

July 4th, 1935

To the discerning reader,

*The following record was written by Daniel Green, the self-professed “academic dilettante” known primarily for his work in psychical research. If you have found this sheaf of papers, it is unlikely that I have submitted the following writings to public record, and I would humbly ask that you place this package back amidst my belongings until I can collate more data on the events described therein. Assuming you do not do so, you may discover a most peculiar set of happenings that I have become acquainted with, events that I hesitate to publish despite my prolific output in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research. Though I possess a general predilection towards the open disbursement of knowledge, the circumstances described are both sufficiently uncorroborated and sufficiently unusual that I hesitate to put pen to paper on the matter. My veiled criticisms towards the hypothesis of telepathic hallucinations put forward for ghosts likely serve as the only public writings that even hint of this affair. Nevertheless, I can at least state with certainty that this haphazard “case study” of sorts serves as an example of strongly functioning psychic faculties, and, if further exploration bears out, the presence of intelligent **life** beyond the fleeting globe which we currently inhabit. I have come to this conclusion following a series of peculiar occurrences over this past year, an odd chain that began under surprisingly mundane circumstances. For you see, the first stirrings of these visitations began on the night of May 5th, when I retired to my chambers for the evening.*

A huddled form shifted amidst a weave of blankets. A miniature pod of a bed rested quietly in a small niche, separated from a greater room by delicate curtains. The grey tint of the alcove was only interrupted by seams of brown, the walls accented with fine wooden paneling. The blankets continued to rustle, hints of tiny limbs being marked by the fabric. A voice started to emerge from the near-cradle.

“Stupid...sheets...” Daniel huffed in a strangely light fashion as the darkness in his vision began to turn to light. He could see his own eyelids flickering as his head finally escaped the bundle.

He was surrounded by a tiny grey chamber blocked off by a curtain. Like the kind of curtain some people supposedly put on their king-sized beds.

Needless to say, Daniel rested his head back down on the bed.

He didn't have long to process anything before he heard some weird sound, like a machine whirring almost imperceptibly. This was followed by the far more distinct sound of footsteps, and a parting of the curtains.

With a few more steps, a figure began to loom over his reclined body. This figure had clothing, two arms, two legs, and a discernable head atop their torso. From there, features started to diverge. Every inch of skin that wasn't covered by the strange, seemingly one-piece uniform they wore was unmistakably green, with oddly leaf-like striations present just below the surface. The head itself was a sight, with rows of large leaves covering where a human's hair would typically be. The figure possessed eyes, but there was no discernable pupil, just a splotch of color on a white orb. This individual didn't really have a nose, just a gentle incline and decline right above the mouth. Or rather, maw, as the structure was notably different from a normal mouth, and most tellingly, two white fangs

jutted out from it despite the feature's closed status. It took Daniel's mind a moment to catch up, but he realized soon enough that the being before him had a vague patch of discoloration where the ears on a human would be, akin to a membrane.

"God, I don't even *read* sciencey-fiction." a coherent sentence escaped Daniel, though it was a bit too high pitched for his liking. And, off, for some reason.

The entity's head tilted for a moment as what appeared to be their brow raised for a moment. They started to crouch down towards the bed soon after, easily dwarfing the structure in proportion.

"I'm sorry for the circumstances dear, but it's really best to avoid denial..." they gazed off for a second, eyes briefly uncertain.

"No, I *will* deny weird dreams. I command you to...I dunno. I just want something that's not this." Daniel's vision went blank for a second as he closed his eyelids. He waited for three seconds. Upon opening his eyes. He still noticed that alien by his bedside. A bedside that wasn't even his.

"Ugh, how does lucid dreams work, anyway?" Daniel started to talk again, slowing his speech as he started to deliberate on the words.

"They usually work when you're asleep." the verdant figure spoke. Something of a smile was forming on their maw. Daniel could see their eyes focus on his own.

"But I *am* asleep!" Daniel started to slide back under the covers a little more. He felt kind of strange, as though his eyes were hurting. "Otherwise, you...you'd really be...here."

"And?" the edge of the being's maw curled. Something about their features wasn't exactly discernable between Daniel's fevered blinks. Unreadable. He remembered how predators are unreadable.

"You...you're...uh...plant. Person. That's...weird." Daniel's speech started to flicker slightly. "And this, isn't my room." Daniel began to blink. A soft glow permeated his vision as he did so. The glow wasn't orange.

"Indeed, mister. We don't know how to really explain it to you, bu-" the figure's maw was caught in motion as Daniel started to speak.

"No, I can always doubt when I wake up, it would be un..." Daniel felt his brow furrow for a moment. "...becoming, to act clueless when you should be investigating stuff." Daniel wriggled around beneath the covers, shaking his head a little. It took only a little longer for him to roll over onto rather wobbly knees. It didn't really feel like his skin even chaffed against the fabric as much as it glided over it. He adjusted his vision towards the visitor.

"I don't really wanna accuse you, Mr. Dream Alien...but what did you do?" Daniel could feel his eyes squint. This grogginess wasn't exactly fading away.

The being was silent for a few moments. Daniel kept an eye on their gaze. As much as one could when blinking. He propped himself up straight though. Enough to keep everything else out of vision.

The figure's mouth curled again. In that same strange...wait. No. That, that was a *smirk*.

“Quite the little spark we've found!” they were shaking their head now, emitting a low murmuring Daniel could guess was a giggle. “Well, I guess we owe a rather thorough explanation for such bravery, do we not?”

Daniel tilted his head for a moment, mind swirling as he combed through the words. “We?”

“You'll figure out that part in a moment, I think it'd be best to get over the biggest hurdle for now...could you look towards the wall, dear?” the figure played with their clothing a bit, a hand briefly grasping some oblong device near the almost non-existent collar. A faint sound of scraping emanated from seemingly nowhere. Daniel's eyes quickened toward the curtains for a moment, before he turned back toward his left with dizzying speed.

The blank wall from before, which Daniel now started to realize was constructed out of some unidentifiable alloy (or perhaps polymer), now hosted a small reflective surface. It looked like a glass mirror, though Daniel supposed that it may not necessarily be made of that exact material. Mostly because the accuracy of the reflected image was uncannily vivid, and because an item of terrestrial make in an alien environment was unlikely, and because continuing along this line of thought was far more comfortable than reflecting upon the two green visages that were present in the mirror, the closest one having strangely, nay, disturbingly rounded features and stubby fangs...

“Please. Talk.” Daniel could feel what he hoped were muscles tense up.

The figure breathed in for a moment.

“Welcome to our empire. You are currently inhabiting a body of our species that has been grown especially for you. This visitation shall only last for as long as your own form sleeps. So you should wake up fine and dandy in the morning! We just want to question you a bit about your own world while you're here.” the figure nodded along, going quiet for a second. “We're from another planet, well, stellar system, if that wasn't already clear.”

A tiny Daniel stared for a timeless time.

“Why am I small?” he asked blankly. His eyes weren't focusing on anything in particular.

“Hmm?” the figure squinted a little at Daniel. “We calibrated the details properly, at least as much as we could glean from your mind. You're a boy, right?” they tilted their head.

“Yes. And 30.” Daniel played around with the sheets a little bit. Senses weren't usually this dull. And heads a lot clearer.

“Ah.” the figure nodded a bit, each motion after the first becoming slower. “I apologize for asking, but you wouldn't happen to be...implying anything by that, would you?”

Daniel stared blankly.

“Imma a-dult.” he took some time to enunciate.

"Hmm. Not trying to say you're lying or anyt-" the person's voice was cut off.

"Wha?! No, I'm telling the tru-" Daniel's voice faded away as the stranger spoke at a notably greater pitch.

"I never said you weren't. I was just about to say we're going to need to look into that matter. I apologize, but it's somewhat...difficult to believe that the developmental differences could be that severe." something of a brow on the alien raised for a moment.

Daniel's head swayed backward as a groan escaped. "How'd you even get me here if you couldn't...gah, talkin' to myself in my dreams now..." he slowly rolled his head back forward.

"I understand you must still feel very disoriented from this, but can you try your best to work with us?" the stranger's maw tightened a little, their features drooping slightly. "I'm sure it would be of great benefit to us both." the edge of their mouth lifted slightly.

Daniel tried to puzzle out the meaning of the expression.

"That's a lot to expect." Daniel blinked precisely once at this stranger. "I don't expect much though, so...okay?" Daniel nodded, looking off to the side. A little while later, his attention returned to the stranger.

"Oh, what's yer name?" Daniel slurred for a second.

"That would be Sani." the plantoid nodded solidly, eyeing Daniel softly. "And yours, sprout?" Sani asked. Daniel noticed they were doing the curling thing again.

"It's Da-" Daniel began to speak a little louder, stopping abruptly midway. His eyes went almost cross for a moment as he started to concentrate. "Da...Dan...Dani..." little leafy fingers were beginning to make their way towards his mint throat. "Dani-el." Daniel almost immediately began to breathe after completing the statement, forgetting to look back at Sani for a second as he smiled widely to himself.

"An...intriguing name." Sani's head rocked back and forth slightly. "I hope 'Danny' works just as well though. It may be a bit...well, cleaner."

"Mmm, maybe they were right about the subconscious stuff. 'Cause that's a weird way to spell my name." Daniel's eyes narrowed as Sani spoke. "Dunno what all, this..." Daniel sluggishly waved an arm around. "...means for me, but at least its material to work with." Daniel gazed off at the curtain blankly, the beginnings of a smile growing. "Heh, I got a cool head even in my dreams."

Daniel looked up to see the bedside visitor holding up some sort of slate with a metallic backing. It almost looked like they were writing something, but Daniel was pretty sure he could only spy their fingers anywhere close to the thing.

"Even in really weird dreams." Daniel's forehead wrinkled as he looked off, slowly resting his head back on the bed. The plant person looked back up at the first sound of sheets wrinkling.

“Good night, starfarer. We hope to elaborate on the situation more on your next visit.” Sani gave a firm nod with their thoughtful gaze. Daniel couldn't help but notice something about the eyes. Too, too aware...

With little encouragement, Daniel fell back into sleep.

*The characteristics of that night were unusual at the very least, and foreboding at both the ends of skepticism and acceptance. The haze of bewilderment could easily maim anyone's critical faculties, as I myself demonstrated. I must admit that I fell rather easily into somnolence and the comforting chaos of dreams soon after my encounter, and yet that very decision would plant the first seeds of doubt into my initial musings on the matter. For who could honestly compare a lucid, if perturbing, conversation with a fellow intelligence to the inane ramblings that characterize dream-creatures? The palpable **contrast** between the visitation and the mundane dreams that followed it led me into unease at the early hours of morning, which I nonetheless had to put aside to attend to my duties at Duke University. And yet, even as I continued on with the rudiments of work, tiny trains of thought would seep into my mind as I trudged on through hallways and broke outside the laboratory. I shall be the first to admit that I make no claim as to the accuracy of my knowledge on fields outside of my area of expertise, but I couldn't stop pondering about the statement made by that strange being one could only hope was a dream. Suppose, for example, if one decided to humor the idea that other beings inhabited worlds around distant stars, much as our own sphere orbits the Sun with the rest of its satellites. And suppose such a civilization had the drive to commune with others much like themselves, and were willing to invest considerable resources into such an effort? The incredulity one would have to endure in order to glean anything from such ponderings is tremendous. And yet, sitting there beneath the cover of oaks on a refreshingly cool day, I did remember that ignoring anything simply due to something as petty as distaste is a more terrible offense than any flight of fancy. And so I continued on, to think thoughts more suited for the fantastic publications of newstands than the intellectual institution I sat not five feet away from. Supposing such a foreign people did yearn to see other worlds, how would they accomplish such a task? With clever machines and artifice, one would expect, to sustain life in the vast black gulf we earthlings might only see at night. And yet what sort of machines, and what kinds of resources to sustain a mortal in that seemingly limitless empyrean? When even our best astronomers must rely on the most sublime of maths to merely approximate the qualities of celestial bodies? The more I thought about the matter, the more I wept for the peoples of Babel, and the sort of difficulties such a sisyphian endeavour must entail. I was almost beginning thoughts of rocketry and the hopes of our own society when I recalled a few words from the other world I was only now beginning to seriously suspect. Yes. That of bodies and their inhabitants. For it was true that the whole race for outer space was predicated upon the idea of moving these breathing, living things that many see as almost inseparable for their own being. The whole game of engineering and logistics and calculating for a massive vessel to ply the void, all to ensure the survival of a quivering thing, the physical corpus of Virgin Earth's inhabitants. I daresay that I am not the first to embark upon this line of thought, as many of my colleagues could attest to, but I couldn't stop myself from easing the equation. We already know of the mind's extraordinary faculties, the successes in thought-transference, experimentation with telekinesis and the tumbling of dice. Given how the sensory system could be bypassed in the acquisition of information, who is to say that the onerous task of travel itself couldn't be alleviated? I am well aware that this train of thought bothers many, even in our own field of psychical research. The specter of survival, pun intended, annoys many, and yet the facts themselves put into question the idea of the mind's reliance on a physical organism for manifestation **at all**. And so, with the glee of a schoolboy I thought more about the statement of my bedside visitor. That of the wholesale creation of a living*

*organism. This, as far as I could discern at the time, rested firmly in the realm of make-believe. Yet I continued on in the spirit of exploration with the remaining minutes of lunch that I had, making a few more judgments. Supposing one could somehow artificially gestate living organisms on demand, couldn't one have a free "receiver" for the entrepreneurial consciousness? I do not pretend to know when the true glimmerings of self-awareness begin and who you could be sending back, mind you, but sitting there in the fading summer light, I couldn't ignore the idea. To travel the gulf of space, not through the locomotion offered by a stellar contraption, but rather moving one's **mind** alone across space, to enter into a foreign body on some distant world. And so, having exercised my more intellectual imagination for the day, I concluded my thoughts and hastened back to the labor of the laboratory. It is clear in hindsight that I hoped that would put an end to whatever matter the peculiar "dream" had stirred up. That very night, though, it became all too clear my mind was only beginning to whirl.*

Daniel frowned the moment he saw green.

