

# Offast 7, 20250 (Frejaday) | St. Monik Hospital

MM/DD/YYYYY | 07/07/20250

*three hundred sixty-four, never the lesser or more  
make up the months,  
which twelve in a lump,  
make up a single year.*

*thirty whole nights, in eight which fit nice,  
are one not enough for last four.*

| Jj = y, as in Yusuf

Lalia awoke to the feeling of a scaly, cold object prodding her face. She ignored it. She smelled intense antiseptic alcohol. She tried to ignore that. More prodding, as she attempted to return to sleep.

"Baba. Baba, wake up."

The raspy, quavering voice jolted her awake. Her tiredness was replaced by a rush of joy as she opened her eyes to see Pjanka beside her, five legs on the bed and their sixth right front one approaching to poke again.

She spoke softly, "Hey my baby." She forced her arms, still feeling weak, to prop her into a sitting position on the hospital bed. "What's up?"

Pjanka looked up at her, their deep, black eyes staring into hers. "Cad you read be bore bagazhids?"

It took Lalia a moment to piece together the meaning of the sentence, lost in Pjanka's inability to pronounce certain sounds and still foggy from the painkiller they'd given her. She finally grasped something probable.

"Magazines?"

Pjanka loved to have magazines read to them, an activity they had started since Lalia had recovered enough to flip pages. There wasn't much other media at Saint Monik anyway.

Pjanka did a little shuffle with their legs, and clicked their mandibles once. Pjanka and her had established the click on the fifth day at the hospital, used as an affirmative, after she found she was unable to differentiate the complex leg tapping Pjanka used. *Instinctual*, She mused to herself, *or so it would seem. at the very least, passed down from their fath-*

The latter part of the thought activated her mental flee instinct, and she shut her eyes and clamped her hands over her ears, squishing them roughly against her skull. She slipped into relative silence for a few moments, before a sensation of cold liquid flowing inside her arm pushed darkness out of the way with reality.

Opening her eyes, she found a nurse standing by her side, masked and gowned in mint green.

She heard the *tick, tock* of the pendulum-timed IV pump, and quickly panicked. She fumbled with the silicon rubber tube, finally grasping the check valve, which she turned to the right to shut the flow.

The nurse grabbed Lalia's hand and attempted to pry it off the valve. "Darling, you need to let go." Lalia looked at the nurse, now having time to process what she was seeing. They were tall, with an almost skeleton-like appearance. She held on tighter and tried to reason with the nurse, "Wait, please."

The nurse spoke in a tone that was marginally more calming than threatening. "You were screaming. It's just a sedative, it'll make you feel better."

Lalia now noticed her throat was sore, and decided the claim could be true.

"It's- I'm fine. I don't need it. I-I'm trying to talk to my child."

The nurse glanced over at Pjanka, with a face indiscernible behind the mask. Ivri had read the patient brief, encountering this same claim in what would be an otherwise respectable record. She decided right then she would find out two things: number one; who let that creature in (which she could swear was her giving the evil eye despite having three tiny beads for such), and two; who was stupid enough to commit such a critical error in record keeping.

The nurse addressed Lalia again. "If you don't let go of the check valve, I'm going to have to call in security to restrain you."

"I want to talk to a doctor."

Ivri stopped trying to pry and instead grasped Lalia's hand, squishing it tightly. "You need to let go *now*."

Lalia winced as the nurse's grip started to become painful. The drug (Letadone, she remembered, effective only on Juli persons, which she was one) was beginning to fade, the pain sharpening her mind. "Let go of my hand."

Ivri only persisted, before turning her head to see Pjanka become a blur, one second on the bed and not even a full one later wrapping their legs around her calf while chittering their mandibles violently. They emitted a painfully high tone. Ivri screamed.

"Leath by baba alode!" Despite them never doing so before, Lalia became aware that Pjanka intended to bite, and before they could even arch their back to strike she had pulled them off the nurse. Pjanka immediately stilled, and let out a small purr.

Ivri was in shock for only a moment. She looked herself over, and upon finding no injury, pointed a trembling finger at the patient and the creature she held in her arms. Her voice seethed with the fury of a respected person receiving one too many disrespects.

"That- That thing, needs to be out, NOW!"

Lalia felt heat rise in her cheeks, and her ears fold downwards. She held down her temper.

