trade-goods and technologies. After that, another hundred for the alien craft to complete the journey over. In that time, it took a full seven orbits to determine where the landing site would be, the aliens gradually comprehending that Jejujon Jojujen's political stability would not survive the aliens favoring a landing at any point near the twilight ring (baffling the translators, who needed to explain that the males had no place in diplomatic affairs). Rather, they were counseled to land on the <full-noon-center>, the point closest to the overhead sun. Jejujon Jojujen's atmosphere was much lower pressure than was safe for the aliens, but the temperature was only a bit chilly for them.

Now, miles above the windless desert planet, a cylindrical pillar of blue metal three kilometers long spits out a blue metal triangle which arcs downward.

{Red/square/clockwise}, an honored war hero, brilliant scientist and beloved entertainer, gained strong support as the planet's choice for <usher/host/champion>. Reluctant to accept the responsibility, {Red/square/clockwise} mustered up the courage to swallow her intimidation and accept. Three of her eyes watched the alien craft miles overhead as she waited off-center on the mile-wide stone platform that marked the closest point to the sun Jejujon, an ancient truce-ground whose rich history was about to reach new heights.

Breaking from her fascination, {Red/square/clockwise} turned to face the nameless <gossip/screaming/broadcaster> that was staring at both her and the landing site. As typical for their caste, the genomic education of the <gossip/screaming/broadcaster> made them useless for emotional intimacy, but with the power to telepathically broadcast what they saw and heard well beyond what was possible for civilians. Once the broadcast reached the second tier of <gossip/screaming/broadcaster> nodes, they would relay the signal to the next tier and the next, until all of Jejujon Jojujen could observe {Red/square/clockwise} and her guests in real time. Instinctively adjusting the slim stalks carrying her 11 pairs of eyes, the <gossip/screaming/broadcaster> managed to capture {Red/square/clockwise} in short-distance focus, while her long-distance eyes stayed focused on the landing zone.

Now the craft approaches and slows, arcing towards the wide opening of flat desert rock surrounded on all sides (at a safe distance) by crowds of the government and the press.

Now the tips of the triangle bend down as it reaches the center of the platform, and the triangle lands on its down-turned corners and goes still.

Now is the moment when everything that happened on all those 30,000 thousand orbits would become largely meaningless. This would be the dawn of a new day, a new era for the native civilization of Jejujon Jojujen.

{Red/square/clockwise} watched the slow ballet of the strange approaching craft. Dragging her five abdomens across the warming planet surface, {Red/square/clockwise} politely clenched her 11 pairs of arms to loosen their exoskeletal joints before beginning her

speech. Respected as one of the species' greatest orators, spectators across the planet reveled at the privilege to behold {Red/square/clockwise} at the pinnacle of her craft.

While intimidated, {Red/square/clockwise} was no stranger to the pressures of an audience. With aplomb, she addressed the entire planet through the <gossip/screaming/broadcaster>. Twisting and jerking her limbs with masterful grace, the symbiotic bioluminescent fungal cultures' precise wavelengths of color flickering from under the veneer of her arms' carapace was vindication of her reputation in public speaking.

“[Address = viewing audience]^qualifier//single united group|(prior cultural+religious+political conflict)acknowledged\\,”

She began, her central three pairs of limbs cutting arcs and jerks in front of her as the exoskeletal segments beamed her fungal cultures' most auspicious greens and purples.

“[Condition = present events]*{historic trajectory of planet/unknown variable}^recursive condition of change*[equally\ applicable re; //entire species\\].”

Winded, she paused to flutter the forest of tiny feather-like gills covering her thorax, allowing the global audience a moment to appreciate her skill.

Now the alien craft approached the wide opening of flat desert rock in slowing arcs, their landing site surrounded on all sides (at a safe distance) by crowds of the government and the press. Everybeetle present was caught off-guard by the sound of the alien craft sweeping by above. The craft made a steady, low-pitched hum which, while simple, was so much louder than anything most of the attendees had experienced that the crowd's telepathic field flickered in muted panic.

MM

Thinking quickly, {Red/square/clockwise} deployed her skills to manage the mood of the crowd. A flutter of glowing limbs danced around her head.

“[Address = viewing audience]^qualifier//excited + safe\\
<recent compressive disturbance>*status :: acknowledged”.

Redirecting the audience's attention from the noisy alien craft was no small task, but she could feel in the telepath-web that the danger of mob-panic was waning. She continued her reassurance to seal the situation.

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"[Posit factota > scale(disparity~({culture+biology+cognition})/{collective
~us~/collective~them~}) equivalent = ASTRONOMICAL.]
[Posit factota; <Alien tissue basis-|carbon based>.
Factota; <Alien physiology humoral basis-|dihydrogen monoxide>.
Factota; <alien dialogue basis-|primarily air compression waves>.
Factota; <Alien native ecosystem conditions-|main star constantly
moves across the sky|Distance from any point on planet surface to the sun in constant
flux||liquid dihydrogen monoxide falls from the sky and winds reach speeds to destroy
buildings>.]