It only took him a moment to realize his eyes were closed, after which he felt his heart skip a few beats, but he breathed deeply nonetheless and started to sit up with parted eyelids.

He was right back in that room again, in that miniature bedroom with grey and brown and that *same* plant person as before, now seated solidly on some weirdly shaped, cushioned stool. Their eyes were already bright and aware.

"Well then, Danny. Are you ready for a more thorough discussion?" they smiled.

Daniel's eyes locked on the sight for a second.

That was an actual smile.

"Dan..." Daniel's breaths quickened. He couldn't see his lavender orbs dilate ever so slightly.

"Dan-IEL." he finished up rather haphazardly as he noted both his higher tone and the uncharacteristic effort it took to speak. "That's my name. You're...I dunno, no..." it took a second for Daniel's head to fall back to the bed, leaves wrinkling as his head shook.

"Plea-" Sani's voice rose once more.

"No!" Daniel found himself reciting the line in an instant. The sprout's feet started to push against the end of the pod-bed's frame, visage quickly becoming obscured under layers of cloth. Tiny wisps of hands feverishly worked to cover himself under as many sheets as possible.

Sani sat back a little bit, taking a moment to adjust the stool. What might have been an eye brow in the literal sense rose, slightly, though their gaze was still focused on the newcomer. The plantoid patiently waited for a little while as Daniel wrapped up his cocooning process. By the end, only a narrow strip of his face was visible.

Upon completion of the work, the sprout's eyes returned to the alien with a newfound glare. Sani could note that his feet weren't pressing up against the bedframe quite as hard as before, though they waited

for Daniel to make the first move.

It came, a good couple of minutes later.

“I say when you come closer. Otherwise, you don't.” Daniel's voice came back. It was noticeably composed, yet rather scratchy.

Sani's expression flickered for a moment, the plantoid giving as slow of a nod as possible soon after.

“I ask you questions now.” Daniel's spoke a little harder. His eyes were narrowed.

Sani strained in their second nod, attempting to sigh as lightly as possible.

“Okay. Give me time.” Daniel's eyes started to slip from the visitor. They were caught on the curtains a few times, and often on the guest, though they eventually settled on the bed. He blinked a few times at the sight, head becoming a little bit more wobbly as it continued it's rotation. He finally looked back at Sani.

“I know dreams don't usually continue, kay? So I'm gonna figure this out.” Daniel nodded to himself briefly, before shaking his head. “Why'm I here?” slightly brighter eyes were turning towards Sani.

“We seek to discover more about your kind, and have brought you here to achieve that end.” Sani only deliberated for a few seconds before speaking.

“I wanted details.” Daniel spoke rather highly, eyes briefly rolling. Sani's expression began to harden before Daniel continued.

“But...I'm guessing if you're aliens, you grew that body with, machines, maybe?” Daniel looked down for a moment as though puzzling, before his gaze shot back up. “Hey, wait, you have to explain the mind transfer stuff to me!” Daniel's iris almost fully flooded his eye. His feet had fallen from their position against the synthetic bedframe.

Sani's tightened features began to relax somewhat, the plantoid not quite looking at Daniel as they nodded.

“We would never fail to do that for our psychical scholar, but we still have to get acquainted before advancing your education.”

A portion of the sheet covering Daniel's face drooped down, exposing a miniature gaping maw.

“How'd you...wait, if you already got me here...” Daniel's self-oriented nods quickly turned into a bobbing motion. “No way! You're *that* good at te, tele, tele-puh...”

“Telepathy, sweetie.” Sani nodded, continuing the motion for a fair while. They took a certain pleasure in allowing the smile to return.

“Yeah! Th, That...” Daniel started to nod back halfway through Sani's motion. The tension in his limbs finally gave way, form soon splaying out on the bed. A broad smile dotted by nubs of fangs soon

plastered itself on Daniel's green face, watery eyes fluttering.

"...th, thank, you." Daniel shook slightly, eventually taking the time to breathe. "M'sorry, face just started hurting and, felt feelings and stuff." Daniel started to move some of the sheets back over his face, gently dabbing his eyes in the process.

"That's what you're sorry for?" Sani tilted their head, fending off a grin.

"Err, should I be sorry 'bout something else?" Daniel let go of the raised sheets, allowing them to drape over himself once more.

Sani quickly stifled their laugh, but couldn't stop the smirk. "I don't think you've done anything to *me*, Danny. I was just playing with you." Sani's smirk mellowed out, the plantoid slowly edging the stool towards the pseudo-cradle. Daniel started to squint.

"Hey...you're callin' me that again!" Daniel huffed a little, eyes becoming pinpricks as they carefully drifted back toward the spare limb uncovered by blankets. "And you still made me tiny! That's...weird! I'm not gonna let that go!"

"Are you now?" Sani raised a brow, leaning forward slightly. "I must say, you seem to have been taking it quite well."

"Well...that's just because I use reason instead of, being confused and stuff. That stuff's just boring." Daniel nodded to himself for a surprising while before glancing back at Sani. "Just letting you know so you don't, I dunno, get ideas or something."

Sani nodded back in a manner almost exactly like Daniel's, though with a slightly vaguer gaze. "You, seem really keen on that idea, don't you? I must say, your psyche is quite slippery..." their eyes drifted off for a second. "...we'll have to discuss this 'grown-up' business later, honey." the gaze focused once more.

Daniel began to breathe in deeply almost as soon as Sani finished, head ajar. Before his eyes could finish tightening, something sparked.

"...Whatever." a half-sigh escaped along with the word. Daniel sat up slightly from his previous position, orbs blinking as he tried to eye the background more carefully.

"Err...so...we gonna do something, or...?" the sprout made out the barest of shrugs. Sani returned it.

"Well, would you like to? I was almost beginning to think that I'd have to come here every da-" Sani's dialogue ceased a split-second before Daniel's voice interjected.

"Wai-no!" the guest shook his head with a certain amount of concentration. "I need to, well, learn about you! And, this situation! And...everything!" his brow furrowed, eyes sparkling.

The edge of Sani's mouth rose again in that weird way.

"I see. We should get to it, then, no?" a definite smile grew as the edge of Sani's hand began to play

with the curtains, faint ripples of some light emanating into the artificial chamber.

“Uhuh!” Daniel started a smile of his own as he stood up even straighter, little hands grasping the edge of the bed as he strained to capture the new sight.

That's when he felt the warmth.

If he had wanted to be honest with himself, he really should have anticipated at least a chance of this based off of the experiences of the previous night. Maybe he had. But sitting in an alien land with someone several times his size present unsurprisingly diminished any capacity to dwell on that at the moment.

Daniel shrunk back a little bit more into bed while Sani continued to fiddle with the curtains, the boy reluctantly beginning to snake his hands closer towards where he had felt that funny twinge in his muscles. His hand finally rested on something disturbingly...artificial for clothing that was covering his loins. And it was getting even warmer.

A faint watery film started to grow over Daniel's eyes as he started to realize both his accident and the fact that Sani was starting to turn back toward him. A wave of light was crashing in on him now, all filtering through windows that he couldn't concentrate on.

“Well then, Daniel.” Sani's voice took on an air approaching professionalism as the plantoid cast a deep shadow looking down at the sprout. “Do you need help getting down or-” Sani's voice was cut out by the quivering cords of the guest.

“I'm, I'm, I'll get down just...gimme a bit.” Daniel's expression floated through a range of emotion as he kept still beneath the covers, hands unconsciously pulling some of the fabric over his underwear. The sapling's body tensed beneath the sheets as his head kept locked, mind abuzz.

“I don't, I don't know if I want to head out yet. Just, you can go out and I'll follow after you soon.” Daniel finally glanced at Sani, eyes uncertain.

“Are you alright?” Sani's voice remained constant as their gaze tightened. “If you're feeling a little weak it's perfectly fine t-” evergreen fingers had started to lift the edge of the covering before a tiny form pulled them tighter.

“N-No!” Daniel's breathing shot up for a second, pitch lowering before re-entrance into a listless haze. “It's, I'm naked! I just, need clothes.” a strained visage looked back on Sani.

The plantoid's brow was only lightly furrowed.

“...I see.” something had left their voice. “Well, if you insist, I can just wrap you up in those sheets and take you to the closet to get dressed.” they nodded along. “Should be simple.”

Daniel's eyes widened.

“I can walk there myself, you can just go out of the room and I'll walk over and dress up and...” Daniel's feverish speech was stopped this time.

"I'm sorry, but I'm not exactly allowed to leave little boys unattended. Not even precocious alien ones." Sani shook their head, almost as if in affirmation, before tugging on the sheets more firmly.

"But, what...pl-please!" Daniel's focus ebbed as Sani pulled harder, tears starting to overflow. "Everything's...stressful!" Daniel's tensing reached a peak, limbs giving way soon after as his contested will finally shrank back in defense.

"Danny...no, it's alright, here..." Sani's face almost appeared to be downcast as they fully unveiled the bed, hands grasping at the curled Daniel. The color of the sheets by his head had deepened, liquid still streaming from his orbs. Sani's expression hardened for a moment as they picked the sprout up, the plantoid bringing him to their chest in an instant. Daniel could spy out light and feel a warm sensation and someone grabbing him, but the world was still in an insoluble puzzle at the moment. The only thing he thought he could tolerate was the deep beating that entered into what he figured were ears. It didn't stop the crying.

"There, there, there's nothing to be upset over." Sani gently kept up a light bobbing motion, beginning to rock Daniel back and forth while astute eyes assessed his appearance. They carefully balanced the toddler in their arms, fingers shifting for a better grip until they glided along a slick, heated surface.

Sani's walk began in silence, and it was only by the greater shaking of Sani's arms that Daniel noticed the surroundings were changing. The light that he had seen earlier was indeed coming through windows, though they were more transparent panes than the traditional conception. There was green in his still-watering eye, maybe a garden beyond it? But by the time he had fully arisen from his stupor he was more captivated by the wall Sani was approaching rather than any other feature of this middling, largely barren room. He could barely notice their free hand impress *something* in the otherwise featureless white-gray wall, before a thin platform soundlessly slid out. He could see the bottom appeared to be a thin slab of metal covered in some rubbery coating topped with...something fuzzy? But he couldn't quite concentrate on that when the plant person had started to lower him onto it. His original fear returned in a flash as he realized his near nudity, arms automatically making one last attempt at safety.

"S-Sani, sir...I dun-" Daniel took in a few more breaths while rubbing his eyes. "-don't need help getting dressed please. Just gimme clothes." Daniel concluded at a more measured pace. His eyelids were still busy battling, but he could sneak in a few glimpses towards the rest of his body. His...he had underwear, but it wasn't right but he couldn't remember the word. And it felt soggy, but if he looked at it with teary eyes, then it didn't look quite so different? Even though he hadn't seen it dry and didn't even really know the signs of accidents, maybe Sani couldn't see?