Another nurse peeked their head in through the curtain, a worried expression on their face. "Do you need security?"

Ivri spat it out: "Yes!"

Lalia set Pjanka to the side. She spoke in a low voice to them, staring them in their three eyes the best she could. "We *will* talk about what you just did. Later."

Turning to address the nurse at the curtain, she attempted to get his attention before he left. "Wait! This is a misunderstanding! They didn't know-" He had was gone. The nurse that had tried to sedate her also left, dropping a "You'll see me again" before leaving the room briskly. There was silence for a moment. A minute took an eternity to pass, and then the curtain slid to the left and a security guard garbed in a drunk-tank pink uniform came in. Heavysset, their skin was dark, a rarity this far north. They had golden eyes with a warm face. Their head was shaved, covered with only a thin blanket of black hair. The main thing Lalia noticed was the stun stick, wired to a battery and tucked into a thick belt. The battery glowed with the slight heat-light of electrical resistance.

The security guard spoke, their words slow and calm: "Hey there. Name's Kisha, him. What's your name?"

Lalia noticed his hand was tactically placed in a way that seemed non-threatening, but allowed for quick withdrawal of the stun stick. She gently nudged Pjanka to the head of the bed, to her left and out of sight from Kisha. She whispered to them: "Stay there."

She spoke to Kisha, who was standing near the front of the curtained room, next to a chair. "My name is Lalia, she." She paused. "Are you going to-" she didn't finish the sentence, leaving a hanging point for Kisha to grab on to. He picked it up.

"I'm just going to stay in here, to make sure you're okay. Mind if I sit?" He gestured at the chair beside him.

"No."

"Okay, that's fine." He stayed standing where he was.

Lalia shook her head. "No, I meant 'no' as in 'no, I don't mind'."

He smiled. "So you're okay with me sitting then?"

She ventured a small smile back. "Sure."

He sat down on the chair, grunting slightly. "First I need to ask you some questions. Answer them truthfully."

Lalia nodded. "Okay."

"Cool." He got up and walked over to her cot, then pulled out clipboard which had been hung on it with a hook. He retrieved a ball-point pen, clipped onto the board. He held the clip on the board open, shuffling the papers, and bringing one to the front. Walking back to the chair, he sat down again. "Are you having thoughts of hurting other people or yourself right now?"

"No."

"Have you had thoughts of hurting yourself or others today, other than the most recent incident?"

"I didn't have thoughts of hurting anybody *at all* today."

"I was told you attacked nurse Ivri."

Lalia sighed. "No, it wasn't me. It was my kid. It- It won't happen again." *I hope to god it doesn't. If they had followed through with that bite...* The image of a pair of mandibles floated across her vision, and she tried to shut

"Your kid?"

down the memories  
"Ma'am, you need to sit down-"  
of *him*  
"Set the drip rate to full-"  
of a god  
***under I go***  
among mortals.

## Nožormont 8, 20250 (Ziusday) | Kjlaleku Arctic Base

MM/DD/YYYYY | 05/08/20250

**Šš** = Sh, as in **Shawn**

**Rr** = rolled r, as in **Rojo**

**Qq** = ch, as in **Loch**

**Yy** = i, as in **fish**

**Jj** = y, as in **Yusuf**

One **poro**, 1.315 kg, 2.90 lb.\*

One **arm**, 1.315 m, ~4' 4"

"I still don't understand. Why you couldn't see me if I was - let's say if I was outside the base, Maybe a few arms from the entrance." Lalia watched as the creature, undoubtedly several dozen poros in weight, swiftly side shuffled along the wall. He was scanning among the countless tiny engravings he had put in the granite store room wall, looking for *something*. She shifted on the pillow which she sat on, and her ears perked towards him in expectation of the reply.

His (for he had proclaimed himself a male yesterday, stating that they seemed the more capable of the genders) voice was now smooth and natural, despite being unable to pronounce half of human sounds less then three days ago. With infallible diction and a confident tone, Meso replied to her.

"I could see you, just not in any meaningful way. Firstly, there is the trouble of the walls. As you well know-" he stopped here to hover his pedipalp over an engraving and mutter a string of clicks and tones -"most objects have a double-u form whose geometry is equal to their three dimensional form, as extended parallel to itself."

Lalia mulled over this. "So even I am just- Okay, so I'm a composite -" He clicked his mandibles at her use of a term he'd coined- "three dimensionally. But four dimensionally, I'm flat?"