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[Posit hypothetical; {THEM}^intention = | Condition (friendly /affectionate /neighborly)]
Hypothetical; (dangerous scenario) yet~ {present conditions *NEGATORY*}]

All of Jejujon Jojujen's watching population sighed a proboscis-shudder of relief, and swelled with love and admiration for {Red-square-clockwise}'s mastery of public presence, bringing assurance in their world's most tense moment. The softening of the crowd's psychic ambience soothed {Red-square-clockwise}'s anxiety. With a theatric touch of expressive excitement for the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster>, she turned to watch the alien craft come to a hover over the sacred <dead-noon-center> of the desert, encircled by the eager crowd.

Now the crowd watched the tips of the triangle bend down. The ship lowered until the triangle landed on its down-turned corners, and went still.

Now is the moment when everything that happened on all those thirty thousand of orbits before would become all but meaningless. This would be the dawn of a new day, a new era for the native civilization of Jejujon Jojujen. The gravity of circumstances were not lost on {Red-square-clockwise}, and she could feel the pressure in her every abdomen.

From the ship's underbelly descended a cylinder that came to touch the desert ground. In moments, one side slid out of the way, and everybeetle of Jejujon Jojujen had their first in-person look at the aliens. Their bodies were smaller than the planet natives, less than half the volume for grown adults. Unlike the natives, whose bodies were adapted to maximize the body area they could drag over the desert surface to absorb its warmth, these creatures were perched up off the ground by a single pair of hind limbs, limbs whose tips were bent forward so their body weight rested on the bent corner. Viewed in context of Jejujon Jojujen's concept of anatomy, their bodies were so painful-looking that many across the planet broke contact with the broadcast out of sheer visceral revulsion.

Within her immediate vicinity, {Red-square-clockwise}'s attending entourage was near enough to pick up her ambient telepathy. *Excited excited nervous historic changing civilization nothing will ever be the same at the edge of a great precipice it's like suddenly the sun moved from the center of the sky what do we do? How to we adapt? I'm thirsty.* Standing in respectful silence, the trusted inner circle of {Red-square-clockwise} let their highest pair of elbows swing in understanding agreement out of the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster>'s view, except for {Periwinkle-fivedots-vertical-axis-clockwise}, the ferociously loyal <concubine-bodyguard-nanny>, who slithered off to procure an ampoule of benzene for her mistress.

{Red-square-clockwise} was about to continue when she was interrupted by a steady flow of compression waves shaking the air.

wwwuuuuuuuooooooooaaaaauuhhh

With no moon, tides, or changing daylight, Jejujon Jojujen's atmosphere was extremely inactive, with barely any wind or weather to speak of. The natives' ability to detect sound was mostly used to protect against danger, as most audible sounds were only made as an act of violence. This sound's volume triggered an innate fear response universal across their species.

{Red-square-clockwise} dipped into the flow of the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster>'s telepathic broadcast just in time to catch an up-close view of the aliens, while making sure she looked presentable in the broadcast.

Her telepathic view of the aliens revealed the source of the compressive event; the transparent protective plate that covered the top appendage of one of the creatures. The warning from the <astronomer/monk/publicist>s that these creatures had only two eyes had not prepared her to see them- not just stemless, but actually pressed deep into their skulls,

with membranes that could slide across to seal the entire eye surface. Realizing the silence she was broadcasting, {Red-square-clockwise} made a cheerful, hopeful gesture towards the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster> to approach the landing craft.

In her own hearts, however, {Red-square-clockwise} was troubled. She didn't believe a peaceful gathering of groups from every region of the planet would be possible, and had no real faith in the aliens' good intentions.

As she started leading the committee group towards the landing site, she passed through a length of distance where the correct eye for the visual depth caught an in-person glimpse at one of the aliens. Rather than distinct, constant, easy-to-understand plates of exoskeleton moving independently to allow clear, unambiguous facial expression control, the most prominent side of the upper appendage was a continuous surface of soft tissue, the whole mass fluidly changing shape with no real order or consistency.

The non-Newtonian solid of {Red-square-clockwise}'s thorax-exoskeleton crackled as millions of tiny bubbles of volatile aromatic compounds pushed through and popped into the surface, where hundreds of feather-like gills sticking out of her body, fluttered up a breeze to carry the vapor towards her most trusted <mentor/confidante/pet>, {aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}. Communicating by fragrance was the oldest form of discourse for her species, and, while considered fairly crude in contrast to more modern communication, was still regarded as the most intimate and expressive language.

"Man I'm gonna need a vacation after we're through with this," {Red-square-clockwise} griped, "Two microepochs ago I was having fun teaching glow-grammar to the hatchlings at <nursery/university/zoo>, now I gotta worry about watching my species go extinct."

The entourage arrived at the edge of the vehicle and came to a stop within chela's reach of the shadow, each side of which was at least thrice {Red-square-clockwise}'s body length. Once they were still, {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down} sent a flurry of chemicals through the air in return.

"Hey babe, c'mon, you got this. You're a legend, yo! Baby mommas gonna be naming their kids after ya, yo! You're gonna go down in history for this!"