"Mmm." Sani was looking off toward something else below that Daniel couldn't see. He could hear some of that same strange tapping as before. "I'll let you try once we're done here, okay sweetie?" Sani's eyes flickered back over to him, a smile rising without the same alien strangeness as it had held before.

"But, um...what're, what're we doing here?" Daniel quivered a little. It was getting really hard to think about this and he didn't know why and just knew that it was off. His legs had started to shake a little even as Sani's arms inched along toward them.

“We're just changing your diaper.”

Daniel could hear something, but it processed like molasses. There was something off, something very very *off*, and he had to let Sani know to get out and...

“But I d-” Daniel's mouth had barely began to form words when he noticed the most subtle of sighs escape Sani. The plantoid was lightly shaking their head, though it wasn't quite the angry kind. It wasn't even the tired sort of shaking if Daniel really thought about it, but his mental investigations were halted as the target began to speak.

“Look Danny...we both know you can't change your own diapers, even if you're quite the smart cookie for your age. I'm just trying to help you, alright?” the plantoid's maw had drooped slightly, eyes almost appearing a little glazed over as they stared off downcast. Daniel almost wanted to look at them a little closer, but he couldn't concentrate on that when, well, he kinda made them feel bad. He, he didn't actually know how to change diapers, did he? But...he could have sworn that was normal, right? It wasn't like he needed to know how to. But why was that? People wore underwear, and the diapers he was starting to remember were a form of them. But, which one did he usually wear? Maybe he didn't need to know how because other people knew how for him...

Sani had already started to lift up his legs while he was in thought, the sapling returning to cognizance as he heard the rip of something, following by cool tendrils of air touching his privates. His arms had started to reflexively shield his unmentionables, Sani gently but firmly batting them away. The iris of Daniel's eyes widened a little as they stared back at Sani's intentful face.

“Mister, I, I don't like people lookin' at, there...” Daniel began to talk again, voice only partially forceful. Sani took a moment from whatever strange wiping they were doing to look back at him.

“Firstly, I think *you're* the mister, little mister...” Sani had a funny little smirk on their face again, briefly bopping Daniel on the nose with a clean hand of theirs. “...and secondly...” the small smile disappeared, soon replaced by the furrowed brow of a surprisingly concerned face. “...you're too little for that to be associated with anything...bad, sweetie.”

“You, you're...girl?” Daniel's mind processed only one thing that was off with Sani's speech at the moment. He could feel, her...sliding the old artificial diaper out from under his raised legs. He could see from the focus of her eyes that she was opening up another one of those weird compartments, but couldn't tell much else apart from this vantage point apart from noting the obvious fact that the old garment was gone and that a strangely folded article had taken its place in her hand. The plantoid herself was just barely chuckling.

“Why, yes? I really thought it'd be obvious, but I apologize for not telling you before. I know you're not exactly used to our kind yet, for obvious reasons.” Sani's head barely tilted, soon righting itself as she began to slip in the new garment underneath Daniel's legs.

“Umm, sorry.” Daniel's gaze briefly averted from Sani, particularly as he noticed her beginning to lay down weird adhesive strips attached to the, thing, he was now wearing. “Just, this is really weird n' I don't usually hang out with lots of girls.” Daniel moved his legs a bit to keep the fluttery feelings at bay.

"I can't say that's a rarity for those your size..." Sani shook her head customarily, eyes still steadied on the rest of Daniel's body. "Oh, and could you keep your legs still, Danny? We're almost ready to head back down."

Daniel's eyes opened a little bit larger at the final comment before his mind recalled the previous few seconds.

"Hey, um, sure, but I told you I'm big! And I still hang out with some girls, I help my sister a lot! Well, at least I used too..." the movement of his legs came to a stop as his talk drifted off.

"It was just a joke, Daniel." the boy could notice Sani's eyes furrow the slightest bit, a strange reaction tinging her face. "Are you, actually perturbed by the status of your female relationships?" a different cast was splayed over Sani's tone as one of her brows nigh-invisibly rose. A pair of green arms were twisting their way underneath him again, slowly gripping on.

"Well, not really." Daniel felt his mind and body go somewhat limp as Sani started to pick him up. Thoughts flowed by of the previous conversation and some of the...women in his life, but he wasn't entirely sure why he brought the matter up. He already knew he was grown-up, why'd he have to bring up weird thoughts?

The sapling's psyche fell back to earth when Sani brought him up to her chest again, though not quite so close this time. Light was coming in through crystalline windows, and there *were* plants and flowers out past it, and there was some dust in the air and he was being held by warm hands and there was a crinkly wrapping around his butt and...

"Saniii?" Daniel couldn't help but slur in the flurry of newfound sensation. "Can we, do stuff? Kinda wanna talk." his eyes languidly reached hers.

They were deep.

"Of course. Where would you like to start off?" Sani looked down at him, and though there wasn't a smile, there was a warmth that was so much more captivating than he thought it would be.

"Everything!"

It goes without saying that second arrival onto that strange shore provided much more concrete information. Once past some preliminary confusion, my guide proved more than amenable to questioning. One of the first points I learned was the name of this race, though I am afraid our limited vocal range cannot truly enunciate it, a term that simply translates to "people", in any case. Despite their alien appearance, it soon became evident that their physiology was rather mundane from the perspective of earthlings, with the obvious bilateral symmetry, a digestive tract that had overtaken a vestigial photosynthetic system, and ambulatory nature. The answers around this line of questioning became increasingly vague, particularly ones regarding their place among plants and animals (disregarding for a moment the inadequacy of earthly taxonomy). They were, however, more than willing to provide some cultural data. Though once again shying away from the specifics, it was made clear that theirs was an oligarchic system of governance, with centuries of citizen service leading the

individual through a maze of bureaucracies. This obviously shocking duration was apparently the result of a natural longevity, though the proportion of time spent in each life stage was kept roughly proportional to how we would expect it, simply on a longer time scale. This Methuselah-like characteristic, when coupled with relatively low fertility, was apparently the cause of small family sizes and endurance of trans-familial “clans” into the contemporary era. The psychic capacity of their race was demonstrated early on in our encounter, though its extent was never clearly demarcated. My guide herself displayed telepathic prowess of the mind-reading sort, and there were a few other instances suggestive of some anomalous phenomena, though my mind is admittedly fuzzy regarding them. Not much information was provided on this matter, though I was assured that further education on the topic would be coming in future visits. It was plain that my guide was withholding some information, though whether it was out of custom, ritual, or strange playfulness, I couldn't discern. Veiled but palpable interest regarding humanity was expressed by the impromptu envoy, an interest I suspected I would be expected to sate. Nothing much further came of it during this encounter, however, and I was released to snacks and slumber after an indeterminate amount of time.

There were, of course, several points of note throughout the whole endeavour. Putting aside the ethics of kidnapping (though presumably they could mentally warn the individual in question), it seems odd to engage in stellar diplomacy via random sampling of an individual whom is then largely restricted to rest as opposed to dialogue, at least with meaningful officials. This is, of course, irrelevant if one doesn't necessarily desire complete contact with a civilization, or if they are an advanced race who may have grander motivations than we can perceive. The familiarity of the vegetable humanoids in question does also seem conspicuous, though there is no real consensus on the possible structure of extraterrestrial life anyways. Their tight lips regarding their mental powers is also questionable, though my obvious interest in the topic and the psychology of the guide does somewhat explain the withholding of that information. What isn't so clear is their interest in my conveyance of human information, though this is again contingent on their still unclear psychic strength. One would imagine they could at least read my mind, if not clairvoyantly examine the Earth itself. This matter is again rendered irrelevant, however, if they merely wish to observe my reactions, a frankly more sinister possibility (and potential indictment of behavioural science). All of this speculation, of course, rests on the assumption that they are indeed extraterrestrials. It goes without saying that the usual suspects are unlikely, as the probability of sharing two frighteningly lucid dreams with a continuing plot are so low as to be negligible. One could also play Devil's Advocate and point out that none of the psychic events described throughout this tale can be verified outside of the “other world” described, and even if they could, one could simply postulate that my own psychic ability was functioning and disregard claims of other intelligent entities. Assuming that other beings are at play, there is still the matter of their nature to be settled, as it is unclear if one could trust either their claims or one's own immediate impressions. Living aliens psychically communicating is one possibility, but so are pseudo-corporeal entities residing within Earth's atmosphere, or wholly bodiless beings, perhaps the demons, angels, and fairies of old. I have no doubt that such suggestions may sound ludicrous or even offending, but if one wishes to be truly objective, it must be realized that their identity is still ambiguous at best. Future interactions and terrestrial encounters could confirm or deny any one of these potentialities, but all must be taken into account. Most of this was far from my mind during the initial visitations, unfortunately enough, but as displayed previously, there was already plenty to process during those times.

Once the second meeting had passed, I swiftly woke to realize I had a whole other day ahead of me (the gentle reader will quickly realize the dubious merits of conscious sleep). Much of my time spent between then and my arrival at work was spent upon the musings previously relayed, though that tapered off for obvious reasons as I approached. I was able to successfully distract myself for most of the day at the University, an endeavour aided by the complexity of designing the conditions for

*precognition experiments involving tumbled dice (frankly, the cards are getting a bit old for our subjects). As the amber haze of evening came, however, I am afraid my countenance began to betray the concerns I felt over my predicament, as I am sure at least one colleague can attest to. A tidal wave of bathos had begun to ebb over me as I considered the absurdity of my nightly wanderings, their potentially dangerous significance, the triviality of most things on a cosmic scale, and what the best approach for safeguarding the human race would be in alien interrogations. Thankfully the hardest wave only came after I had already checked out for the day and had begun to walk back home, with only a few vagrants being witness to my moments of weakness. Though I am not one to overestimate my skills, I had expected to be better able to deal with exotic intelligences, particularly when being able to do so could potentially spell weal or woe for the whole planet. My thoughts invariably turned to the motivations and actions of my visitors, with their trustworthiness being an obvious point of contention. Beyond the mundane yet relevant issue of their seemingly overwhelming advancement in comparison to us (and the accompanying disregard for normal, truthful relationships), I was also concerned with their identity and the stranger reasons for deception. None of this is new, as everyone reading likely knows. By the time I had gotten to the house, I had worked myself into a bonafide fit of paranoia as I went over what events rang true in memory. I was not at all inclined to give these people the benefit of the doubt when they had such power over my person and presumably the livelihood of my kind. However, after the fall of night and a somewhat indulgent dinner, doubts over my doubts had begun to bubble to the surface. After all, complete disbelief itself assumes certainty, a classic paradox, and I eventually had to begin to take a more nuanced view. It would be best to view my visitors simply as **beings**, with the extraterrestrial hypothesis being a close runner up in terms of models but by no means treated as fact, at least not at that time. As I hesitantly headed up the stairs towards my bedchamber, I couldn't help but have a certain section of the Bible flash into my mind. It had warned of trusting communications from angels, yes, but if one truly took that to heart, how could they then trust the Word of God itself? A little line of reasoning that implodes itself, another paradox, a trickster in the stygian depths of the room I was entering. Frankly, that sort of partial ambiguity wasn't exactly the most comforting of things to contemplate as I settled down in bed, a definite fatigue beginning to overcome my frame. Yet it certainly felt appropriate for the kind of enchanted journey I was about to embark upon. Needless to say, it was at that moment that I closed my eyes and landed into sleep.*

“Sssani?” Daniel found his lips moving before his consciousness had fully slipped free of somnolence. His eyes were still practically shutters, but the blurry shapes just past his eerily familiar bed seemed to be coming into focus.

“...Daniel.” the bigger one was talking now. They were green and big and most certainly that same Sani as before, particularly if the broad, fanged smile was any indication. “Good morning to you too.”

“Oh, 'morn.” the sprout interrupted the tight yawn of his tiny maw for a moment to speak, eyes lazily beginning to hover over his, friend? “I was, um, there was questions...” his gaze went askew for a moment as if in pondering, or remembrance, though his eyes eventually flitted back when Sani opened her mouth once more.

“Ah! I see you remembered. I brought along a friend today just for that, actually.” Sani gave him one of those knowing sorts of nods, at least as far as he could tell.

“Y-Yeah?” Daniel's head curved over to one side as a few other thoughts slipped away.

“Indeed!” one of Sani's hands danced along the periphery of the fibrous partition. It took Daniel a second to process, but he could spy a faint dark patch in the light grey. His eyes widened.

