The harsh deceleration that had shoved the three of us deeply into our couches let up, replaced with near free-fall as our lander fell through the middle reaches of the atmosphere.

"Now it's up to the chutes," Maqtlaz said. She monitored the lander's status panel. "I hope double the rated interval of cold and vacuum soaking hasn't degraded them too much."

"Tazo," Yalad said, 'are we still on track?"

The reticle above the tiny Zhdant-globe in the so-called navigation panel lay pegged over the floodplains north of the mouth of the Friebrkad River. I read the coordinates from the verniers, pulled the atlas out of its cubby and opened it to the page we'd marked before we left Comm Station Number Seventeen three hours ago.

"Near as I can tell from the iron idiot here," I shouted over the slipstream noise, "we're coming down about fifteen klicks north of some settlement called Dzaltlievan."

We all grunted as the initial drogue fired.

The atlas flew out of my hands, falling at Maqtlaz' feet. "Leave it," I told her.

We all silently counted off the seconds until the main chutes deployed. Then the capsule jerked hard and our jaws slammed shut.

"Lost one, curse it!" Maqtlaz shouted. The lander began to spin lazily with only two of the three main chutes slowing it. "We're going to hit a little harder than usual, folks." She spat out a sliver of tooth.

Seconds after the landing bag inflated, the lander slammed into the gravel. It felt like a car crash. "Tazo here," I said blearily.

"Yalad here," he mumbled. "Maq? Maq? Dammit, she's passed out."

We fumbled with our restraints. Maqtlaz began to come to. I looked out the egress hatch window.

"Looks like the locals saw us come down. They're on scene." I tried to keep the fear from my voice.

"Good! They can help us, maybe give first aid to Maq."

"We've got other problems." The hammering began on the egress hatch. **Please don't pull the emergency handle**, I willed them silently.

We could hear them shouting now through the vents.

"Kill them! Kill the spacers! They killed the world! BURN THEM ALIVE!"

Achachens tozej qietsachevas qlieoka dish tyei kopecheshtijens tozej dlafio chilotidish, maqichtlachtio cheztleas iankilens tozej, oqik lienjiash cheztlens tozej draitsyotlish.

"Tavrik dra tentbravr qik," potlie Maqtlaz. Zochejodl dra draitsyotl yzqens dazej.

"Pri'enzh omeiakomo tleveqlasqik ashtiablas iazh qlielienjas tlas patlaetsiens qlie achachiens tozej."

"Tazo," potlie Yalad, "ichtiozhie velozdish tsenchenzh aqle?"

Mitlatematlivr toyak Freibrkad toyaktlakiens zochens dazej ayavzieprad dra Zhdantkitlaliololiach qliefae kavrens jiaprjdivrjodl.

Zhdanzzieprebr` zhdanzhia mochitik tozej, zhdanzoyafevranzh priaachens dradlepratlik tozej, tamatia benzish tozej, achitzitlachilaklieqra 17 tyei achan daz chtenz timanish dazej.

"Ekatoladtlasik yotlchrpliash," acachik tozej aietslienjfav qrazhitia, "aizintlaozdiens matlamachieli matlapatlzdev mitl dra Dzaltlievanfaens preqlach."

Qikriem zhdanjens tozej chiala tentbravr krofish tozej. Maitliktaj pierens tozej zhdanzoyafevranzh, edre chitontli dra Maqtlaz cheztle.

"Ens apezo'd zhdaenzh," ai ens bezhik tozej.

Pitlik tletla chtenzhish tozej, seql zhdanshtladlens tozej tentbravratl. Pitzika katzitlanshtijens tozej tetlchiel, iazh kamtadish chtakeshtijens tozej.

"Tentbravr polotish tozej, flel!" chtachtachens tozej Maqtlaz.

Klezvra omqreviens tozej draitsyotl qietsachevens qin omei ol tyei tentbravatlir.

"Pitzikatl akomozda viakrish dazenzh, nad." Iakatzi tlapakadra chrchens tozej.

Pitlik iepri lienchtemens tozej draitspali, pichtilio chtakeshtijiens tozej draitsyotl.

Mantlachjem ikrchansh itsmoliens tozej. "Tazo," mikchatekavra potlik tozej.

"Yalad," potlachens tozej. "Maq? Maq! Ketlachoiens tozej, dzaq."

Drivdetish shtozstaliodish tozej. Zatecheviens Maqtlaz. Pochqi dra sheqrdrik yzqetajik tozej.

"Yzqens tozej dish nad itsmole. Yqzish iens." Stiefe machitad soblik akom pazklik tozej.

"Yekta! Makoiens dish chiele, pachtamakoad Maqcho tamakiens ekenzh."

"Klantlifredr kavrish." Sheqrdriktia viakrad tlatzens tozej. 'Bradeshfronzbre qlie katzitlano'd zhdaenzh,' tletlvra iens bezhik tozej.

Chtachtachadiens kaqodish tozej tekalitia.

"Krazojens zhdaenzh! Achitzinad krazojish zhdaenzh! Zhdant krazojens tozej! Ens kotlia tezintlish zhdaenzh!"