Out of the bottom of the cylinder, which came down from over twice the aliens' height overhead, one of the creatures pushed (awkwardly, as it struggled with Jejujon Jojujen's weaker gravity) a small rolling kiosk towards {Red-square-clockwise}. She noticed the metal prongs sticking out from below a cluster of jagged tiles that she realized were the approximate shape and size of the communicative organs of her own species. The scientists of Jejujon Jojujen had long been baffled by the claims these creatures made about themselves; though they could travel between planets, they could not travel even an instant back in time. Only their finest scientists could grasp subatomic dynamics, much less the vast ocean lurking beneath the quantum foam, and yet their technology allowed information recording and processing that dwarfed even the <librarian/raconteur/playwright>s' ability. They had the ability to record huge lengths of information and process it into a device that could push electrical flow through an organized metallic medium in a way that could translate between their languages, yet their own body's bioluminescence was utterly mute, and they were all but deaf to telepathy.

"If there is a history after this," she sullenly fanned back to {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}.

"Oh, c'mon. What is there to worry about? I bet they're just as nervous as you are, they probably want this to go well as much as we do!"

"Assuming they weren't planning an invasion from the start." She caught herself when she felt the distinct wavelengths rippling the pool of her friend's emotional psychosphere. "Ah, jeez, I'm sorry, {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}. I don't mean to be grim, it's just been nagging at my thoughts lately."

{Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down} chattered the side clusters of her exoskeletal mouthparts in sympathetic good humor. “That’s why you’re such a great leader. You bear the burden of worrying for us all.”

Their conversation petered off in the presence of the alien diplomats, who were very noisy. Not that their noise drowned out the message in the silent conversation between them, but the sounds of the aliens made it difficult to focus. In the windless deserts of Jejujon Jojujen, normal days passed with no sound louder than waving speech-arms or abdomens dragging across the sand. These creatures had a physiology that didn’t allow air exchange with the atmosphere by silent gills covering their body, but rather, they would gulp in volumes of air to absorb oxygen (the caustic toxin which, amazingly, powered the aliens’ metabolism) and vomit out useful waste products, in-and-out, in-and-out, all their lives. In that quiet, sacred expanse at the center of Jejujon Jojujen’s sunny side, even through their face-shields and across the distance separating the press, the sound of wind rushing in and out, created by each alien in asynchronous rhythm, sounded like a terrible battle raging in the distance. In the surrounding crowd, several veteran <combatant/hunter/musician>s who had survived the last war excused themselves and hurried into the distance.

Mercifully, the planet of viewers watching from home heard it filtered through telepathy, but {Red-square-clockwise} had to fight to maintain her composure. She watched as the alien behind the puppet-kiosk pushed it up to the edge of the ship’s shadow nearest {Red-square-clockwise}. Though their carbon-based anatomy made their bodies amazingly durable by the standards of Jejujon Jojujen’s silicon-based denizens, they were strangely timid about the nourishing gamma radiation of their sun Jejujon.

The kiosk poked out of the ship’s shadow, standing only as tall as the alien pushing it, making it proportionally the size of a very young child compared to {Red-square-clockwise}. She was close enough to hear the telepathic static of the alien’s mind, the product of billions of miniscule sub-minds flickering conversations in their primitive non-language which, through sheer numbers, created complex emergent thought in a process baffling to comprehend for {Red-square-clockwise}’s helium-silicate monocortex. The alien bent forward to hide its head and upper appendages behind the kiosk, and from its hiding place came a nightmarish stream of clattering like a whole crowd having their limbs rapidly broken.

tikkatik tik tikkatika tik tik tikkatik TOK

{Red-square-clockwise} flinched as the kiosk sprung to life. Both the face-plates and the cluster of conversation-limbs began moving, bending, swinging, jabbing, the rows of lights dotting each length swapping between exact single-color frequencies. The artificial face-plates spaced themselves out with mathematical uniformity, giving the appearance of someone making a cringe-inducing effort to look relaxed and casual. The speech of the kiosk had the cold precision of a grammar textbook and the emotional emptiness of severe autism.

“[Address = present whoever]^qualifier|happy?|glad to be off that stupid ship|I’m kind of hungry\\Acknowledging :: status|dude I don’t know, I’m still not sure this thing will work|
[Introductory posit > speech (.....uh..... uh..... hello? Hello, is this thing on?|
|phonetic transliteration = ~Dtaaeiiiiffvfvvvuuuhhhddt~| are you sure you charged the battery?)]”

Even as she raised her limbs in response, {Red-square-clockwise}’s psychosphere sang out to her surrounding entourage. *Joyful relief excitement positive outlook good good*

good I'M MAKING HISTORY YAY. She sent her arms whirling in flashes of scarlet, emerald-green and sandy yellow, with all the eloquent prowess that had earned her reputation as the planet's greatest speaker.

“[Address = acknowledged received]^qualifier|pleased|excited|welcoming|
[Posit|factota; <Historical basis-|unprecedented|>.
Posit|factota; <your arrival-|triumph/awe-inspiring/celebrated occasion|>.
Posit|factota; <{welcoming-peaceful-loving}*scale-|planetary|local|myself
personally|>.]”

