

Mara pointed to the calico cat. “The Chancellor recognizes the Representative of Toshubiah Valley.”

The cat made her way to the floor. “Thank you, Madam Chancellor,” she purred.

Aldin watched her carefully and did his best to not show any fear. She smiled at him. “I’ve watched and rewatched the interview our Chancellor conducted with you, Visitor from Terra. I’ve also read the accounts of what you told Citizens Orlan and Aouphril. But I don’t think you’ve told the whole story of how you came here.”

Aldin drooped his tail. “No, it isn’t, though it iz all I really understand of it, Representative...”

“Meoindy,” the calico answered.

“Thank you, Representative Me-ow-in-de,” he did his best to keep a straight face over a cat with ‘meow’ as part of its name. “What I did not tell was the events that led-up to me conducting an experiment in that room. It was in the original devlbunny research lab-or-ah-tour-Es across Nahmakanta Lake from our colony and about,” he trailed off in thought a moment flicking his tail back and forth, “four hunnred mits below ground. The original lab-or-ah-tour-Es had been sealed off for about twenty years and recently unsealed as we were in need of more space for the various research projects we conduct as part of the war effort.

“I had requested a room to use to do my fiz-ics research. I was self-studying on my own. We are a small group and don’t have the advantage of a college like you or the humans that we can go to. If we want to learn something, have to rely on human data on the computer network and then study on own. I found a lab-or-tour-E room with the equipment I needed, but there was no power to it. We were supposed to string in power lines as needed. I saw that there were power outlets in the room, and so, I went exploring to try and find somewhere I could plug the power lines in to bring power to those outlets, which wood be e-zee-r than installing new outlets.”

“Power line?” Meoindy interrupted. “What is a power line?”

Aldin looked puzzled at Meoindy. “How do you provide electricity to your lights and the flat panels in here?” He paused for a moment. “And I’ve been wondering how long the,” he paused, “in English, I’d call it a ‘battery’. In Common, a portable temporary power source. Anyway, I’ve wondered how much longer I could run this small hand held flat panel before needing to recharge the power source on it. I haven’t had to plug it in to recharge since it was loaned to me when I was put under kwar-en-teen more than 15 days ago. Humans have these and we’ve adopted them, but they must be recharged every day.”

There was some murmuring across the assembly. A wolf raised his paw. “Chancellor, if I may?”

Mara looked at Meoindy for permission as she was in the middle of her questioning. She nodded.

“Go ahead, Representative of Klamath Valley.”

The wolf dressed in a business shirt, suit, and tie came down to the floor. “When you’re talking about a ‘power line’, what you mean is wires usually of metal and insulated from each other that allow electricity to pass through, right?”

“Yes.” Aldin’s tail twitched a bit. Even dressed for success, the wolf was scary looking to him. As long as the wolf came no closer, he should be able to fight down the fear.

The wolf started tapping icon after icon on his handheld flat panel and power lines something like Aldin had seen when he served as a scout among the Fudds appeared on large flat panels around the room. “Something like this?”

“Yes.”

“Wow!” the wolf exclaimed. He looked around the chamber. “This is how we use to provide power a little over two-hundred years ago. Back before,” he tapped another icon and a picture of a stoat appeared on the flat panels, “Nikle Tesel devised a way to broadcast electric power through the air, eliminating the need for above ground power lines. Your people still use power lines?”

Aldin stared back in disbelief. “There was a human with a similar name on Terra a hundred years ago who proposed he could do just that. He was considered crazy and never was able to do it. As for power lines, humans still use them. We bury our wires as we don’t want most humans to know we’re there.”

The wolf nodded. “Our building lights, and large flat panels have power lines connected to them for emergency back-up. Most don’t realize it as it is so rare for the back-up to be needed. The lines are run through conduits underground rather than strung on poles, probably similar to what you use. There is less chance for failure with them buried underground. My normal job in my District is to maintain the conduit network in case something goes wrong with the broadcast generators.” The wolf turned back to Meoindy. “Thank you, Representative Meoindy, for allowing me to jump in.” The wolf returned to his seat.

“Where were we?” Meoindy asked.

“I was explaining that I needed to run my own power lines down into the devilbunny lab-or-ah-tour-E if I wanted power to conduct my experiments,” Aldin answered. The calico nodded and he continued. “So, I went looking for somewhere I could plug the power line into so I could get power in the room I wanted to use. I found the place, but should have reported it immediately to our Council of Elders. But I didn’t,” he drooped his tail. “I knew if I reported it back immediately, it would be the end of my research before I could even begin. I found a power control room, with power running in it. A devilbunny technology power source of some kind that had been running on its own since before the devilbunny lab-or-ah-tour-Es had been sealed off over twenty years ago.

“So, instead of immediately reporting what I had found, I chose to find the switch to channel power to the room I wanted to use. I turned it on, and went to perform a couple of experiments. I had planned to report my discovery afterward. Except, I never got to. That’s when the accident occurred. So, I guess the power I used was a little more than that power source could handle, causing the surge that caused the explosion and dropped me here. I have no idea what it was. I simply saw a chance to get some research done.” (drooptail)

Meoindy nodded. “I have no further questions.”