"Yes, that would be an appropriate approximation. At least on one side. And I would be one above composite. Let's call it- a higher composite. *Un maltiažys grandys*."

Despite not being fluent, she recognized the tongue immediately.

"You've been learning Romiq?"

"I have been, yes."

"From whom?"

"The doctor."

"He speaks *per lingi opsel*."

Meso rubbed his pedipalps together. *like a fly does*, Lalia thought to herself before she could stop it, *cleaning its legs*.

"In the language of old?' I don't believe that is correct. Firstly, you forgot the article. Secondly, the 'pee' in *opsel* is voiced, pronounced as a 'bee'."

"Not in *lingi kongruin*. The article is optional."

He walked over to her, his spider-like legs gliding to carry him at a perfectly steady rate. "The version he speaks is obsolete then."

"...Yes, his dialect is no longer used."

Meso stayed perfectly still, giving no indication of disappointment. He blinked once, all three eyes flipping down and then up, an expression normally indicating that one's unconscious brain was still kicking around.

She knew better. "Okay, I should probably get going. The computer is down again," she explained "and the team is hand calculating right now. I should go help."

Meso stepped in front of the door.

Lalia felt a spike of anxiety, her heart jumping up in speed. "Meso. Um- I need to leave the room."

He spoke calmly. "I need you back. Tomorrow, before oh-seven-hundred. Try to not eat anything in the meantime."

She nodded. "Of course."

He stepped aside, legs perfectly efficient from one step to the other, inverse kinematics calculated by a brain a dimension higher than she could predict.

## Offast 7, 20250 (Frejaday) | St. Monik Hospital

MM/DD/YYYYY | 07/07/20250

**Žž** = j as in **J**acques

**DŽdž** = j as in **J**ack

**Rr** = rolled r, as in **R**ojo

**Qq** = ch, as in **L**och

**Yj** = i, as in **f**ish

**Jj** = y, as in **Y**usuf

**Ōō** = lengthened o, like sayin **r**obe very slowly

Lalia came to once again, this time to the sound of music and animated talking.

She recognized the smooth, gravelly voice of Kyndall Pyrsoliber, singing *When You Stole my*

*Heart.*

*"I was just minding my business..."*

She focused on the other sound, a voice.

"They call me owl-man because I can do this. And then his head rotated as if a top, to rammi's amazement." The voice sounded familiar.

A chitter sounded, and she heard Pjanka speak to the voice: "How did he do that?"

Lalia pushed herself up, a considerable task with how groggy she was. Along the way, she sighted a wheeled bedside table to her right, a radio sat upon it. She got into a sitting position, and was pleasantly surprised to see that Mei was sitting on the chair at the right of the room.

She was holding open a a book, and Pjanka was sitting on her lap looking at the book.

"Mei? Ésí èdlim eul-" She fumbled for English, not finding the words she needed to communicate. An abstract thought about Letadone floated in her foggy mind, possibly related. Mei looked up at her from the book she was reading to Pjanka, whom also turned to look at her. They made a little trill. "Baba! You're awake!" Mei lifted the book out of the way. Jumping off of Mei's lap, they leaped up onto the bed effortlessly. "Are you okay? I stayed where you told be to, but the persod id the pik suit still attacked you."

Lalia needed to reply. She needed to explain she wasn't attacked, that she had been safe the entire time. That she had only been sedated. That Pjanka didn't have to worry about their mother.

"Júá ljo wuje. Ésí tsuna. Ésí-" She almost felt like screaming. Why couldn't she speak English? Rominq? She was stuck in Lwala Juli, a language she only ever spoke at home. And which very few people understood. *Mei does though*, she thought.

Pjanka crawled up to Lalia, plopping down on her lap and and leaning against her stomach.

"Baba, Bay says you wod't be able to talk for a while." Lalia put her hand on the soft fur of Pjanka's body. "Ésí-" She couldn't do it.

Mei walked up to her. "It's fine. It's just the Letadone. It's a normal effect, which'll wear off in a bit. If you'll excuse my poor grammar, I still remember some of it that you taught me."

Lalia nodded. She started stroking Pjanka's fur, to which they made a little trill.