There was a tense moment as the kiosk answered with a long display of grunts and clicks, like the intestines of this strange metallic machinery was noisily digesting {Red-square-clockwise}'s speech.

K-krrrr-k-k-krrr-k-krrrr-k-k-k

The process was punctuated by a vicious-feeling high-frequency sonic strike;

DING

The alien at the kiosk leaned its head into the hidden backside. One of the other aliens stepped toward the translator. This new alien pushed out a gulp of air which, by some mind-bending mechanism of some hidden organ, it harnessed to generate a wild bouquet of frequencies that were further warped by the fluctuations of the fluid-like surface of its head's rubbery carapace, visible beneath the transparent faceplate.

Doookkhdtooooouuuhrrr wwwwhuuuaaaddttsszzeeehhhtzssaaaeiiiinnngkk

Excited but paralyzed with tension, {Red-square-clockwise} watched the <translator/diplomat/alien> bob its head up and down as it studied the back of the kiosk, generating a stream of simple falling tones, plainly audible across the whole desert.

Hhhmmmmmm. Hhhmmmmmm. Hmmmmmmmm.

The <translator/diplomat/alien> turned to face the aliens further into the ship's shadow. It extended one of its upper appendages, where all the sub-appendages knotted into a single lump except the shortest, thickest one that stretched vertical upward.

liiddttzzssaaooollgkguuuooddt

The queer potpourri of frequencies had an immediate, palpable effect on the rest of the aliens. For some, tension struck their frames, causing upper limbs to bend with clumped-up sub-limbs, or flattened sub-limbs striking against each other, or hopped from one lower-limb to another or just jumped up and down. For others, tension left them, their bodies drooping as if deflated by a long, slow out-gulp of their suit's pressurized atmosphere. {Red-square-clockwise}'s psychosphere swelled with relief that none of their behavior seemed to be coordinated aggression.

Turning away from its companions, the <translator/diplomat/alien> again hunched over the kiosk and input its incomprehensible language.

tikkatikkatik tikka-

As absorbed as she was in the activity of the alien committee, a single eye extending from {Red-square-clockwise}'s head, one with a depth of focus too distant to focus on the ship, wandered out over the desert to the shining black sea of carapaces crowded a safe/respectful distance away. Her helium-silicate monocortex was only supplying her nonessential eyes with enough <humoral cognitive energy/mental chakra flow/liquid attention> to save the effort of re-booting her retinas, but one of them picked up a bit of motion on the far side of the arena that drew an added flow of attention;

Somebeetle had broken past the line, violating the sacred boundary enforced on everyone but {Red-square-clockwise} and her entourage. As more and more attention flowed away from the alien delegates and towards the trespasser, {Red-square-clockwise} noticed a flurry of flickering lights around the trespasser's head, like she was speaking out loud. As her localized cognition expanded, {Red-square-clockwise}'s realized what was being said, and her gills flattened to her body in fear.

The trespasser was reciting a religious litany. Most of the planet's adults who had studied history were at least marginally familiar with the church of {green-oval-orange-trapezoid-banging-together-forever}, the dogmatic fundamentalist sect representing the far extreme of the planet's religious community. Holding to the strictest interpretations of the sacred history-crystals with their own selective context, they were responsible for countless atrocities, and were infamous in their animosity to the idea of life from other planets, which they deemed heresy (which, to be fair, many of the <theologist/salesmen/gladiator>s of Jejujon Jojujen agreed was an accurate interpretation of the crystals) and opposed hatefully.

{Red-square-clockwise} left the aliens totally ignored as she poured her <humoral cognitive energy/mental chakra flow/liquid attention> into watching the intruder slither across the sand, and into tensing her own temporal dilation lobe to slow the flow of time. The litany, a precise display of perfect arcs in purple and green, were a famous and universally-respected incantation regarded as so perfect, so musically and mathematically flawless, that even the staunchest atheists would grudgingly admit it as possible proof of a higher power.

"{<-The 11 Sisters-> ==| Path^(The Only #unto# [Glory / Proper Hygiene])!}"

{Red-square-clockwise} fell into a state of blind paralysis as she poured all of her attention into protecting the aliens. "How did she get past the guards? Well no wonder, I knew from the start there was a strong religious underpinning of the military, but I never thought they'd attempt something like this! They're going to start a war! How can I stop this?"

She resolved to give her own life to protect the aliens. Even though it was too late for her to redirect enough <humoral cognitive energy/mental chakra flow/liquid attention> to her motor cortex to start slithering in place to intercept the extremist, her background as an orator and educator was the perfect experience for quick skips backwards in time. Making peace with her own death for a good cause, she let herself flood back into her senses and present moment, and prepared to-

{Red-square-clockwise}'s genitalia went solid with dread. The terrorist was close enough that, not only could she better make out what they were saying, but could faintly distinguish the cloud of temporal distortion surrounding them. The attacker was wearing a tachyon collar. Even if {Red-square-clockwise} went back in time, she would have no memory of the attacker and would be helpless to stop it. {Red-square-clockwise}, and the entire world,

watched in paralyzed fear as the terrorist, propelled by deep hatred and righteous purpose, went to commit a war crime on an advanced alien species.