Several more representatives asked questions, which Aldin answered. Then, Tobias raised his paw. Mara pointed. “The Chancellor recognizes Representative Tobias of Alisferil Region.”

Tobias made his way down to the floor. “What might be the environmental impacts from the kind of accident or travel as you described it?”

Aldin looked at the otter and thought a moment. “As I don’t know what the deviblunny power source was or how the surge triggered the doorway, I’m not certain what all the impacts would be, Representative.” He twitched his tail a moment. “There was a power surge and explosion and I found myself here. So, it must take a lot of power to open a doorway. Our colony uses water turbines and we’re already using most of the power we generate. It’s another reason I decided to do a couple experiments before reporting back to the Council as I said to Representative Me-ow-in-de earlier. I doubt we could generate enough power to open a doorway, but what do I know as I have no idea how it opened.”

”We are,” he paused a moment doing the math in his head, “about 35 or so kamits from the nearest human settlement, so we can’t tap into their power grid. If we could, there could possibly be a huge pollution impact because, most human power on Terra is generated through burning carbon-based fuels.” There were gasps across the chamber at the use of such a dirty and primitive power generation source.

Aldin thought again for a moment. “However, there is another thing to consider. If you don’t know your target destination and just open a door at random, the consequences could be a lot worse than being sucked into another world.”

“Oh?”

“Well, look what happened to me, Representative Toe-by-us. I fell 12 mits. But, what would happen if that doorway missed your world and instead opened deep in space instead?”

“I would guess you would have been sucked into space.”

Aldin nodded. “Instant death in the vacuum of space as you freeze dry. It wouldn’t be pretty, but at least it would be quick.” He trailed off a moment. “But, what if in that case, the doorway got stuck open for even just a few minutes? A good chunk of your atmosphere would also get sucked through into space.”

Tobias’ eyes widened.

“Which is one of the reasons, I suggest that even if your people understand the technology and/or could develop the technology to send me home, I wouldn’t recommend you try. It’s just too dangerous, unless you really know your target and have a way to slam the door shut quickly if you miss your target.”

“Thank you. I have no further questions.”

Early afternoon, right after Parliament reassembled from their lunch recess, a male deer with a modest set of antlers raised his hand. “The Chancellor recognizes the Representative of the Central Lakes and Forests District.”

The buck made his way to the floor. “Thank you, Madame Chancellor. I have an unusual request. An adolescent from Rock City in my district would like to ask a question of our visitor. May I put him through? It’s too far for him to travel here to take the citizen’s circle.”

“Very well.”

The buck tapped an icon on his flat panel and the head and shoulders of a young otter with medium brown fur, wearing a blue baseball cap and a red shirt appeared on screens throughout the chambers.

“Go ahead, Master Ryan, you’re live.”

“Wait? What? In front of the entire Parliament?”

Aldin smiled at a camera. “Go ahead, young Ryan. You had a question for me?” Aldin raised his tail in a question mark.

Ryan pulled his baseball cap off and squeezed it in his hands. “Well, Mr. Bush-E-tail, science has always fascinated me. Could you describe what you were doing just before your accident in more detail, please?”

“Sure. However, I’m not sure if I can explain it well as I was trying to learn it myself. I was starting an experiment with material that when super-cooled conducts electricity much more easily than at room temperature. Unfortunately, I don’t know what the material I was using is called in Common. But I know someone who could possibly help with that.” He turned to Mara. “Chancellor, you said you were a chemist. Do you have a table of elements from smallest to largest?”

Mara split the screen in half and produced a version of the periodic table covered in Common symbols. It had a few more rows than what Aldin could recall on Terra, but fortunately, it appeared to have a similar set-up. He pointed to the eighth one. “This is what we breathe, right?”

Mara nodded. “Oxygen.”

“Then I need the name of the one to the left of it.”

“Nitrogen.”

“Thank you.” He counted down to the fourth row and then over to the right five. “I also need this one and,” he counted over another 8 to the right, “and this one.”

Mara answered, “Vanadium and gallium.”

“Thank you.” He turned back to the camera. “Ryan, the material I was using was an alloy of vanadium and gallium. I was using super-cooled liquid nitrogen to cool the material.” Aldin again turned to Mara. “Sorry to keep asking. What do you use for a temperature scale? Do you have one where water freezes at zero and boils at a hunnred?” She nodded. “Perfect. That makes this easier.” He turned back to the camera again. “I’m sorry I have to keep pausing, Ryan. I want to get this right for you. Using that liquid nitrogen, I was cooling my metal alloy down to about minus two-hunnred degrees.”

The young otter shivered at the thought of temperatures that cold.