“Waiiit!” Daniel reached out towards Sani's stray limb in a gesture that practically took him out of the bed. The mess of blankets covering him started to slip free, revealing a tiny plantoid frame and a fringe of plastic down below.

“I'm naked an' they're gonna see!” the growing near-black orbs in Daniel's sockets now directed themselves towards Sani. “You, umm...said there was a closet?” his head was now darting back and forth towards the changing silhouette in the fabric.

“Mhm.” Sani was nodding, but Daniel still noticed the edge of her maw curling. “I take it you want me to go get something?” her arms were starting to rest on the hips.

“Uh, yes please?” Daniel's words were somewhere between a question and a statement. The iris was returning to normal while the eyelids shuttered.

“You're lucky you're so cute, you know that?” Sani didn't really try to hide her chuckle, leaves gracefully flowing in tandem with her shaking head.

“Heyyy!” Daniel's jaws flapped as he glared at Sani, almost instantly recoiling back into the bedsheets as she stepped through the curtain. The sprout's head poked out of the pile a few seconds later. That person was still standing outside, he could tell..

Time passed by. Minutes maybe but mostly time and a lot of it. Daniel was beginning to nod off by the time the gossamer barrier was pierced once more. They were Sani, but they had something in their hands.

“Is, issat-” Daniel couldn't quite finish before the guide spoke up.

“It is clothing. Now, are you ready to get dressed?” the plant woman was getting closer to the bed now, sitting back at that stool from before. Aquamarine cloth lay folded over her arms, with sleeves for not only arms, but *legs*. Daniel blinked.

“Jumpsuit?” Daniel just cocked his head at her.

“You can think of it like that. Now, can you stand up for me, mister?” Sani was right at the foot of the bed now, arms beginning to unfold the sleeper.

“Sure...?” Daniel's brow contorted for a moment, eyes staring off a bit. His legs started to lift upwards, the sapling's arms almost panickedly projecting out to balance on Sani's chest. His irises compressed a moment after the actions, gaze quickly averting from Sani's bemused expression. It found refuge over his padding.

The garment was a soft white speckled with strange teal symbols that he couldn't quite recognize. It had some sort of, shiny exterior shell, as well as weird wrapping parts that stuck to the front with some blue sheath right where there should be...

"...there's no pins." Daniel's vaguely detached voice escaped his mouth, eyes floating back toward Sani.

"Mhm." Sani started to examine Daniel's face a little closer. "You haven't worn disposables before?"

Daniel could feel his cheeks warm as soon as the words reached him. He forced his gaping jaw shut and quickly turned away from the girl with crossed arms. His balance was precarious. "Nooo..." the boy essentially whispered, expression gradually shading into confusion. "Mmm, err..." Daniel's arms reached out toward Sani again, the sprout wobbling slightly. "...Wait! Sani, Sani!" Daniel's eyes became pinpricks in an instant, the toddler desperately tugging on his guide's sleeve.

"Why, yes Danny?" Sani was giving him a dangerously patronizing face, but he couldn't quite care at the moment.

"I, I remembered!" Daniel's breaths were approaching hyperventilation. "I use the t-" the sapling's eyes darted off for a second in thought before they impatiently returned. "...potty! I can wear normal underwear!" a frenzied smile was etching itself onto Daniel's face.

"Really?" Sani's brow seemed to rise ever so slightly. She had already started to still Daniel's limbs, preparing the sleeper for use.

"Uhuh! I *told* you how big I was before!" Daniel's hops were cut short as Sani started to pull the sleeper over him, head popping out the front in short order. His hand held support was soon rendered into a full embrace while Sani made sure his legs were going into the right sleeves. He kept talking throughout.

"Wai-I wanna get my underwear on first!" the little plantoid's voice came out as a whine.

"Dan, Daniel?" Sani looked up from her work as she heard something escape her charge's maw. She was greeted with a quivering visage and heavily-blinking eyes.

"Sani, I, where's the underwear?" Daniel's cherubic features strained with his throat, a modicum of restraint buckling.

"Daniel..." Sani sighed, going through the remnant motions of dressing before letting Daniel stand up again. The boy clutched on dearly. "We don't have any in your size here, but if you can show that you're trained I ca-" Sani's speech ceased when Daniel's grip tightened.

"But I know I can!" Daniel's eyes were starting to overflow. "C-Can't you just re-"

"Danny, we have a guest outside, remember? I was just trying to get you dressed...c'mere." Sani began to match Daniel's grip, pulling the sprout into a hug. Daniel's awareness fell into a fine mist as his head neared her chest, tears fading into Sani's apparel.

"M'sorry, I just, still don't feel good about here..." Daniel's words bubbled up from the mental fog.

"I know dear. Things should make more sense in time, I'm really proud of how brave you've been so far." the female plantoid's words flowed out like quicksilver, verdant fingers beginning to weave their way through the thin leaves on top of Daniel's head. The quaking sapling's silent cries diminished a hair,

his body still tightly adhered to Sani's own. After a little less than a minute, his head started to lift, face being rubbed by an arm now parted from Sani.

"K-Kay..." Daniel edged a word past the redoubled tightness of his throat, anxiously gazing back at the curtain. He turned back towards Sani to see her nodding.

He took a deep breath.

Daniel could feel a smooth hand entwine around one of his own, but he kept his gaze focused on the partition. The shadow from before had seemingly vanished, though he could now discern the sound of something tapping against the floor. Before he could really process the cascade of emotions still broiling, Sani's other hand pulled away the curtain.

At the far end of the room, right by that piercing golden window, stood a man dressed in something approaching "military robes." Daniel's cluttered concerns melted like the mist of the morning. The plantoid could feel a gentle tugging on his wrist as Sani drew further away. He scrambled a little among the sheets to get down, almost slipping a few times from peeking back toward the visitor. He was almost walking faster than Sani as the two started to approach the figure who was now turning toward them. He appeared rather lithe in comparison to the other two, a spindly twig...subspecies? Or perhaps age? A smattering of theories floated through Daniel's intellect until the person started to talk.

"Hello, sir." the man inclined slightly as if in a nod, maintaining a posture faintly too proper. Matte dollops of color stared into Daniel's own.

"Ello?" the boy blinked, maw slightly agape as his eyes turned upwards. "You're, um..." Daniel's voice drifted off.

Sani's mouth opened for a second before the stranger continued.

"An archivist of the state library, assigned to your case for the evening." the man's eyes were quick at roaming over Daniel's appearance.

"Hmm." Daniel stepped back a little bit, ocular orbs functioning similarly. "That sounds like, interviews." his head tilted lightly.

"It is. But you get to interview us too." the scholar gave the same self-directed nod one gives in the deeper reaches of thought.

"...sounds okay." Daniel's composure returned to normal as he nodded towards the archivist. "Oh yeah, your name?"

"Kano." the olive plantoid's features began to liven. "You're Daniel, I take it?"

"No way, you're..." Daniel's breaths were growing quicker, before his brow suddenly furrowed. "...you got my name from someone else?" his voice suddenly deadened.

"Yes I did." Kano gave a thin smile. Sani eyed the two with one hand on her hip.

"I take it we're heading out now?" a foot of hers tapped, more jokingly than anything else.

"I see no reason why not to." Kano shrugged, letting his arms drop to his sides.

"We are...?" Daniel's face alternated between the two of them.

Kano's walk towards a strange, bordered protrusion to the left of the "bedchamber" served as a response, Sani's hand once more connecting with Daniel's. The sprout awkwardly balanced for a few moments as he followed behind her, testing some sort of strange grip his feet had on the floor. He had seen some clothing that was like this before, where everything was one piece, but even those had shoes, right? And why was he wearing this? He'd only seen pilots wear anything approaching this, and he wasn't a pilot. Daniel shook his head as Mr. Kano got close to the wall. Maybe there was a reason plants' lives were secret.

Daniel snapped back to in time to see the seemingly metallic wall slide away when Kano and Sani approached. He thought he was finally able to raise the brow of this, body of his.

"Was just gonna ask where your technology is at..." Daniel dragged his covered feet along the floor, taking some time to view strange, slits in this entryway.

"I cannot tell if your surprise is based more on your planet or your isolation here." Kano's comment came out matter-of-factly.

"Hey, yeah! You've been keeping me in that room for a while, Sani!" Daniel tried to glare at Sani until she looked down at him. She was pretty tall.

"Now now, I thought the cookies were sufficient bribes?" the tip of Sani's mouth curled upwards before she tutted.

"...Uhuh." Daniel wriggled at the increased pressure on his hand.

Daniel's environmental awareness increased as soon as he noticed that there weren't any visible windows in the strange grey-white corridor they now stood in, despite the pervasiveness of a seemingly sourceless light. Streaks of wood paneling prevented the area from being too blinding, but the sheer brightness of the place just felt alien. He could spy more of those strange indentations that had to have signified those...sliding doors, though his focus was now focused more on the four-pronged nexus Kano was approaching. Daniel's pace increased as soon as he realized that there was golden light coming from the two ends that were to be on either side of them, the kind of light that only the sun could produce. Once again overtaking Sani, Daniel almost tripped on the fringe of Kano's robe.

"Wait, we're going outside, right?!" it was Daniel's turn to squeeze Sani's hand, the sapling excitedly pointing at some translucent door at the far end of the left passage. It was like it made out of metal and glass, and he could see a pavement of some sort and the beginning hedges of a garden, like the kind he glimpsed out the window. The sunlight down the way felt...heady.

"Our room for today is upstairs." Kano didn't turn back when he spoke with an even tone.

"You'll get the chance soon enough, for now we need to help Mr. Kano with his job, alright?" Sani

increased her tone until Daniel started to look back at her.

“It's, but we can go after, right?” Daniel's eyes started to plead, legs slowing.

“We will go when it's the right time. We don't want to leave Mr. Kano waiting, do we?” Sani's eyes tightened a little, Daniel's unsteady focus flitting towards the tall man briefly. He was almost at the end of the current corridor, near some sort of spiral staircase where the metal of the walls became tinged in a purer gray. The strength of his legs returned after that.

It took Daniel some time and Sani's patience to start to navigate the steps, whatever pad that lay beneath his feet assisting ever so slightly in the climb. Kano had already disappeared by the time Daniel was making decent progress, but it was only a little while longer before he made it to the top two. Kano was simply waiting in a corridor much the same as before, though this corridor was a little less bright, bearing the same color as the staircase had below. The doors weren't different too, mostly in that they appeared as actual doors, albeit with some synthetic knob. The wood was pretty cool too, they didn't seem to skimp on the lacquer. Kano kept walking ahead of the group for a little bit, approaching another crossroads similar to the one below. This one however, terminated in a continued hall, another corridor, and some sort of seating area filled with benches. It continued out into some sort of second story patio, but Daniel couldn't concentrate on that as Kano stopped at a door to the right that was closest to the nexus. He fiddled with it for a moment before pulling opening the door, gesturing toward the interior. Standing there with a gaunt face and weird stylized clothes really made him look like a wizard.

“Come along now.” once again, Kano just spoke.

Sani was still pulling him along, but Daniel wasn't too far behind her this time. The first thing the sprout was greeted with was a palpable wave of light, all emanating from past a huge wall of a window towards the end of the wide, rectangular room. A low, artificial rable rested near this pseudo-atrium surrounded by cushioned chairs to form something of a seating area. To either side rested synth shelves that almost appeared to be built as partitions of the room, fused into the ceiling and filled with some strange metal slates and even crystals, though a few bound books were also interspersed here and there. Daniel mostly wandered in with a curious mixture of confused awe, carried along by Sani towards the resting spot. Once past the distracting maze of what was presumably reading material, Daniel noticed a few bowls and weirdly shaped objects on the table, though his interest was mostly piqued when Kano rapidly walked in from behind them to mess with some mechanical device that rested close to a pod-chair that he had apparently picked.

“We can begin when you are ready.” Kano talked as he pressed a few buttons on his now lit-up contraption. Daniel didn't really have the opportunity to react before Sani had led him toward an L-shaped couch on the opposite side of the table as Kano. The piece of furniture had a metallic backing to it, but as Sani helped him up onto it, he noticed that whatever “cushion” it had practically melted like foam as he sat back, at least to a certain extent. It was very warm sitting next to her, though.

“Er, ready.” Daniel managed a weak nod. He could see Sani eyeing something before Kano spoke.

“To start things off, can you provide us with the name of your world and people?” the archivist began to look upon a slate on the table. Daniel noticed that its glassy screen held bright images before he remembered the question.