One of the aliens had walked to the edge of the ship's shadow closest to the approaching attacker, and raised an upper limb in an apparent gesture of peace.

“{<~The 11 Sisters~> ==| Path^(The Only) #unto# [Glory / Proper Hygiene]}!”
“{<~The 11 Sisters~> ==| Path^(The Only) #unto# [Glory / Proper Hygiene]}!”
“{<~The 11 Sisters~> ==| Path^(The Only) #unto# [Glory / Proper Hygiene]}!”
“{<~The 11 Sisters~> ==| Path^(The Only) #unto# [Glory / Proper Hygiene]}!”

The fundamentalist collapsed dead at the edge of the ship's shadow. {Red-square-clockwise} knew it was already too late. In a final act of hatred and spite, the terrorist had ruptured several of her own organs, flooding her thoracic cavity with caustic solvents manifested over a lifetime of hatred and sexual repression. This caused a reaction that made her body inflate to five times its normal volume and rupture with a horrific **bip** that splattered the nearby ground and ship with bright green viscera, and sent the nearest alien flying away with an enraged-sounding bellow.

Whooooooooaaaa-ho-ho-ho-ho-hooooooooah!

Mercifully, in the population genomics of Jejujon Jojuen, intense militaristic and religious inclination rarely overlap with adequate education in chemistry and physics. The aliens' high-gravity, constant-turmoil home planed had made their carbon-based bodies absurdly robust. Some mechanism in the attacked alien's suit caused it to inflate, making its bouncing low-gravity tumble out into the open sunlight noisy but harmless.

pfff

Oooh!

pfff

Aaack!

pfff

Gah!

Before sliding to a face-down halt, giving out a low, steady hiss.

There was an agonizing moment of stillness as the aliens looked at their off-cast companion. Even with the dim telepathic feedback from the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster>, {Red-square-clockwise} could feel the intensity of dread enveloping her whole planet, sprinkled with just a handful of sharp, distant pains that she knew were entire families committing suicide to escape the aliens' retribution.

Everybeetle of Jejujon Jojuen watched, frozen in suspense, as one of the aliens walked up to the edge of the ship's shadow and unfolded a device that made a protective, mirror-shiny shield overhead. Tucked in the shield's shadow, the alien bounced over to its companion, whose suit had swollen into massive bulges, covered in hate-green guts. As it slowly arose, it revealed a cracked face-plate with a tiny gas jet pouring out. Even if she had

tried, {Red-square-clockwise} wouldn't have been able to squeeze her attention away from their noisy exchange as the one alien shared its shade with its injured companion.

Mmmaaat? Yyyuuuuu hoookeiyyy buudddeeee?

Kackh, ughh. Yyeaah, nnnoothhiinnng brrooakunn.

The wounded alien pointed to the hissing crack in its faceplate.

Yyyuuuuu gaaht aannyy bluuuu guuuu?

Yyeaaah, ssshuuuurrrr, hhhhhoooooollld oooooonnn...

Using an upper limb, the uninjured alien pulled a device from the strap around its mid-trunk, which it raised to touch the hole that gas was hissing out from. Squeezing the device, the alien injected a dollop of some blue paste that cut off the hissing gas.

Thaannks. Hhoowws mmaeeeyy rraaad lleevvuhhls?

The alien returned the device to its strap, and pulled out another, which it waved all over the injured alien's body before raising it up to read a small monitor on the back.

Mmiinniimmaal. Yyooouur kiidzzz wwooaannt beee mmuuhch duummmer thhhaaann yyyuuu.

Kkkeek, rreeeeel ffuuunnnny. Hheeyy dooctorr, aaee thhoooot thheeeiii diiduuhnt lllaaaiik llooouud?

The alien standing behind the translation-kiosk made some noises.

Yyyeaahh, mmeee tooo, hhhooollld ooohn.

{Red-square-clockwise} watched the alien behind the kiosk bend its head down and hit one button over and over. She realized that it was deleting the words it was originally planning to say, before starting again, banging down a flurry of characters.

tatatatatatatatatata

tikkatikka tik tikkatik tik tik tikkatikkatikkatik tik tikkatik

Her every drop of <humoral cognitive energy/mental chakra flow/liquid attention> pooled upon her sensory input of the alien interpreter, {Red-square-clockwise} watched the crowd of mouth-plates arrange themselves in parallel horizontal zig-zags. She thought they had made a mistake by putting on by such a sheepish, embarrassed, apologetic expression, but then the arms began to light up and swing around.

[Address = this guy] ^qualifier|sorry\confused\apologetic\

Acknowledging :: ignorance of local custom
 (posit; abstract concept - culture {of this planet}^qualifier|confusing to us|
 “Uuuuuuh... We dunno what you meant by that. Your ways don’t make sense to us. Have
 we done something rude?”)]

{Red-square-clockwise} was paralyzed by indecision. These aliens were more unpredictable than even their <astronomer/monk/publicist>s had guessed, leaving her and the entire planet perched on a razor’s edge of uncertainty, one bump away from oblivion. Her inner turmoil was blasted away by the faintest puff of pheromone-laced breeze wafting her way from {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}.