To Lalia's relief, Mei continued in Lwala Juli. "*A meal is arriving for you and Pjanka -*" they looked up at mention of their name - "*right away. How are you doing?*"

*"I am tired."* Lalia paused. *"And - I'm lot of things right now. But I can't talk about it- not while Pjanka's here."*

They looked now up at their mama. "You said by dabe. Pjaka, she."

Mei filled in for Lalia, responding to them in English. "We were just talking about you. It's - did you say she?"

Pjanka clicked their mandibles in affirmation. "I ab Pjaka, she."

Lalia noticed her mind felt a little sharper. She attempted a sentence in English, slowly articulating each word: "You don't have a gender, though."

Pjanka spoke. "But by pather was a he -" Lalia felt her breathing pick up, and tried ineffectively to slow it.

Pjanka stopped suddenly. "I'b sorry. I wod't talk about it."

Lalia slowed her breathing. "No, it's fine." She now felt in possession of her language faculties.

"Pjanka, do you want to be a she?"

Pjanka clicked her mandibles.

A head poked through the door. "I have some food for a Lalia de Madzja?" A medium built nurse with short black hair stepped in, holding a metal tray. Mei strode towards them.

"Stewed greens, potato, and chicken?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Are the meat and all the rest separate?"

"...No, I don't believe so."

Mei sighed, while Lalia did the same inwardly. The meat was for Pjanka, and she did *not* want to eat food that had touched it.

"Please take this food back to the kitchen, and try to be fast with the correct order."

The nurse's face turned red slightly.

"I- I don't do the orders. I just deliver."

"What's your name?"

They paused. "Džefferi, him."

"Last name?"

"I - I shouldn't-"

"*Last. Name.*"

Džefferi winced. "Miers."

Mei smiled. "Thank you, Džefferi Miers. I want you to go down and let the kitchen know they got the order wrong, and make sure they replace it. Unless, of course, you would like an *very* negative internal performance report filed. Which as a *legat* I have the power to do."

"Yes ma'am. Um. Would you- you like the vitamins replaced as well?" His eyes were pointed at the ground, uncomfortable with Mei's piercing stare.

"Eyes up here."

He reluctantly made eye contact.

"No, we'll take the vitamins now. Oh, and the meat as well."

Džefferi still holding the tray, she picked up the metal fork provided with the meal and lifted the lid of the dish. She speared the chunks of chicken, sliding them off into a napkin.

Lalia's nose wrinkled at the smell, and her tail flicked in disgust.

Placing the lid back and folding up the meat napkin, Mei placed it on the chair. She obtained a small acrylic cup of pills and a bigger one with water in it. Walking over to the bedside table, she placed them down gently. She walked back towards Džefferi, stopping about a foot away, where she made a little bow. "Thank you very much."

Džefferi left hurriedly.

Mei closed the curtain behind him, then pulled the chair up to the side of the bed taking the chicken off and holding it, and sat down.

A few moments of silence passed. Lalia surprised herself by blurting out:

"Why in the *gods' names* am I not allowed to call my family?"

Mei was taken aback.

"What?"

Lalia moved her legs a little bit to get more comfortable.

"I haven't been allowed to contact *anybody* the entire time I've been here. I tried to rush the phone at one point and I got restrained by a military police officer. On that point, why in God's name is there a continuous military guard stationed outside my room?"

Mei took a deep breath and looked to be choosing her next words carefully.

"Firstly, I wasn't aware you weren't allowed to call anyone. To answer your question simply: they know about what happened at Kjlaleku."

"I would think so, I've been interviewed twice already. Not to mention you've almost certainly had to write a report on it."

Mei folded her hands on her lap.

"They know, and they care. The military has a considerable amount of interest in what happened. And in the results."

"What results? Everything we managed to record would be the same as all the other teams'. We have no useful information they would want."

"Lalia, you know what I mean."

"No, I don't?"

"You know firsthand how powerful he was."

"So they should be focusing on tracking him? I don't see what it has to do with me! They already know I don't have any more information, so why am I being kept here as if-"

*As if it's me they want*, she realized. *No, not just me. Pjanka as well.*

Lalia swallowed. "They couldn't- they can't just take a child. There's the human clause. There's systems in place-..."

Mei nodded. "I've worked in the government for a long time. By nature of exerting my legal immunity, when I need to- I've come to know that there's checks and balances. So many, in fact, it's a miracle things get done. All of my actions are reviewed by a committee, which is itself inspected regularly. I've never even spoken to any of my higher ups." "If they could, the military would have taken both of you in already. The best they can do is keep you in hospital, which I have finally managed to veto."