“Then I passed electricity through the alloy. I was able to balance a magnet in the air over it. I tapped the edge of the magnet and started it spinning. ‘Cool,’ I whispered as I started jotting down some notes. Then the power surge came, the explosion and the doorway opened that sent me here.” Aldin paused a moment. “No, wait.” He thought again for a moment staring off in the distance. “There was more to it than that come to think of it. As I started jotting down some notes, I saw something shorting out against the far wall and start to smoke. I took two steps back, there was a bright flash when the explosion occurred, blinding me. The doorway opened, I felt like I was falling and as my vision cleared, that is what was happening. I screamed in panic, hit the ground hard and blacked-out. When I woke-up I was in Aouphril’s home with my arm

bandaged up.” He looked about. “Spirit, if I hadn’t taken those two steps back, I wouldn’t be alive. That doorway would have cut me in half as it slammed shut! I can’t imagine how Aouphril would have reacted to the back-half of my body landing at her feet.” Aldin shuddered.

He then remembered Ryan was still on the line and turned back to the camera. “Sorry, Ryan. Thanks to your question, I just realized how close I came to not surviving that day. Anyway, that’s what I was working on. Seeing how advanced your world’s technology is, I bet if you contacted your local college, they could reproduce the experiment to show you in person, but without the explosion and doorway opening.” He glanced at Mara, who nodded in the affirmative.

“That would be awesome. Thank you, Mr. Bush-E-tail.” Ryan closed the connection.

“I have no questions of my own. Thank you,” the buck stated and returned to his seat.

Late in the day, a creature Aldin had only read about but had never seen muzzle-to-muzzle before raised its hand. It had grayish white fur with a white head, black ears/paws, a pink nose and a furless tail that it curled behind it.

“The Chancellor recognizes the Representative of Piccayune District.”

The opossum made her way to the floor and smiled showing a lot of teeth. “Visitor All-dun, your theory of coming from a parallel world is interesting, but I have a different theory. I study astronomy and I saw the drawing of your night sky you made for Citizens Orlan and Aouphril.” She held her flat panel in her tail and tapped it with a finger of her right hand. The lights in the room dimmed and a map of the night sky appeared on the ceiling. “This is our night sky as we would see it this evening.” She pointed out various constellations with a laser pointer, ending with the ‘frying pan’. “What some of my colleagues may not know unless they study astronomy is that the handle use to have a third star. It went nova about the time of the last war and that nova has since faded. You could still see it with a telescope if you know what you’re looking for. This is where that star would be today if it hadn’t exploded.” Another star appeared on the map. It was about the same distance below the end of the handle as the distance between the two stars within the handle. “Just like our Sun, all the stars of the galaxy rotate around its center. As they are different distances from Earth, over time, they will shift in relation to one another in our sky. We don’t live long enough to notice. So, what we recognize as constellations today looked different in the past as they will in the future.” She then tapped an icon on her flat panel. The Common symbol for zero appeared in the lower right corner and started counting backwards, at 1,000 year intervals as the stars shifted. She paused it at -100,000 years before present.

“Is this the stars you see at night on Terra, Visitor Aldin?”

Aldin stared in disbelief. It was very close to his night sky. A few stars were off a little bit, but the Big Dipper and Polaris were in the right places. Orion's bow was flat instead of curved and his belt was bent. "It is very close."

The opossum turned back to the rest of Parliament. "My fellow representatives, it is my theory that our visitor is not from another world, but from our distant past. This is the night sky as it would have looked 100,000 years ago, long before the period of our lost history." There was murmuring throughout the assembly hall. The opossum turned again to Aldin. "Perhaps you're a 'missing link' between our wild cousins and ourselves."

Aldin stared at the star map in thought for a moment before replying. "Your theory is as valid as mine, Representative. Some of the stars aren't in the right place, but that could be due to errors in the program. However, I'd prefer that your theory be wrong."

"And why's that?"

"Because then I could still hope that all who I know are still out there somewhere and alive and not dead and forgotten for a hundred-thousand years. If your theory is correct, then something went very, very wrong in our war and all was lost, enabling your civilization to rise from our ashes." He sagged his head and drooped his tail. After a few moments, he sat up straight. "Representative, may I ask you a question?"

"Go ahead."

"Let's say I am from your distant past. How is it that wild cousins haven't changed in all that time? How is it that when I speak in wild cousin chitter that Orlan and Aouphril can understand me? Over a hundred-thousand years both language and fiz-i-cal ap-peer-ants of wild cousins should have changed. Also, seven billion, I think that is the right word, seven billion humans would have left some footprint or evidence behind, even after all this time. Yet, no one here seems to recognize them or make mention of some lost previous civilization in your 'lost history'. Surely, there would at least be verbal stories of such. With that, I don't believe I'm from your past, Representative. It could be I am from the past, but not necessarily your Earth's past. Maybe where I came from is a combination of both our theories. Who knows?"

The opossum nodded. "I have no further questions."

Two members of Parliament proposed going into recess until the following morning at 9 clicks. The proposal passed unanimously.

Tobias appears courtesy of Kylinn (<https://twitter.com/kylinn>) on twitter/deor on LJ

Ryan appears courtesy of Seizethemoment (FA:
<https://www.furaffinity.net/user/seizethemoment/> and Weasyl:
<https://www.weasyl.com/~seizthemoment>