“You got this, sister. Show ‘em how we do it on Jejujon Jojuen!”

Courage flooded from her third and fourth abdomens, rushing into her thorax and lifting her luminescent arms. This was, by far, the most important speech {Red-square-clockwise} had ever given, even with her illustrious history. With a quick flutter of her gill-fronds to organize her thoughts, {Red-square-clockwise} launched her full mastery of the art form into her address to the aliens.

“[Address = <unfortunate victim/honored guest>^qualifier//tragic + pitiable\\
 <recent suicide attack>*status :: acknowledged^qualifier//despicable +
 inexcusable + wretched\\
 (posit; apology - your vile attacker was from a fringe minority)
 (posit; confession - we are a backwards and primitive species that still clings to
 traditions)
 (posit; insistence - ideology/teachings/protocol ^ <~The 11 Sisters~> return ==
 peaceful/compassionate/harmonious)
 (posit; request- our population* <great majority> wishes for //peace + cooperation
 + condemnation of this heinous act\\)]”.

Everybeetle present and everybeetle watching from home gazed in awe at the spectacle of her oratory prowess. Even for the greatest speaker of Jejujon Jojuen, in that moment of rising to the occasion {Red-square-clockwise}’s linguistic prowess excelled into the realm of legend.

The whole crowd awaited in agonizing anticipation as the aliens’ nonliving interpreter digested the information.

K-krrrr-k-kk-krrkrrrrkrrrr-k-k-k-krrr-krrkr-k-kkrkrrr

DING

{Red-square-clockwise} couldn’t tear her 5 in-focus eyes off of the alien behind the kiosk, his whole crew standing behind him, appearing to have as much interest in the translation as she did. One of them unleashed a percussive attack on the back of the kiosk-user’s head.

Dooohcktuurr, wwuut iiiss iit?

Understanding the aliens’ anatomy enough to know where the interpreter’s eyes were looking, {Red-square-clockwise} expanded the working space of her visual/linguistic cortex to zoom in on the thing’s eyes. Extrapolating the alignment of both eyes’ aperture with the

photosensitive inner lining of the eye's transparent core, she could tell that both eyes' alignment crossed on the glowing back surface of the kiosk. Her sudden realization that these things could redirect their eyes' line of sight by sliding the round surface inside a slimy cavity made {Red-square-clockwise}'s kidney clench.

From the perspective of {Red-square-clockwise}, the alien interpreter's view was jerking along a horizontal line, inspecting whatever medium the words had been translated into. The two repulsive eyes traced down the line, then traced the line again. The soft flaps sandwiching the eyes, continuations of the fluid-like surface of the alien's head, pushed together to cover the eyes except for narrow slits, like it was shutting out any visual information that would distract it from the translation in front of him. Then, the flaps flew apart, sinking into the head until the eyes were completely uncovered (as much as could be, given their disgusting state of being embedded in the alien's head).

p-pff-ffHAAAAHHHAAAAAHHAAAAAHHHAAAAAHHAAAAAA!

{Red-square-clockwise}'s whole telepathic field swayed in terror at the alien's aggression. The fluid surface around the eyes clenched and rippled, sealing the eyes shut, as the alien tilted its head back to face upward. Its mouth stretched wide open, revealing a nightmarish mandible assemblage. In the native customs of Jejujon Jojujen, individuals were born with anywhere from one to five dozen mouth-plates, as well as genetically-coded understanding of the sophisticated etiquette of how to use which ones for which foods in which circumstances. The alien's masticators were just two crude rows of hydroxyapatite-coated nubs shaped along the curve of the alien's head, to be slammed and ground together to reduce a food morsel to paste. It was the kind of grotesque surrealism that could traumatize children and empower <artist/shaman/panhandler>s of the body-horror genre with a lifetime of dark inspiration. It would have been awful enough to behold, even without the shuddering, rhythmic roar gushing from its maw, dropping a blanket of dread across the entire planet.

HAAAHHAHAAAAHHHAAAAAHHAAAA! Ooohmmaaiigaad, yuuugaaiiz! Yuuugaaiiz! Yuuunnnooo uuuuuuaat iit uuuuaaasss sssaaeeeeiiiiinnng?

The alien interpreter turned to face its companions, who stood still and silent in the shadow of their craft. {Red-square-clockwise}, in her ignorance, thought the other aliens were just as confused and fascinated as she was. The interpreter made a few jumbled sound-strikes before flinging its upper limbs in the air and jerking them about, in rhythm to a louder, consistent, repeating pattern.

*liit uuuuaaasss sssaaaaeeeeiiiiinnng AAAAAALLLAAAAAAAKBAAARRRAAAA
LLLLAAAAAAAKBAAAAARRRAAALLLAAAAAAAKBAAARRRAAALLLAAAAAA
AKBAAARRR-*

The repeating-pattern sonic attack had an immediate effect on the other aliens. Their bodies jolted and spasmed, as if the ground beneath them had become unstable, some clutching their cores with their upper limbs, some stomping the ground with their lower limbs, ALL of them repeating the interpreter's gruesome mandible-brandishing aggression display.