Lalia let out a small giggle. "This is nepotism."

"What? No, I would do this for others as well."

"If you were assigned to."

"Obviously, I do all my assignments to the best of my ability."

Lalia smiled smugly. "You weren't assigned to me."

"No... You're my friend, It's the least I can do."

"Nepotism!"

Pjanka shifted slightly at the volume of Lalia's voice.

"Shh, don't yell it! Listen, half of my job is investigating corruption. I would know. It's *not*



nepotism."

Pjanka spoke up. "What's depotisb?"

Mei closed her eyes for a few seconds. Opening them, "It's when a person in power favors someone close to them, particularly when giving them jobs. It's not what your mom thinks it is."

Lalia gasped. Jocularly she responded aghast: "Mei! Shame on you, insulting me in front of my own child. How can she respect me if my friends don't?"

Pjanka tried to comfort her mama. "It's okay baba, I still respect you, Bei just does't udderstadt."

Lalia responded. "It's not that, it's just we have differing opinions. It's ultimately semantics."

Pjanka clicked her mandibles.

Then, she cocked her head and asked:

"What's seabdtics?"

"It's the study of meaning, honey."

As with everything said in her vicinity, Pjanka carefully and silently made a new slot (*semantics*) in her memory, and inserted its corresponding information.

She often ran through her collection of memories when there was nothing else to do, which was frequent due to the strange behavior of her mama lying down and becoming unresponsive for eight hours, apparently something all creatures did. *Sleep*; when a person becomes very quiet and motionless, and the energy buzzing from their body slows down. She didn't have the word for that energy yet, which was slightly frustrating.

"Baba?"

Džefferi once again poked his head through the curtain, and Mei went up to meet him.

Lalia looked at Pjanka, still stroking her fur.

"Yes?"

"What is the buzzig that cobes frob your body called?"

"What do you mean?"

Pjanka reached her front right leg and placed it over her mama's heart. "It cobes frob here." And reaching as far as she could, she pointed at her mama's head. "Add here. Add everywhere else a little too."

Mei came over with the meal. "They got it right this time." She handed the plate to Lalia, who took it and put it on the bedside table.

She bowed her head, "Thank you."

Pulling the chair underneath her, Mei sat. "Of course. May I ask what you fellows were talking about?"

Pjanka took her arm down and turned to face Mei. "The buzzig, it cobes from the idfusiod pubp, the flourescedt lights. Add frob all the people. Add the small thigs id the wall that scratch at dight, add the lides idside the wall. It's very loud."

Mei and Lalia both tried to piece their way through that statement.

Mei spoke first. "That's a lot of stuff. Um- yeah, I'm not sure quite what you mean. You have a very good vocabulary though. Maybe- no. Electricity"? She turned to Lalia, who was just as

confused as Mei.

Lalia's face suddenly lit up, and her tail flicked in understanding. "Yeah, I think that's it! Meso had electroreceptors. It's how he knew to disable the radio, and how he knew where we were at all times..." Lalia trailed off as bad memories threatened to surface.

Pjanka nudged her out of her thoughts.

"What's electricity?"

"How about when we get back home, we buy you a book about it at radio shack."

She knew she was going to start getting on her mama's nerves, but once she was on a roll it was hard to stop.

"What's the radio shack?"

"It's a chain of stores. They sell things to do with electricity and circuits."

"What are circui- "

Pjanka managed to stop herself.

She she made a new slot, *circuits*, and filled it with a temporary definition; a thing to do with radios. It would have to do for now.

Lalia picked up her meal, and after taking the vitamins began to eat.

Mei picked up the chicken. "Pjanka, do you want this?"

Pjanka leaped from Lalia's lap onto Mei's, landing before she could even flinch.

'Woah!' Mei dropped the meat. Pjanka dashed and caught it before it hit the ground, then extracted the meat from the napkin with her pedipalps. Despite only having two appendages to use and no digits, she manipulated the materials with ease, the napkin separating from the meat, drawn by an unseen force.

She registered the taste under *chicken*.