“Oh, um, didn't I already tell you?” Daniel twisted his head a little.

“I...don't believe so, dear.” Sani interjected, looking with mild puzzlement down towards the interviewed.

“O-Oh...” Daniel's mind came to a stop for a good few seconds. He was able to coax a few memories to the surface, the ones from, the previous, or this night, right? It was, couldn't it be dangerous? And he hadn't actually revealed anything yet, strangely enough. But, well, even if he told them, it's not like it'd help them much more, since they already got him...

“We're, humans, from the planet Earth.” Daniel looked down for a few seconds, eventually nodding to himself. “Uuhh.” he kept the motion, though his eyes were now wandering towards those bowls on the table. It looked like they had little nuts and berries.

“Mmm.” Kano's finger dragged his finger along the slate in a strange way. “Do you remember anything from your lessons about the nature of your species?” the man's eyes started to meet with Daniel's. It took him a second to drag his own away from the food.

“Well, like, yeah?” Daniel's expression went funny at something in the comment, though his mouth continued. “We're...ma-mmals, which means, like, we have warm blood and no eggs...” he nodded along. “And we have two legs and arms and hair and skin and a head!” his tone started to pick up something of a fervor.

“Indeed...” Kano set aside the panel in his hands, leaning forward slightly in his chair. “...well, was there anything in particular that you would like to share?”

Daniel eyes grew for a moment, the sprout looking between Sani and the other plantoid for a good few seconds.

“Like, anything?” he finally converted thoughts into words.

“Yes. We would like to hear what you would think is of note.” Kano had started to say a few words when Daniel's dialogue began.

“Well um...wow there's lots of stuff, but I think we should begin with...”

*It is at this point that one may wonder about the risks of revealing detailed information regarding our race to as of yet unidentified beings with unclear motives and great power. It was at this point that I myself realized a rare opportunity to reveal the depths of the human spirit. One may argue that this was not quite prudent, but if man is to live only a safe life, then it is no life worth living at all. From here, I began to expound our little human story, not the storybook version that the bigwigs at Washington or even in our own academy would gladly relate, but the nuanced and bizarre tales of the human **people** that make up the organism. I may not be qualified for speeches on normal grounds, but when it comes to the sublime soul of humanity, I daresay it did the speaking for me.*

A little boy in a deep-blue sleeper was rolling around on a couch in a miniature library, eating from a bowl that his guide had let him leave on said couch (as long as he promised not to spill it). He spoke of the amusing meanderings of a certain people populating a given globe in the heavens. The man opposite to the boy listened to the ramblings with an intent that only the wise or mad can muster. A hand was raised.

“And why did they eat of its fruits?” Kano's eyes were fixed on Daniel.

“I...dunno, actually.” Daniel sat up from his prone position, eyes going off to one side for a moment of consideration. “Wait, are you actually a mage?” the boy froze.

“You tell me.” Kano's expression changed as if to chuckle, but no sound escaped. “Though, you never finished the explanation of your technological base.”

Daniel's body flapped back onto his seat for a second, Sani pulling the bowl out of the way in time. He excitedly gibbered to himself for a small while before regaining the coherence to speak.

“Oh right, um, I already told you most things, electricity...check, mmm...” Daniel's attention floated back toward the ceiling as he righted himself upwards once more. “Oh! Forgot to mention the, radio, invisible waves and stuff...the telephone! Though that's with wires...and there was this weird resin thingy, ba-lit, I think?” Daniel started to talk to himself. Kano somehow tapped on his device while watching.

“Do you think that's enough for sigma class or...?” Sani pseudo-whispered towards Kano while the toddler was busy licking his fangs. The man just spoke back.

“Perhaps, though...” Kano's vocal chords immediately stilled as he heard Daniel raise his voice again.

“Oh, and guns that shoot as long as you hold the button down! Guess that's, not really useful for hunting, but, hmm...” Daniel sank back into his world again.

“Gamma class.” Kano was the first to speak up.

“Definitely.” Sani's concurrence was immediate.

Daniel remembered where he was approximately 30 seconds into his discussion, when Sani had started to scratch his head in a way that was growing familiar. His restless voice started to dim as he felt his concentration slipping, head soon laying gently on Sani's lap. It was the good sort of feeling, but he knew that there were other ways to describe it, and a deep knot in his chest prevented ease. He reasserted will over closing eyes, looking back toward a now-sideways Kano. He was still there in his wizard robes, and still writing on that thing and...looking at him! A brief push against Sani's hand revealed unprecedented strength, and he didn't really want to sit back up...but a growing indignity kept clawing its way in his heart. His neutral expression edged toward a frown. Not quite the sad kind.

“Mister Kano.” Daniel concentrated on the person closest to an official. His robes were a bit of a white-blue, come to think of it. The patterns were unfamiliar.

"Oh, yes Daniel?" Kano wasn't looking up, but his voice was as sharp as ever.

"I'm not sure if I already mentioned this, but I remember the average lifespan for my species." Daniel took the time to think out his words beforehand.

"Mmm." Kano kept the same voice, giving the typical sort of nod. Daniel noticed his still-distracted eyes briefly move in a strange way.

"It's 74 years." Daniel could still feel Sani threading her fingers through his leaves. His *leaves*.

"Intriguing." Kano gave another nod, apparently finishing up some task on the miniature machine.

Daniel could feel his throat swell. He quickly elected to make out some words.

"Aren't you gonna say something? I know you know my age, this, this doesn't make sense!" Daniel knew Sani's massaging efforts had increased by now, but he was awake enough.

Kano's eyes turned toward Daniel. They did so with weight. His expression didn't really betray anything, but Daniel could feel something behind the orbs. He talked the same as before.

"I'm just the recorder. Interpretation is not my job." Kano set aside his slate, a brief tone sounding as it hit the table. He stood up from the encapsulation of his chair, stretching his head a little as he turned toward the wall of a window. Daniel found his head strain as much as it could to view the man even from this lower vantage point. The sunlight felt odd.

"We can always conduct physiological tests for truth if you're really concerned, but I don't see anything amiss." Kano started to walk away from his place against the glass, coming up closer to the pair on the couch. He gestured briefly, and Daniel could feel Sani's hand parting from him. He hesitantly wobbled back up as once the pressure was removed, casting glances at both of them. Kano appeared normal, and, even Sani? The visitor directed the rest of his attention toward the man who had now crouched down in front of him. Daniel felt his chest bubbling.

"What do you mean? What kind of little kid even knows about half the things I said!" Daniel felt like the words became inflected with anger on their own.

"That's fairly normally mental progress for one of thirty years." Kano's shoulders barely moved in a shrug, eyes dutifully scanning Daniel from his leafed head to bulky bottom. "Physical development also appears typical."

Daniel's heart was racing as he shifted in his seat, a few crinkles reaching what would be his ears.

"It's, couldn't you read my mind to know human's growth patterns?!" Daniel scooted back into the foamy cushioning of the seat. His face wasn't so smooth when it was creased.

"Why do you make these kinds of assumptions, Daniel?" Kano tilted his head, something approaching genuine confusion brushing its way onto his rather face. "We actually attempted such a morally ambiguous action when we first transported you here, but we only gleaned as much as Sani revealed to

you." Kano talked in a low tone just above the threshold of whispering. Daniel could feel a certain hand near him once more, though it only landed on his shoulder this time. "For some reason, your psyche is almost impenetrable to us, which would make for good research, but that's not exactly why we're here at the moment." the man's mouth moved like a wave.

"That, only kinda makes sense." Daniel's gaze flapped about, a certain listlessness taking over. "Don't, don't feel good." the sprout's limbs lost some of the tension they held before, his body now supported more by the couch than himself. Kano started to speak up again as Daniel's breathing intensified.

"I believe that concludes what we had planned then?" Kano looked at him with a face. The boy could feel his body tense up lightly but firmly.

"Indeed." Daniel's head limply turned to face the source of the words, though he already knew Sani would be standing there. Her hand was still at work on his shoulder, but she appeared strangely, calm?

Daniel began to pan his face back toward Kano. Something about the robe, formality maybe? It was like a meeting or office thing, something official, maybe ridiculous?

He let the image sink in for a few moments. The two stood by.

Oh right. It was *right*.

"Uhuh." Daniel nodded along with the others.

The room was pregnant with something, Daniel was sure.

Despite his transfixed state on the coach, the little plantoid's eyes were still processing the environment. He noticed Kano stay in position for half a second, before he small the slight smile at the corner of his mouth, before he saw it fade, and finally cognized a figure in formal ascetic-wear bowing and turning to leave the room with a robe fluttering behind. During this process, he could feel Sani's gentle caress on the top of his leaves, the bigger plantoid inching ever so closer to him. It didn't feel so...necessary though? Until something clicked, and all the feelings became normal.

"Sssani?" Daniel turned his body more than his head. "What're...what was thaaat?" Daniel's color-pupils were widening, Sani reflected in their gleam.

"It was real, wasn't it?" a sentence left the woman.

Daniel could feel his head bob ever so slightly, before he fell over into Sani's lap.

It was soft, and really sort of softer than he had anticipated. Sani's hands kept at their work on his head, and it only took a manner of seconds for seconds to fade into meaninglessness. It *was* comfy, like lotuses...heh, hopefully not their eaters...

Daniel's analog consciousness ebbed in and out like a record player. Some measure of it held enough of awareness to notice and even take pleasure in observing the orange glow that was taking over the room, twisted ever so slightly by the library crystals. The leaves above were being raked into the zen garden his brain was fast becoming, at least if the cognizant portion couldn't recognize the error in that

statement. For there was something troublesome in paradise, but Daniel couldn't quite put his finger on it. It was a strange body feeling yes, but he didn't really recall the type. Not hunger, nor exactly pain, or even the need to pee. He whimpered a little, as it was a sort of hurting, and a scary kind. Because he didn't know what it was, or what to do about it, and so despite Sani's rhythmic petting Daniel tensed up at the churning down in his body and prayed in intent for it to be over. He sensed his position shift slightly, legs curling out of Sani's arms and butt edging outward now, but calculating what was actually going on was still a nigh-insurmountable task. The spasms were growing more intense now, Daniel's thoughts occluded by a confusing suffering. Just as a light moan marked the zenith of the discomfort, Daniel could feel a few alien muscles rapidly spasm. It was hard to tell where they were precisely, or why they had moved, but all that mattered was that his pain was gone and he could fully feel Sani's pats again. Well, that and the strange warmth that he could almost swear was under his clothes, but that didn't matter because he wasn't hurting anymore and Sani was here and he was really tired. A little wave of disturbance bubbled about his mind as he thought about how the strange-feeling felt like when he went pee earlier, but those thoughts drifted away as fast as his sleepy smile grew because he knew he didn't go pee and because even when he did, it hadn't felt so bad. And so, with little fanfare, Daniel fell back into his garden.

Throughout this whole venture, one must of course remain realistic. It was fairly obvious from the outset that assuming that the encounter was real, it could still lead to little or no tangible additions to human knowledge. History is replete with supernatural encounters that promise great gain and end with little beyond a few churches and possible posthumous benefits. Going into the modern era, there is little indication that we should show any less skepticism towards strange aerial craft and their purported occupants. This, of course, carries its own double-edged sword. Such mysteries need not be the cosmic machinations of "the universe", the tricks of external intelligences, or bizarre tests of faith, but rather the seeming that covers an insufficiently analyzed phenomenon. The promise of psychical research has always rested upon that premise, and beyond a weary messianic hope more reminiscent of spiritist days, it still remains as the normal foundation of an unpretentious science. Keeping an eye on that empirical prize has proven to be one of the more difficult yet important tasks throughout an adventure that blends transcendent promise and fantastical ennui to the sharpest edge.

By the time Daniel's eyes flickered back again, the previous ginger halo around the shelves had reached a solid tangerine color. It only took a moment for Daniel to realize that it wasn't the light but rather Sani's gentle lifting that had woken him up, a pressure beneath his armpits disappearing as his back now rested up against the plantoid's chest. Daniel cringed briefly at a strange coolness while he sat on her leg, but he was more interesting in rubbing his eye to get a better look at her.

"What was...we doing again?" the words fell out as Daniel attempt to redo his line a couple times. Bleary teal eyeballs slowly focused on an increasingly clear woman, arms in slight movement.

"Trying to wake you up, evidently. It's getting rather late and we have t-" Sani's maw flowed only until Daniel's started to.