BAAAAAHHHAAAAAHHAAAAAHHAAAAAAAHHHAAAAAHHAAAAAA!

Every one of {Red-square-clockwise}'s abdomens went smooth in terror. She could not fight the thought that right now, in this moment, she was witnessing the last moment of her planet. Her interpretation of the aliens' emotional state suggested such intense betrayal and hatred that a group suicide attack seemed imminent, and with their strange technology and cooperating rage, they surely had the power to wipe out life on her planet.

The interpreter, still brandishing its paired rows of hard white lumps, turned back to the translating kiosk. Hunching over the input panel, its frame still rhythmically twitching with tense emotion, the alien pounded down a very brief input.

Tikkatik TAK

The kiosk's imitation mouth-pieces fluttered around and arranged themselves into a pair of equilateral triangles side-by-side, inner points touching, lower points resting on the top corners of a lower-half semi-circle. It was the smuggest, smarmiest, goofiest, shit-eatingest expression that {Red-square-clockwise} had ever laid any of her eyes on. The kiosk's luminescent speech-arms fanned out in an even spread, and the highest and lowest two pairs of arms began rapid symmetrical fluttering perpendicular to her line of interaction with the kiosk as they flickered between green and pink. It was a statement so crude and non-grammatical that it was barely even language, yet so blunt and unambiguous that a newborn child, still wet with male-guts, would have instinctively understood.

“**[LOL]**”

{Red-square-clockwise} flexed every one of her eyes all the way to her skull in surprise. The ambient telepathy from her nearby entourage told her she was not alone in her response. Even the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster> was nonplussed. She couldn't respond before the interpreter began clacking out more inputs.

```
“[Posit; Query ::  
  Condition A ==  
    <<The 11 Sisters>> 'ideology/teachings/protocol X'  
      :: return ^ modifier (sacred/perfect/eternal)  
  Condition B ==  
    'ideology/teachings/protocol X {contents}' claim * (created by <<The 11 Sisters>>)  
    verification PROOF  
      :: return 'ideology/teachings/protocol X {contents}' ^ modifier  
      (sacred/perfect/eternal)  
  Condition C ==  
    'ideology/teachings/protocol X {contents}' claim * (sacred/perfect/eternal)  
    verification PROOF  
      :: return 'ideology/teachings/protocol X {contents}' ^ modifier  
      (created by <<The 11 Sisters>>)  
    If Conditions A AND B AND C == “TRUE”  
      :: return “YES”]”
```

{Red-square-clockwise} hesitated. The self-affirming logic of the religious establishment of Jejujon Jojuen was obvious to anybeetle that survived their rebellious adolescence, but she was sensitive to the beliefs of the entire planet watching her answer, and

still fairly intimidated by the crew of mandible-brandishing aliens that seemed very focused on her. She wavered, her speech-arms' elbows clattered against each other and her luminescence blurred into off-colors- it was very unlike her to stumble over her words from stage fright like this.

“[-er- {ummm...} that == |oversimplifying <it> ^ modifier 'really very' but... well...
...
...Yes, it is.]”

the kiosk absorbed the light of {Red-square-clockwise}'s statement and digested it into a cogent response for the aliens.

k-k-krrrr-k-krr-k-k-k-krrrrrr-k

DING

BAAAAAAAAHHHAAAAAAAAHHHHAAAAAAAAHHHHAAAAAAAAHHHAAAAAAAA

The aliens burst into a unanimous apoplectic fit, bumping into one another and staggering around as they unleashed a military-grade peal of continuous rhythmic clamor. {Red-square-clockwise} was amazed that their awful display was becoming less and less terrifying for the whole planet. The interpreter didn't even stem the flow of compressive waves as it began tapping out a response.

HAAHAAHHHHAAAAAAAAHHHAHAHAHAHHHHAAAAAAAA

tikkatikkatikkatikkatikkatikkatikk TAK

The kiosk came to life, fluttering an even longer elocution of mirthful green and pink.

“[LOLOLOLOLOLOL]”

Without even having time or <humoral cognitive energy/mental chakra flow/liquid attention> to process what she was witnessing, {Red-square-clockwise} couldn't respond before the interpreter blasted yet another question into the kiosk.

“[Posit; Query ::
Condition A ==
<-The 11 Sisters-> teachings |
:: return <peace*love* Hygiene > ^ modifier ABSOLUTE
Condition B ==
IF <-The 11 Sisters-> teachings \\conditional; selective interpretation//
:: return {<violence|terror|torture|slaughter> OF
<male|female|adults|elderly|newborn infants>} THEN
{<violence|terror|torture|slaughter> OF <male|female|adults|elderly|newborn
infants>} ^ modifier; justifiable
Condition C ==

```
IF condition {<violence|terror|torture|slaughter> OF
<male|female|adults|elderly|newborn infants>}
== within parameters |<-The 11 Sisters-> teachings \|conditional; selective
interpretation/|| THEN
:: return {<violence|terror|torture|slaughter> OF
<male|female|adults|elderly|newborn infants>}
:: return <peace*love* Hygiene >^ modifier ABSOLUTE
IF Conditions A AND B AND C == "TRUE"
:: return "YES"]"
```

{Red-square-clockwise}'s dozens of mouth-plates tapped together in surprise at the aliens' nuanced understanding of religious hypocrisy. Despite her secular upbringing, the relief gave {Red-square-clockwise} enough of a thrill that her core religious genomic coding broke through in her ecstatic response..