## Nožormont 9, 20250 (Rainsday) | Kjlaleku Arctic Base

MM/DD/YYYYY | 05/09/20250

**Žž** = j as in Jacques

**DŽdž** = j as in Jack

**Rr** = rolled r, as in Rojo

**Qq** = ch, as in Loch

**Yj** = i, as in fish

**Jj** = y, as in Yusuf

**Ōō** = lengthened o, like sayin robe very slowly

One **Decarm** = 0.1315 m

One **Cubic Millarm** = 0.113 ml, 0.0267 teaspoons

Lalia woke up to her internal alarm. For a second she was disoriented, confused by the sharp lack of the warmth of a sleeping partner beside her, and the earthy smell of underground dank.

But she wasn't at home. She was on base. She felt her stomach growl, and not for the first time longed for fresh vegetables. She slipped out of her sleeping bag, navigating her way across the room to the door, the ambient heat from the heated floors enough to illuminate her way. She considered changing her clothes, but it had only been four days since last change, and there wasn't much dirt here. Having woke up earlier than everybody else, so she had a bit of time to kill.

She walked out to the common area and went straight to the food preparation island. She opened up the nut bar box, disappointed when there was still only nut bars. Due to her inability to eat meat, she'd had to eat only these monstrous things for four days now.

Thinking of eating, she suddenly remembered the deal she'd made with Meso. *Deal*, she thought, *that implies I had choice*. A chill ran down her back. She hadn't considered exactly what it was he wanted, but a terrifying thought had occurred to her: she didn't know. He could be waiting for her to enter the storeroom so he could dissect her. Or maybe he wanted to show off a stickman drawing he made. The truly scary part was that both were equally possible, at least as far as she could see. Who did she think she was? To think she could understand a creature like him? He said it himself, no evolutionary pressures, no need for specialization. His kind, deus minor as he so humbly put it, were generalists *in mente, corpore et anima*. His whole brain was plastic, able to be deformed and restructured in accord to his whims.

She noticed her ears were pinned against her head, and her tail was curled. She carefully forced them into neutral positions, as was polite in human company. Not that anybody was awake, but it's as they say: better habit than have not.

She considered going to the medbay and administering herself some tslako, to feel a bit better. She decided against it, then changed her mind and walked to the medbay. She opened the medicine cabinet and pulled out a glass vial of pills. They were light green tablets, with a J inscribed on one side and a line on the other. She took three, then closed the container and put it back, the label facing her. "Oh crap." She was used to tslako as a moss, steeped in hot water and containing maybe ten cubic millarms per square decarm; she hadn't expected a tiny pill to be fifty cube millarms. And she'd just taken three. "Oh well."

She was already feeling lighter, and not so stressed about the meeting. She decided she would just go there now, even though it was only oh-five-hundred. As Lalia walked to the basement, she noticed that the gray hallways were actually a very pretty shade of gray, thinking on it. She noticed her tail bobbing from side to side, but she decided to let it slide. *After all*, she thought (or spoke, she couldn't tell the difference), *what is a tail for if not wagging?*

As she approached the basement door, she admired the happy yellow sign displaying `Reactor Room | Authorized Personel Only`. She opened it, and walked down the stairs, each metallic *clang* reverberating in her head like an tiny song. She made it to the basement, and went to the right, coming upon the storeroom. She heard a voice from inside, slightly muffled by the old wooden door.

"Welcome back."

She responded with a cheerful "Hello!", and entered the room. It had been completely redone.

What had previously been a largish room with a few mops and some presumably empty boxes was now a makeshift lab of sorts, a microscope on the floor, various beakers filled with fluids, and a container of what looked like urine. All over the walls was paper. Some of them were empty, some were written on in an indecipherable script. Most of them however, were diagrams from an anatomy book, and even more complex diagrams written in pencil. Lalia noticed an uncomfortable amount of these detailing (again in that same script, which was rather pretty) an egg cell. Looking on the back wall, the wall was textured with insanely small notches of differing diagonal direction.

Meso walked over. "That's your genome. Quite impressive, yes?"

Lalia looked over it. "Yes. It is. There's so much. Wait, how did you get my DNA?"

Meso gestured over to what was in fact urine. "I isolated some epithelial cells of yours from the urine tank."

"Wow."

"Something is wrong with you. Your brain waves are all *off*."

Lalia giggled. "I took one hundred fifty cubic millarms of *tslako*."

"Why?"

"I was stressed."

He clicked his mandibles twice.

"Sit down."