"Work tomorrow! Got to sleep to...wake up? How does this stuff even work?" Daniel shot up for a second before he wobbled enough on the couch for Sani to lower him back into the strange clamminess.

“Easy there, we'll get you to bed soon enough.” Sani ruffled his feathers one last time, her expression briefly matching the first weird one Daniel had seen her give.

“Kay...w-wai...” Daniel's eyes flickered again for a second before a certain gleam pierced them. “...I didn't even get to really interview you two!”

“I'm sorry it worked out like that, b-” Sani spoke as her arms began to scoop up the sprout, swiftly bringing him up to her chest.

“Nooo.” Daniel's eyes narrowed into a semblance of what he recalled was a hard stare. It was a bit easier to concentrate now that the weird feeling had disappeared, Sani holding him beneath his back and by the bend of his legs. “You promised that I'd get to interview you...” Daniel's eyes glistened more than usual in the dimming light.

“I know, and I'm sorry that it wasn't today, but tomorrow we have something planned, just for you.” Sani's speech was quick and eyes focused more on a walk that had begun to be set towards the door, but she still looked on at the boy every few seconds with a deep gaze.

“B-but, it can't just be the outside, 'cause you already promised that, it has to be more, 'kay?” Daniel was blinking a lot more now, but his eyes were returning to normal luminosity.

“Mhm. Trust me, it's more than outside, and it's even something that you love a lot. Does that sound fair?” Sani's face was a shade illuminated by dusk.

“Mmm, Uhuh...” Daniel wriggled lightly in her grasp, head unstable. “It's...whatsit though?” his words drawled on to a degree.

Daniel was glad to see that Sani's mouth didn't curl in the creepy way.

“Something you *really* love.” Sani's arms were almost rocking from side to side as she gingerly began to make it down the staircase.

“Is! Err, isit...” Daniel's legs kicked a few times, body tensing in tandem with inner guesses.

“Umm...ooh wait! I guessed it!” Daniel's miniature frame stretched out completely for a moment, saucer-wide eyes staring right at Sani.

“What's that? I can't exactly hear the answer.” Sani tilted her auditory membrane slightly towards Daniel, though her eyes were mainly preoccupied with navigating the lower hallway.

“It's, si-chi-k?” Daniel's took the time to go over the sound of the word and even shape of the letters in his head, but somehow they came out funny. “It's, um, y'know, when you see far away and think the thoughts of other people... that sort of stuff. It's a, 'phe-nom-e-na.” Daniel's perturbed expression gave way to a proud beaming towards the end.

“Looks like you just did it too! Wonder how you ever got the idea that that is what we were going to show you...” Sani looked down on the sapling for a few moments with a near-concealed grin. It took Daniel's eyes a few moments to lock down on it.

"It was an *obvious* guess." Daniel experimented with his tones, emphasizing the word for only a half-second. "Just wish the words weren't so big, err, confusing." Daniel nodded along to himself, vision taken up by the shifting hues on the walls. "Like, what if we just had one word instead of two, an' maybe it could also be used as ad-jec-tive, not just a, noun?" Daniel looked back up towards Sani, her eyes briefly flitting back as she nodded.

"You don't already have such a term?" Sani's eyes drifted back towards the outline of an oncoming door.

"We don't, and I just don't know what would be a good name for it..." Daniel let out a little sigh, gaze starting to follow in suit of Sani's as he noticed where her attention was.

"Are, we?" Daniel's voice quivered for a moment, the boy looking back toward Sani with widened irises.

"Yes, we're here." Sani simply spoke as the pair approached the door, the metallic slate seemingly vanishing in a matter of moments. Daniel's diminished awe lasted long enough for him to only start moving more as they actually entered the barely illuminated room.

"I, kind of wanted to see it now...Sani?" Daniel's head went cocked as he noticed that she was walking towards one of the walls, for, some reason?

"Yes?" Daniel could feel his body weight shift as Sani briefly slid out an arm to, tap against the wall, a metal platform sliding out.

A soft metal platform sliding out.

"Saniii! I'm not wet, see?" Daniel absent-mindedly poked against the front of his sleeper as he was set down on the makeshift table. A few other thoughts flitted by but he was pretty sure this was the, right one?

"Mhm." Sani was already undoing a few buttons and stripping sleeves, barely looking up from her work as Daniel spoke.

Daniel's breathing increased slightly, then severely as Sani finally pulled off his sleeper. His mind felt as dusky as the room, but there was definitely no reason for him to be on top of this at the moment and that strange cold feeling from before was more discernable on the hard surface. It was, near his butt?

"S-Sani?" one of Daniel's hands grabbed at the air, reaching for Sani. "Why're, not feeling good." a structure in Daniel's voice left in an instant, tears coming unbidden.

"Shhh, Danny. I'm just cleaning you up like before." Sani's words floated around a sensation that was now being actively pushed from Daniel's awareness, though the tendrils of cognizance became stronger as he heard the popping of tapes.

"I don't, d-didn't..." Daniel was muttering words now that even he could barely understand. Sani looked up briefly, fey eyes flitting in tandem with a cocked head. She reached into some pocket, if he could

see clearly, procuring what looked to be some plastic, thing with a, bulb? He didn't really know, and as it was brought near to his mouth and ancient reflexes kicked in, he didn't care. There was a strange, almost alien sadness to Sani's face, he could still realize, but it was mixed in with so many other emotions that the little visitor could barely begin to unravel them. He turned his face away as he heard more crinkling from a newly-unwrapped diaper, the very air now suddenly a stinging force against whatever-was-there. Daniel focused on the texture of a smooth little protrusion that massaged his mouth while attempting to deaden the cold caresses that were wiping something muddy from his bum. The tears were flowing silently, Sani having to carefully prevent Daniel's legs from curling up too much as she rapidly wiped away the mess. It was a dozen seconds or so later that she was done, Daniel gradually drifting off from the situation at hand as the pacifier rolled around in his mouth. The guest didn't notice as Sani balled up the sufficiently-used diaper and threw it into a briefly revealed wastebin in the wall, nor did he stir as she began to slide a fresh one speckled with moons beneath his bottom. Mundane consciousness began to return at the still alien sound of tapes being applied, but it only came back in full as he noticed Sani staring down at him.

Daniel's arms reached up towards the guide of practically their own accord, the sprout's murmurs rising as he grasped at her. She quickly brought the child up to her chest, tiny chin resting on her shoulders as he set an ear analogue against her body. Brief shudderings moved their way across his body, though never quite reaching a full sob. Mostly he just held still there amidst a damp patch of Sani's clothing, occasionally rubbing his eyes against the fabric. The larger plantoid kept still aside from a light rocking motion, head bowed against the boy's increasingly darkened visage. The two kept there in the twilight for a minute's more time, before Daniel noticed the sound of footsteps again.

He could spy the curtain-room of his coming into view, a little cavern of canvas that wasn't really rendered any clearer by the walk. He knew Sani knew where to go, though, because he heard her move aside the curtain and slowly lower him into bed. The sides of the pod bed looked the same, but felt so much more encompassing as he felt a foamy mattress begin to bear his weight, signs of glistening being the only continued signs of Sani's presence in a comfortable void.

"S-stay please?" his vocal cords twisted briefly.

"Of course."

As Daniel's weary eyelids finally gave way, he still knew Sani was there, not just because lithe fingers were being threaded through his leaves in that way he now knew he loved, or because he knew that she didn't care about his lack of continence, but because there was a tiny little part of her inside him that told him so.

One of the more obviously peculiar aspects of this whole affair was the sizeable gap between the third and fourth meetings. After the previous night's events, I was understandably eager to enter into that liminal domain once more. This early excitement hardly faded throughout the work of that new day, as a few subjects obliquely pointed out. If anything, the environment only maintained my bouyancy, the usual rigmarole of psychological testing and mathematical assessment gradually taking on an almost sacred weight. For assuming all my suspicions were founded, and that the vow I could remember my counselor making held true, and that anything from these visits would take on a concrete nature, the information that could be unveiled would easily outweigh the 50 or so odd years of rigorous research conducted by well-intentioned but bumbling human hands. The promise of revelation also held a

certain somberness to it, the lives given to uncovering secrets that would be breezed over by foreign declaration, but the sheer salvific assurance that came to mind could warm even the most stoic of hearts. The first hints of the luster fading only appeared as I checked out for the day and began my normal routine, preparing a brief supper, reading a few books over the mechanical drill of the radio, and composing a couple letters to associates and family. It is difficult to discern if it was normalcy, extrasensory insight, or mundane intuition that gave me the first impression that the coming slumber was to be less than mesmerizing, but either way, that is the exact outcome that occurred. My dreams that night could rightly be called by that name, the idle products of an unconscious mind or perhaps a divine gift if you were only a touch romantic. While off-putting, my newfound optimism found its full shattering the following night, after I found that my schedule ended up almost exactly the same the next day. By that time, even the completion of the conditions for our next set of experiments couldn't really rouse up the same sort of enthusiasm, and so as a veiled blessing I was forced to seriously contemplate what had previously occurred.

Though aspects of the encounter were blurred by the amnesia of waking, the key points were remarkably intact. The gentle reader will be pleased to know that I personally punched myself over the sheer mass of data on our planet that I revealed, though I'm clearly skeptical as to what benefits tight lips would have had. My lack of assertion over my right to interrogate them is also something that left a bruise for a few weeks, the reader may be disturbed to know. A brief reverie I experienced (likely due to the literal alien nature of the encounter) is the most likely culprit to blame, and if I were only a tad more paranoid, I might accuse mental influence as a means of deferring the interview. Granted, the formality of the encounter and appearance of hierarchy itself lends more credence towards the provisional extraterrestrial hypothesis, so some useful information was gathered, however tangentially. Beyond that, the most obvious gain from this visit was the pledge of psychical information in the future, the main problems being the validity of the promise and the nature of the knowledge. By the time I had started to ponder that aspect, my emotions had sufficiently cooled to realize that this too served as a bait for me in a sense, regardless of if it turned out to be true or not. Past these surface observations, I frankly couldn't glean much else from the recollection. This was partially due to the nature of the visitations themselves, which tend to be quite short, and the aforementioned issues in recall. Anyone could spin speculations on the most minute of details for hours on end, but there simply wasn't enough grist for me to work with for the span of almost two months. And yet, the events were too extraordinary and my life too boring to keep them from the mind for long, and in the intervening span, I dedicated more of my time to pursuits peripherally related to these transportations. For a solid week I studied various neuroses and megalomania in particular to give the fantasy hypothesis its own time. The visions seemed too disjointed to be appealing, however, and little to no symptoms crept up in my waking life, leaving the most credible mundane hypothesis as internally-consistent, lucid dreams. Assuming that was the case, there was little harm in exploring these "dreams" further, then, and potentially everything to gain if they turned out to be true. With that reasoning, I began to visit the folklore section of the local library, gathering a sizeable smattering of information on all sorts of legendary creatures. Frankly, this was mostly for my own amusement as I found almost nothing concrete from these to link to my encounters, though I cannot deny a certain ambiance to them that almost measures up to the supernatural. As an adjunct to this, I dredged up more reports of flying airships in the same library, as well as other "cigars" and advanced craft. I get the suspicion that if aliens capture the public imagination as much as those pulp magazines suggest, then these sightings may one day be considered the work intelligences from distant stars. Provided, of course, that such craft don't have a mechanical existence that may or may not be associated with my hosts, but I am not exactly ready for that line of thought yet. While I was still there, I checked up a few times on the cutting-edge developments of plastics, considering the practical sides of what an alien civilization might develop. It may have been more mundane than my other investigations, but it seemed strangely

pertinent. Once I was past my library buzz, I started to have more existential concerns about what I was encountering, and the state of my life in general. I sort of belatedly realized that living alone, conducting psychological research all day, and using stationary as my primary means of human contact may not be the highest human purpose, and so I started to brush up on my religious studies. As the days became more crushing, and I remembered that most unmarried men my age are priests, I decided to translate this research into active involvement. On the first weekend I attended enough masses of different denominations to get intoxicated on communion wine, and at the risk of sounding like too much of a haughty secularist, did not find sufficient differences between any of them to commit to any one. Some illumination did come in the form of a conversation with a pastor, whom I felt some kinship with in the form of shared virginity. After a short conversation, it quickly became apparent that the most important difference between him and me is that he chose a (moderate) asceticism, whereas I mostly wandered into it. This was always in the back of my mind of course, but the remembrance that my lack of romantic desire did not necessarily equate to enlightenment stung hard enough to make me think about what I was actually searching for. And so, at his urging, I left this poorly planned pity parish sampling and began to seek in earnest. I do not imagine that he thought I would find it in occultism, but as I remembered an eccentric friend of mine who had materials from the defunct Golden Dawn, it seemed the most sober step to take next. Quality of judgment aside, I started to see a semblance of what I searching for in the basic workings of neophytes, though the avalanche of material to work through and Victorian wankery to decode rendered it a task fraught with trouble, not least in discerning how it would help me with my otherworldly travels. Would magical powers likely related to human psychic ability be of use in dealing with these beings? Perhaps if they were wholly supernatural, but the extraterrestrial idea was still the main contender. If the archivist's comments and basic reasoning were anything to go by, these entities had their own esoteric traditions, but wouldn't that render this endeavour more of an obtuse sociocultural study? And why would there be such a delay between visits where none existed previously? Presumably there would have to be bureaucratic or physical factors if they really were aliens. Could such a gap point to a different nature? Had my previous visit been the last one? If the next were to come, could I master enough of these techniques to be of any efficacy in time? Wasn't this all intended for divine ascension anyway? Despite the strength of my early forays, it was clear that I couldn't resolve the swirling haze of inconsistency in any timely fashion, I so I kept up only a routine of daily workings as I pondered my encounters once more. There certainly were...stranger aspects to them. Ones I wouldn't really expect under any model and couldn't quite remember. The threads of feeling were too multifarious and vague to pick apart entirely, but something about the guide, environment, and atmosphere said more. That guide, there were a few comments. Perhaps they were a guide of a different sort.