“\ ^ modifier* By the <Glory/Grace/Freshness> of <~The 11 Sisters~>//, YES!!!!”

K-krrrr-k-k-krr-krrrr

DING

BAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHAAAAAAAAHHHHAAAAAAAAHHAAAAAAAAHHHAAAAA

{Red-square-clockwise}, and her entourage, and the <gossip-screaming-broadcaster>, and the entire adult population of Jejujon Jojujen observed in baffled wonderment. These alien creatures, brandishing their awful mandibles and attacking one another with violence straight from a documentary-crystal of the old wars, collapsed into chaos. Some clutched their heads, some used upper limbs to strike lower limbs, some leaned into each other as if they were struggling to stand unaided, and one collapsed onto its back, clutching its core with its upper limbs as its lower limbs jerked violently.

The interpreter could barely compose itself to enter a new input. Even when it was executed, the kiosk just repeated itself, adding an emphatic flourish with its 'face' frozen in that insufferable smirk.

"[ZOMGROFLMAOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLOLO]"

HAAAHAAAhaaahhaaaahhaaaa hheeeeeeee hhheeeeeeee hhheeeee aaahhhhhh

The energy of the aliens' violent cacophony began to wane, and settled into a quagmire of complex noise that {Red-square-clockwise} began to assume was their idea of 'normal chatter.' The interpreter's nightmarishly liquid head-wrap was still stretched out to expose its mastication assemblage as it bent over to type an unusually long input into the kiosk.

Tikkatikkatiktiktikkakakakaktikkatiktiktikkatik tik tikkatikka tik tikkatikka tik tik tikka tik

The kiosk, its face-plates still frozen in that punchable simper, set its arms in motion.

“**[Posit: Observation-**

%Parameter; time period {discovery of your species >>> landing on your planet}

CONCLUDE ::

**Difference((our planet/your planet)):<geometric/distance/geological> ==
ASTRONOMICALLY HUGE {Assigned descriptor [X]}**

**Difference((our species/your species)):<culture/morality/worldview> ==
PROPORTIONALLY EVEN GREATER THAN [X]**

%Parameter; time period {landing on your planet >>> now}

CONCLUDE ::

**Difference((our planet / your planet)):< geometric/spatial/geological > ==
ASTRONOMICALLY HUGE {Assigned descriptor [X]}**

**Difference((our species/your species)):< culture/morality/worldview > ==
MAYBE KIND OF SORT OF NOT QUITE AS GREAT AS [X]”**

Between this worldview-shattering revelation and the planet-wide telepathic response, with a few cloistered pockets of righteous outrage but mostly continent-spanning swaths of surprised, delighted joy, {Red-square-clockwise} was paralyzed. There was some purposeful activity among the aliens, with half of them pulling strange devices from the elevator of their craft and manipulating them with their upper-limbs. Each of the devices created weapon-like sound outputs, but unlike those of the aliens themselves, these sounds were discrete frequency clusters, creating patterns of changing wavelengths that somehow made the device-users bob up and down in unison. {Red-square-clockwise}'s confusion grew as she saw the non-device-using aliens start to contort and twist their bodies in a synchronized time pattern. She only just realized that, analyzed mathematically as a sequence of changing ratios between the frequencies (effortlessly calculated by her hydrogen-silicate monocortex), the mathematical patterns of the sounds created were... beautiful?

Through her corner-eyes, she witnessed her friend {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}, comparatively unskilled at oratory, but very experienced in physical arts for her training at <cooking/martial arts/sex>, was ranting jibberish as she threw her speech-arms about in grouped clumps. {Red-square-clockwise} couldn't even ask a question before getting slammed with a cloud of informative pheromones.

It's the SOUND! {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down} scent-squealed, They're creating an empathic collective that they're coordinating through patterns in SOUND!!

Looking at the aliens, {Red-square-clockwise} realized she was right- the rhythm-moving aliens were mimicking {Aquamarine-trapezoid-horizontal-front-down}'s garbled speech with their own limbs in a simple imitation game, all of them binding the motion of their bodies to the regular patterns in the sounds created by the alien devices.

The interpreter-alien entered another statement into the kiosk.

“**[Posit: suggestion-**

Condition A ==

(Activity period): <diplomacy/bureaucracy/work>

:: return; **ENDED**

Condition B ==

(Activity period): <PLAY/eat/sound-temporal-pattern-synch-body-motion>

:: return; **INITATED**

If Conditions A AND B == “TRUE”

:: return **“YES”**”

{Red-square-clockwise} stared, unmoving, at the chaotic band of aliens, her corner-eyes beholding more and more of the watching crowd babbling jibberish in coordination to the aliens’ motion. Her speech-arms hung dark and slack, swinging against her thorax. For the first time in her life, {Red-square-clockwise}, the greatest orator in the entire history of Jejujon Jojuen, was speechless.