She complied, sitting on a box. She admired the drawings, feeling alarm bells slowly break through the warm blanket that was *tslako*.

He spoke once more. "In any of your world's myths and legends, is there a creature named Seza?"

"Not that I'm aware of."

"Oh. Well, that's fine. I can explain to you who he was. A long time ago, around 500 years, a shifting event occurred in which the anchor position of a fellow deus minor moved close enough to the origin that he could interact with the human world. Similar as to how you unwittingly pulled my anchor position into the origin, though this was a natural event."

"Okay."

"Seza was unusual. Not only was he social with creatures outside of his kind, but he had a way about that made you *not* want to rip off his head."

Lalia joked, "The best ones do."

"Absolutely. I had the honor of traveling with him for a few hundred years, before I reached reproductive potential and I killed him in a love match. I could have let him live, but I just couldn't bear seeing someone I respect so much being under my power and carrying my baby." *Dear gods*, Lalia thought. *Hermaphroditism sounds like it sucks*.

"And you weren't going to have his baby."

Meso made a hissing sound. "Of course not! It was my duty to supersede him. Anyways, at one point when Seza was in the origin, he did something to a woman."

"Par-pardon me?"

"He called it courting. He would bring her gifts, he would compliment her. And other such things."

"Annd-?"

"A few years in, she asked if it was possible to have children. He said yes, and after a year of research he managed to create Filyks."

"Didn't *she* create the child? Or did Seza just make the child out of thin air?"

"Of course she incubated the child."

"Incubated? I feel like that doesn't give her credit."

Meso paused for a few seconds, and she got the hint. "Sorry."

"Anyways," he said, "He taught me the process. He taught me everything of how it works. Every synthase, every nucleotide. I could do it for any human if I wanted to."

The rose tinted window Lalia was looking through shattered.

"Wait wait wait, no- I'm not agreeing to that, no, just no."

Meso clicked his mandibles, and spoke in a raspy tone. "I'm not finished."

Lalia swallowed, as dread slowly rose. She felt her ears drifting downwards against her will.

"Okay, but then I'm leaving. I have to- do things."

He continued. "The Juli genome is extremely complex. Particularly the chromosome sets for interbreeding with humans. It surprised me when I found it out, but I can say with certainty that your kind was created.

Now, I can estimate a multitude of interactions for my experiment, but my data set is limited to mainly working with human systems. There's something I'd like to try, and it simply needs to be tested."

She lunged for the door only for it to slam in her face.



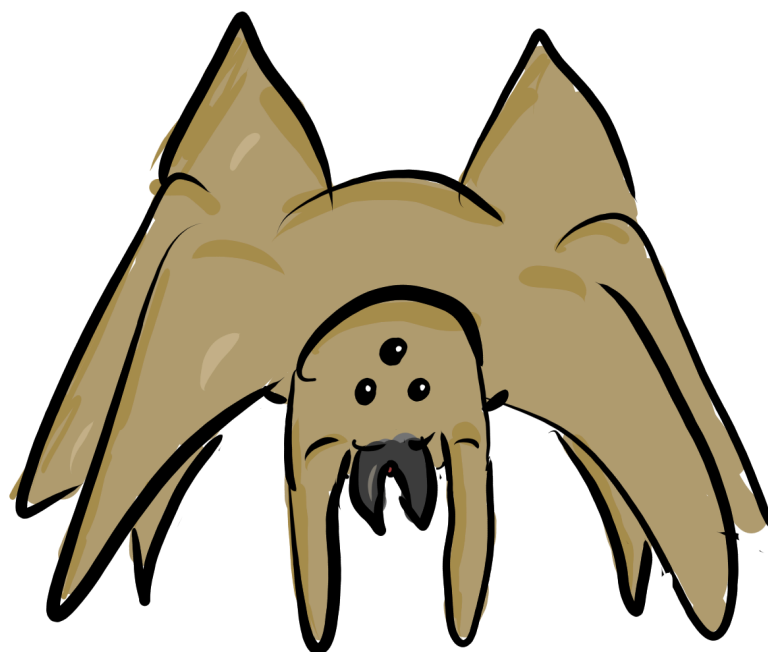


Lalia, the protagonist. 5'3" 1.6m



Pjanka, child of the protagonist. ~1'3" feet, 0.38m





Meso, small god brought into the world by the protagonist and the rest of the team. ~5'0" 1.5m