If the previous parchment hadn't made it clear, by the time that July rolled around, I hadn't really made much more progress in understanding these events as I had when I first rose from sleep. This was only to be expected in the end, I don't exactly regret the time spent, inasmuch as one regrets time spent with a friend. The cacophony that had previously pervaded the world eventually simmered down to a vague wrongness in the air, and I mostly dealt with my feelings by focusing on the outward instead. The new conditions had been implemented, the results were solid if not startling, and the globe continued to spin. If anything, what I felt at that time was how I've felt for most of my career; I was just conscious of it now. The night that I received my next visit was like any other night, really, until something began to percolate into my unconsciousness.

Daniel rubbed up against covers, groaning. At least, it was supposed to be a groan, but it came out differently than usual. His muscles were sort of funky, not bone-sore in the way he was used to, but just

felt weird. Lord, he was even thinking kind of weird. Hopefully he hadn't come down with something. Daniel started to scratch his head as began his morning routine, lifting strangely light legs over the bed frame while his eyes blinked open, until he realized that the ground was a good distance away.

As his fingers were greeted with some sleek, glossy surfaces, Daniel remembered something important.

“Uh, umm...Saniii!” Daniel felt his lungs give way surprisingly fast. His brain was still processing a few more things, but things were fine by the time the curtains parted.

“Ooh, careful there Danny!” the form of a certain plantoid by the name of Sani made their way into the chamber. Her arms were quick to reach for the sapling's shoulders, scooping him up enough to stand him up properly on the bed.

“What're, where was you?” Daniel's finnicked with his tongue a little bit, concentrating more on the face he hadn't seen in a while. His pseudo-pupils were growing wide.

“I'm sorry about this whole thing, Danny. The delay ended up being necessary, but we should have plenty of time now to do the stuff I mentioned last time!” Sani's speech became concurrent with light tickling near the sides of Daniel's head, the kind he remembered she used when she didn't want him to get too sleepy.

“I don't know why whatever had to happen...things were getting really weird back.” Daniel's voice ebbed for a moment in thought. “Home.” he finished up the last word as he cogitated something correctly. Delay for the sleep dream transportation thing? Maybe they'd explain it during the...

“PSYCHIC STUFF!” in an instant Daniel shouted as much as he figured was possible, little legs barely shaking the cradle as he bounced. “That's what you promised!” he giggled a little as Sani's fingers intensified, drawing close to her body.

“You're going to need to keep your voice down if you want to do it, but yes.” a slight smile developed at the edges of the verdant woman's mouth, one arm reaching underneath the bed while another kept pressure on the jittering toddler's shoulder.

“But, uhuh, okie, I'll be quiet but we have to go and do it!” Daniel's voice blew like a leaf in the breeze, his eyes eagerly awaiting response from the big person. His head tilted slightly as he saw her looking down more, eventually bringing up some brightly colored length of cloth.

“Hehe, alright, but first we need to get a little boy dressed. Can you do that for me?” Sani half-asked as she began lay the fabric over her arm, soon reaching out to grab Daniel as well.

“Mhm!” Daniel gave long, drawn out nods as Sani carried him out of the curtain-room. They slowed as his eyes spotted a light indentation in the brightly-lit wall that they were approaching. By the time they had actually reached it, he realized that the tingly sunlight didn't seem to be heating up his body evenly. Sani did the pressing thing, like before...and the same small slab of metal came out.

Daniel almost squeaked as he was set down on the fuzzy surface, skin prickling lightly as he stretched out into place. Even though he easily knew what was going on by now, he didn't refrain from placing his tiny spearmint hands over the discolored moons of his diaper. Sani just smiled with a mildly

shaking head as she gently drew away the hands, placing in them a long green toy? Daniel blinked a few times as she drew forth the plush from what was now apparent as a shirt over her arm, Daniel's mind recovering from the out of place magic trick as he felt his padding pop open and a deep coolness begin to pervade his nethers. He hadn't really been thinking about it, but it had been warm when he woke up...on both sides! He quickly got to work playing with what almost looked like one of the snakes from his garden, somewhat successful at being distracted from the icky mess he made in his sleep. He was helped in this endeavour when he discovered the opalescent eyes of his latest friend, cognition shifting as Sani's chill-wipes removed the last of the muck from his bum. After that, it was a simple enough affair for her to ball up the old one, throw it down the trash chute, and lay out a new diaper imprinted with alien suns. At least, that was as much as Daniel could discern amidst the almost trained flurry of hands he witnessed beyond the green haze of his plushie. Daniel grip on the toy weakened for a moment as Sani suddenly finished taping up the garment and picked him up, a new hold briefly forming as the "snake" was pinned between the two of them. The stuffed creature fell to the ground as Sani set Daniel back down on the table standing, lithe limbs pushing up against her chest for balance. The plantoid scarcely noticed the unsteady gaze of the sprout as she flattened out the turquoise shirt against air before swiftly sliding it down Daniel's chest. His confused head popped out a moment later.

"I'm glad that no one was fussy for his changes." Sani smirked a little as she evened out the creases in the shirt, patting Daniel's head a couple times for good measure. His expression began to morph somewhat, miniature maw opening into a slight smile.

"Mmm!" Daniel's mouth briefly opened wider as if to speak more, before it closed in favor of a vaguely embarrassed giggle. "Where, where we going for psychic stuff though?" Daniel managed to edge out a question as he was scooped up into Sani's arms once more, the soft toy tailing along.

"It's just across the other side of the courtyard, it won't take us long at all to get there." Sani nuzzled the sprout's smooth visage slightly, Daniel entering into another tiny laughing fit while the guide carried him out the door and back down the metallic corridor. He recovered by the time they reached the four pronged nexus again, a veritable tidal wave of...delicious light cascading across his sensory system. And, they weren't heading down the hall more, to the staircase, but instead towards those clear, plain walls that weren't walls, but doors...

"Goin' outside! Outside, outside..." Daniel was quick to bounce in Sani's arms, the plantoid securing her grip briefly as an increasingly hyper sapling rocked side to side. The strangely savory sensations of the sun were growing stronger as they reached the door, and it even took the boy's eyes a few moments to adjust to the undiluted presence of pure, natural light.

When the clear-doors finally slid open (as he was realizing a lot of the doors around here did), Daniel got a belated confirmation that whatever sort of simulated light they were using, it didn't feel quite the same on the skin as the real deal. For a second, Daniel's sense of perception was completely engulfed by a flurry of nameless feelings, phantom stimulations that wavered about the periphery of his being like some new sense. The toddler wriggled around in Sani's arms as they travelled across a silvery concrete pathway, delighting in every pull of fabric across skin, with each floral scent that drifted from the surrounding hedges, and in every sound that characterized the outdoor world. With pupils dilating against a bright riot of surroundings, Daniel spied foreign insects buzzing from one rich flower to another, a sea of color cast against the stark light of a yellow sun adrift in pale blue. Words were not reaching associations fast enough to describe them all, and as Daniel drifted through the rest of the garden towards a metallic building at the far side, he felt like he had barely come to know that

wonderful world that existed beyond walls any better.

Daniel was drawn out of his trance when he heard noises. They were of the talking kind, but they didn't sound like Sani or the archivist person or even himself. Focusing long enough to draw his gaze away from the light, Daniel spied a duo of *people* resting beneath the shade of a scintillating awning. They looked up from their conversation briefly, eyeing the two that were approaching a set of clear double-doors. The expression was one of the weird ones, almost like one of the weird ones that Sani would sometimes give, but of a different character. It wasn't the type that seemed too hostile, or even interested necessarily, but it almost felt like an acknowledgement of sort. And then those deep blue and brown eyes gazed back at one another, a couple ambulatory plant people starting to talk amongst themselves once more. Daniel shifted his legs a little at this, being greeted with the tell-tale crinkling of diapers from this world. He didn't have. Pants. That, was that unusual?

But no one said anything as Sani opened the doors, stepping inside to a coolness deeper than Daniel had felt back in the other building. The whole structure seemed to be composed of an almost industrial, lustrous metal, with filaments of this material criss-crossing a giant glass roof suspended above them. Daniel could feel the light languidly streaming through, an imperceptible but subtle twisting of it producing a different, taste. It was weird. A hallway rested on either side of the atrium, with a spiral staircase directly beneath the roof leading to a second floor. Another new plantoid figure stood right by this set of stairs, garbed in a white coat and holding one of those light-slates like, Kano had. Their amber orbs beckoned.

"Ah, Ms. Sani, right on schedule. Could you bring our little guest to the extrasensorium? Everything's ready." the figure looked on with a clear face, every muscle seeming to be in their usual place. Daniel looked between the newcomer and Sani for a little bit, pupils narrowing.

"Indeed." Daniel's gaze began to fix on Sani once more as she gave a surprisingly proper nod to the doctor-looking individual, following behind as the person walked down the corridor to the right. Daniel clung a bit tighter to Sani, eyes scanning the new hallway. He caught glimpses of a black, smooth floor below, appearing almost akin to marble. The walls themselves were of a more standard artificial, polymer, metal wall stuff that was used back in the other building, the similarly standard doors having little glowing plates affixed to each of them. These plates showed what were presumably identifying numbers or something or other, but given the speed of the walk he couldn't really make any of them out. The leading plantoid came to a halt near the end of the corridor, standing before a sheer-white door. The figure fished something out of their pocket, something like a small card, before bringing right in front of a nearby glowy panel. After a few seconds, its light shifted to a solid green hue, and the stark panels vanished into the walls.

"After you." the coated one bowed lightly before the pair, eyes floating over them before settling on Daniel. The smile wasn't insincere, though.

Sani carried on through the portal, Daniel remembering to look away from the lab person as the room came into full view. It was almost like a lab room, but not quite. There were some shelves, yes, and everything looked to be pretty clean even though the metal was all grey, but there weren't really any testing stations like you'd usually see. It was like a, high school lab, maybe? But there was also a translucent pod-chair towards the back, and two slim metal pillars standing on either side of it...

"Where's the psychic stuff? It was going to be info or showing, right?" Daniel tilted his head back toward Sani. His brow was furrowing.

"We were planning something a bit more special than just that, Danny." Sani's maw widened, casting one of her earlier smirks. "C'mere."

Sani carried Daniel closer towards the room's end, aiming for the chair. Daniel didn't move much beyond a few twists of the neck to keep an eye on the new plantoid. They were opening one of the shelves and pulling out *something* before Sani finally plopped Daniel down on the chair.

"Sssani? What're we doin' exactly?" Daniel slowly worked out the words as he breathed a little faster, arms clawing into the bottom of the pod chair for security as soon as he noticed Sani was standing back from the chair itself.

"It's nothing to be worried about, Daniel." the orbs of Sani bore into his own. "You're just going to get a first-hand experience of the mind, okay?" Sani made way for the movement of the, doctor, as she spoke, the plantoid holding a, canister, in their hands. Daniel's breaths were solidly short and shallow by now, a strange tinge of adrenaline coursing through his system.

"There's, there's no shots. No shots!" Daniel's voice suddenly spiked as he the saw the lab coat become bigger. It looked like they were reaching toward the wall behind the chair, or pillars?

"There's no shots, Danny." Sani reached over with one arm, barely bringing her body closer as she massaged his leaves a few times. "Just a little medicine that's easy to take, okay?" Daniel could hear Sani continue her speech, spying the doctor tap on a panel that had appeared on the wall while he wasn't looking. A strange sound was coming from the pillars, now.

"It's, I dunno..." Daniel could feel his eyes grow watery, the circuits of his consciousness being bombarded with a flood of considerations.

"Daniel. Please be brave, okay?" Sani's voice didn't waver at all this time.

He took a second. Time became a trickle briefly. Then he got a feeling.

He nodded.

"Already followed the standard preparatory protocol, correct?" the doctor tapped away on their metallic tablet while a stream of words flowed from their mouth.

"Yes." Sani's voice was trained.

"Classic timeframe, aye." the doctor gave a quick nod to seemingly no one in particular, stepping forward a little bit as they fumbled with the white, plastic-looking canister. Daniel's face creased a little bit as they looked onwards, the plantoid eventually popping open the lid. The sound, was a humming.

"Alright kiddo, can you open your mouth for me? Things should be done quick." the amber-eyed doctor shot a casually penetrating look at Daniel. He had blinked away most of the liquid from his orbs by now, but still looked on the doctor and canister for a few seconds before slowly winching his jaw open. The doctor simply reached into the canister with a gloved hand at the sight, procuring a small cyan tablet. They steadied the object in the center of their bone-white palm with a surprising level of grace,

or caution. Daniel's eyes tracked the hand carefully, eyeing its cargo with all the care of a botswain. The sounds, didn't just sound anymore, it was almost like they could be felt. In that instant of momentary confusion the doctor dropped the tablet into the awaiting mouth, Daniel involuntarily shutting his maw at the surprise. It wasn't really, it didn't quite taste like anything, but the texture was strange as it rested on his tongue and it felt like it was bubbling. Or dissolving, or another slew of adjectives that occupied Daniel's mind as he sat back in the chair, attempting to grapple with the sensations. In the corners of his eyes he could see that the tops of the two pillars had unfurled into something that revealed, smooth plates? They were almost like resonators of some sort, if what felt like perturbations in the air nearby was anything to go by.

"How're things looking?" Sani looked toward the doctor while the sprout wrestled with some more novelties.

"The noetic harmony seems rather stable, we'll just need to stimulate a few of the anterior centers a little more. Extrasensory functioning should see the most notable impact initially, stability of the overall entanglement should follow not long after that." the doctor's face turned jade in the aquamarine sheen of the screen.

"Indeed." Sani's gaze flitted back toward the sprout in the seat.

Daniel sat in an undulating wave of stimulation. Intellectually, he knew that there was a room he was sitting in occupied by two other people, including one of his favorite ones in a long while, but he couldn't really concentrate on those when it felt like the core of his current world was being probed at with the intensity of a jackhammer. It wasn't even like it hurt, because it didn't, but the way that he perceived the world underwent countless minor adjustments every second. Sense of time, yeah. Feeling? Assuredly. Space. Oh, definitely. And this was supposed to be the psychic stuff, right? But he knew something, something trickling in from a deep recess of knowledge that wasn't ultimately affected by whatever was going on. It's not like it could be "psychic energy", because psychic stuff is what happens without your brain being touched, and he *knew* that his brain was being touched. But this felt physical, like countless little waves penetrating his body at once. So if it wasn't the machines that were being psychic, and if this was supposed to be where something psychic was going on...

The thin wafer that was formerly a tablet on Daniel's tongue dissolved.

Daniel paused the hamster wheel of his mind for a moment.

No way.

No, it **had** to be this way.

"Sani." Daniel felt a world slip from his mind into his mouth and out of it.

"D-Daniel? Are you feeling alr-" Sani's pupils widened, beginning to approach Daniel's chair before he spoke again.

"Sani Low-niss." Daniel completed a sentence.

Sani's legs stopped. The doctor's head lifted from the data slate to the chair. All eyes were focused.

Sani was the first to move again, an sylvan arm slipping into a pant pocket. A small, thin card that blurred the line between metal and plastic was procured. The doctor tapped once more on the wall-screen, thin metal sheets furling back into coverage over the pillars. Sani held the card right in front of the plantoid on the chair.

A picture of her hung there in the air, surrounded by a confusing stew of biographical data. A few words hung prominently on the top, though.

“Sani Lonis”

The new silence lasted only a few seconds.

“Well then, looks like my part of the job is done.” the doctor chuckled a little, sliding the screen back into the wall. Daniel blinked again and again at the card.

“Is, its, I'm...” Daniel could feel a cocktail of something more than feelings stir within him. The tips of his mouth crested upward in either direction.

“Psychic, Danny.” Sani stated.

Daniel exploded into a happy haze as Sani approached, hugging tight as she picked him up once more. A few tears fell dripped down his face as he became possessed by a giggly fit, eyes looking everywhere around the room. For her part Sani held him close and gave him one of the more special kinds of head scratches, even as she spoke to the doctor.

“Was that procedure of sufficient length?” Sani turned toward the plantoid, trying to make out their form amid the swirling mass in her arms.

“Yes. It's actually quite short, figured it'd be nice to wait for a proper demonstration before we took him out.” they spoke as they meandered along toward the shelves, slipping the tablet canister back into position.

“As for th-” Sani didn't need to speak much before the doctor continued.

“Based on the readings, one more cycle for full stabilization.” the doctor looked back as they closed the cabinet, eyes steady on Sani. There was a deepness.

“Affirmed.” Sani spoke clearly, inclining her head in a miniature bow. The doctor responded in full, with a certain smile to boot.

Daniel barely noticed as Sani took him out of the room, reacting even less to the corridor as she handed him a green plush he had come to recognize on that spot. He hugged it and fiddled with it and had even chewed it a few times by the time they had stepped back into the shining sunlight outside. The resulting somatic overload quickly intensified the playing of the beaming boy, who by now was curling up with his snake-friend rather fondly. And thinking about him. Thinking some, strange, but special thoughts about him.

"S-Sani! Wait!" the words bubbled out of Daniel's mouth, eyes practically saucers.

"Yes?" Sani looked down with a bit of a smile, briefly coming to a stop within beneath a few small trees.

"Feeling weird, and, and lookit what I can do!" Daniel kept giggling like mad for a few moments, before beginning to stare at his toy with a far-away gaze. The plush first shifted slightly, as if in a strong breeze, before Daniel's laughs redoubled and the plush rose a few inches from the web of Sani's and Daniel's arms. The toy hung suspended in the air, gently twirling, before Daniel's arms reached out and pulled the fuzzy animal in for another embrace.

"Well, well then." Sani's voice sparked up for a moment before heading back down toward a measured tone. "I think the doctor will have to add psychokinetic functioning to the list..."

"Oh, uhuh! That's, that's what that one's called, and, and I fully have it now..." Daniel's giggles began to die down, a low, steady breathing taking their place. By now, Daniel had gone through many tears, but he knew that these new ones were some of the happy ones. "Thank you lots and lots..." Daniel's eyes closed as he fell back more completely into Sani's cradling.

Sani took a moment to look at him, then.

The smile formed as they took shade beneath the awning of the opposite building, the boy's energy having diminished into a quiet tiredness. Sani rocked him back and forth a little as she carried him through the sliding doors, sporadic, fatigued laughs and light crinkling ranking among the few sounds in the hall. Daniel came to a little more as he remembered the wall types and what they meant, the sapling groggily resting his head up against Sani's chest just a few seconds before she passed through another sliding door.

There was the curtain-bed and changing wall thing and glass window with the nice garden and...

Daniel opened his eyes a little wider.

It was true, that there was still a little bed for him, and that there was a changing table and a window to the outside. But there was no longer a curtain around what was a *crib* and a changing *table* with shelves stood right in front of where the slab in the wall was and the window had some crystal *beads* hanging on strings in front of it that spread light. And that besides that there was a plastic *toy chest*, and foam *blocks* on the floor, and a *blanket* over some of the hard floor, and so many other knicks and knacks that made this place *his* place.

"Saniii..." Daniel lightly moaned as he beheld the slight, lungs lightly sputtering but eyes still eager. Sani continued her rocking, the movements becoming ever more gentle. "Shh, it's alright. We just had a few things switched up in your room while we had our appointment. I trust it our baby boy likes it?" she lightly scratched his mint neck, Daniel no longer laughing but still smiling.

"Uhuh..." Daniel nodded along, brow becoming a little more creased. "Sani, I'm-"

"Tired?" she responded in an instant.

“Yeah, but I wanna play in my room...” Daniel's expressions started to do most of the talking as his voice strained.

“It's alright, you can play after your nap.” Daniel's eyes became wider as she neared his new, crib.

“But its dayti-” Daniel's voice stilled as he gazed into Sani's eyes. There was an intensity to them, but also a sublime calm.

“And little sprouts need their naps.” her words came out clear as Sani slowly lowered Daniel into the polymer-wood crib, the boy still grasping at his plushie.

“But...I don't know why, but am.” Daniel's voice quivered and finally stilled.

“What, Danny?” Sani's head tilted, but her expression remained the same.

“I, I'm scared, and I don't know why.” after a few seconds of concentration, the words escaped the tiny plantoid, eyes focused as intently as ever on the Sani above them.

“Daniel.” Sani's speech sank like stones in the air. “There's nothing to be afraid of.”

Sani looked back toward the window for a moment, towards a golden noon outside. Dust lit up in the air, and for the briefest of moments, time froze again, only Daniel knew this time that it wasn't because his brain was being blasted. Sani looked back at him, for possibly the first time, truly alien.

“There's no reason to be afraid. It'll just be like falling asleep and waking up.”

Sani spoke the words.

Daniel could hear them.

Daniel thought of a few thousand thoughts for a second, and came to a conclusion in an unthinking instant.

Daniel fell asleep.

As should be obvious due to my diminished capacity for neutral writing over the past ten or so pages, I have essentially no idea about how to conceptualize of, or approach, this situation. No model seems to fit, and potentially everything hinges on the choices I make within the next 16 or so hours. Of course, to the gentle reader, this matters not, as I will have come to my conclusions by then, deal with whatever else is raised by my alien hosts, and hopefully publish my tidied results for the world to see. The problem, ironically enough, is largely personal, though I initially hoped for this endeavour to lead to gain for the common mass of humanity. Much of my speech now likely seems far less lucid than the admittedly somewhat “out there” beginning, and of course the hypothetical reader will not truly understand the conundrum that I can barely begin to fathom. After having experienced all these past events, I sometimes do wish that I had become a priest, or a monk, or a magician, or an explorer, or, Hell, even a poet, anything that might give me another angle of viewing this issue. But, like the brother

who went abroad and the one who stayed home, I doubt any one path would have satisfied me. And so, Daniel Green the psychical researcher writes to himself rather indulgently on notes that he will eventually have to revise once the encounters are settled. My vacillations on this matter are somehow stronger now than in the previous two months. At times I feel an utter longing to return, fear of enchantment, an ennui toward the situation as a whole, the curiosity of a scientist, and countless other attitudes that cannot be described. Of course, despite this, or rather because of it, I am taking an action. That is why I will return to bed and sleep. Because frankly, Daniel Green has done little in his life and his science could likely meander on for another century with scarcely a thing of interest happening. Daniel Green could get caught up in his paranoia, aye, even eternity can be empty, but he also senses something wondrous and he for once in his life will reject something of his own will. He will not be scared to venture out where doubtlessly few others have ventured before. Once, he may have rejected the transcendent as an enticing yet ultimately hollow toy for children, but now he sees the specter of skepticism at midnight which negates its own existence. He will meet up once more with his mysterious benefactors and see what they have to offer, which, frankly, may be of a legitimately concrete value to mankind outside of his pseudo-existential ramblings. And if he dies or goes mad or finds a thousand other terrible fates, by God, he does it with style.

Herein do I conclude my notes on July 4th, 1935. I am secreting them away now in my house, where they should not be disturbed for a good while until I can fix them up for publication, ideally with artifacts or potent supernatural powers to boot. If you are reading this, please place it back, as redoing some of these lines from memory will no doubt result in a less potent literary effect.

It's been a life, this life of mine.

Your one time Friend, Daniel Green