

The Windownesian

Chapter 2

There Is One Imposter Among Us



1961: Yuri Gagarin became the first human sent to space.

1969: Human landed on the Moon for the first time.

1995: The first rover was sent to Mars.

2011: Kepler 22b, the first habitable planet outside the Solar System was discovered.

2021: Blue Origin NS-16 was launched.

2027 June: Blue Origin NS-20, the first project to take civilians to space was launched.

2027 The last day of Summer, in the dormitory of Hong Kong Shue Yan University:

It is one or two days after Alex has found the Sapient Sabre. These days, he has been introduced to the kitchen, and the supermarket ten minutes walk away from our university. He is still sitting still in his chair most of the time, but occasionally enjoys some fresh air. This is my roommate. As the last sunset of August descends behind the Western hills, the door sends another roommate. A rather loud “beep” sounds from the card reader, and the door opens. The first thing comes to sight is his heavy breather. Not the pink and grey breathers. It is a metallic breather, with two thin plastic tubes on each side, linking to a circular tank he is carrying. He is a really slender man. Not thin, slender. The arms and

legs are exceedingly long, but they don't look weak. He is not topless, but the brown long t-shirt on his sport trousers makes him seem like so if his skin is not pale. He takes his breather off, unmasking his pointy cheeks. It is then we recognize the large eyes and small nose. He soon looks more pale, and he puts on his breather again. I make the first move. I rise, walk to him, and lay out a hand,

“Jonathan Wills.”

He grabs my hand, and says “Tataraka.”

“Your name is what?” Alex rises and asks him.

“It should be ‘What is your name’, you put the question word before the verb,” he corrects Alex.

He also shows a card. It looks like a student card. Written on the bottom right is “Tataraka”, and in the center there are numbers. Arabic numerals, but displayed in straight lines to resemble numbers. “80667”. 8 is two squares stacked together, symmetrical in the middle. 0 is a rectangle. 6 is a right pointing triangle with a line at the top.

7 is 7.

“Do we call you Tataraka? Or do you have a more convenient name?” I ask him. He just leaves the card in my hand, and rushes to the windows, slamming them close one by one. “Sorry I am doing this. I cannot stand the high oxygen level here,” he explains. And he taps the card reader to turn on the air

conditioner. I forget that Shue Yan is next to Braemar Hill, basically a forest, hence the high oxygen level. But who would hate the oxygen?

I look at his card, and utter, “80667...umm...How about we call you Bobby?”

“Bobby. I like that name. Bobby.”

And so he is Bobby. He takes off his breather, and he is a pale one.

At night, someone knocks on the door. Since Bobby is at the closest bed to the door, he opens it. It is Meander.

“Meander,” I am reading my book, “meet Bobby. Bobby, meet Ms Lee.”

“Please to meet you, Meander,” greets Bobby.

“What’s with the radio?” Meander notices the soft radio playing in the background.

“The radio? It keeps me comfortable,” Bobby answers her.

“Luckily it may not be loud enough to disturb us sleeping.” I say.

“It is not my problem,” says Alex, “my ears can auto-mute things.”

“Is that why you don’t respond to me when I am calling?” I tease.

“Wait,” Bobby asks, “what do you mean ‘us’ and ‘sleeping’?”

“Oh, Meander is staying here for the night.” I explain.

“I don’t mind,” says Alex.

“Bobby, can I stay here?” begs Meander

“I will see how it goes on the first night,” Bobby means yes.

And so Meander is staying for the night. The windows are closed but the air con is on. We can still breathe, so we don't really mind. Bobby's radio is rather loud in dark silence. But we manage to put ourselves to sleep out of tiredness.

On the next day after our first lesson, Alex and I go back to our room. We have been grouped together for the Wednesday compulsory course Ecology and Literature. When we open the door, there is an overwhelming smell of stimulating plants. The room is filled with green grassy plants, coriander, to be exact. I know some people are addicted to this vegetables, adding 1:1 portions into their meals. I am the exact opposite, these are the grasses grown from hell, with a terrible scent just to neutralize the sulfur in the hell. I love lavender. I love mint. I love Rose Mary. All the smelly grasses. I hate coriander. From Alex's shocked eyes and covering nose, I guess we are on the same side. Not exactly that the room is filled with coriander, but a few visible corners, that's enough to disgust us.

"What the hell are these?" I ask Bobby.

"I don't know," answers Bobby, "I find these in a large bag next to the bin in the kitchen."

"Wait, you are liking a plant you don't know name?" Alex comments.

"They remind me of home," he takes a batch and smells.

"Okay, if we are living together, we need some rules." I rumble.

“And first of all,” I walk to my desk and grab a batch of coriander, “keep your own objects on your own desk, especially things we don’t ask for.”

“I agree on that one,” Alex removes some at the side of his bed.

“Fine.” Bobby is not looking happy.

“I don’t want you to feel bad,” I try to comfort Bobby, “I don’t mind you keeping coriander in your own area, but I want you to keep these babies to your own.”

“Why are these babies” “These are babies why?” my roommates both ask. Seriously, I am not surprised that Alex doesn’t know metaphors, but a fluent one like Bobby?

“Well...umm...yes, these are not babies. I am just referring to these corianders you may treat as good things,” I explain to them. “All I’m saying is, just keep these things in your own area.

As Bobby is retrieving the grasses on our desk and by the window, he is agreeing to our rules.

On Thursday, we have our lesson on Science Fiction. Professor Mike Resnick is teaching this semester. After going through the outline and presentation grouping, Professor Resnick realizes that he has time.

“And what we learn from Slusser’s essay is that, Science Fiction is the true bridge between what’s scientific and what’s imagined. Each era humans have new science discovery or new technology, and fiction captures the potentials of

these technoscience. So, we still have about thirty minutes left. Plenty of time.

How about we get a headstart and talk a bit about our topic for the first two weeks, space travelling. Wait, let me try to open a file. So, this is the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Let's see if I can open the PPT and play some clips."

"So, we have the screenshots of the movie here. I presuppose you have all watched the movie, it was a famous movie back in the 1960s. Well, you are not that old. I was thrilled when the movie first came out. Anyway, one object central to the movie is the monolith. This black rectangular thing is the monolith. Notice that each time humans reach an evolution milestone, it appears. It appears in the first scene when apes start to use bones as tools. It appears when humans start space travel. It appears when the protagonist becomes a Star Child. Think about what that means. And oh, why many movies and writings love to write about space? Any guess?"

"Umm, because it is the most unknown thing to us?" I suggest.

"Good. You are?"

"Jonathan Wills."

"Good Jonathan. Now there is another reason. Space travelling requires the most advanced technology humans have ever had. It is also the display of power. Whoever can send human to space, whoever is the champion. This was how America gained power after World War 2 and the Cold War. Space, has always been the final frontier, in all sense. Next week when we are back we will take a look at Arthur Clarke's story 'The Sentinel'. On week 3, we will watch a

movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. On week 4, we will look at aliens and feminism through the stories 'Out of All Them Bright Stars' and 'The Women Men Don't See'. That's good enough for first lesson. Dismiss."

When the lesson ends, it is 530pm. I decide to take a shower first. I take my bucket with new clothes, a towel, shampoo and soap to the public toilet. There are two toilets with bathrooms, one closer to the kitchen. We Shue Yan hallmates call that fish tail. The other is closer to the lift and our room. We call this fish head. I learn that by listening to hallmates swearing "Hey Ching at the fish head, go soft when closing the fucking door". In the fish head toilet, there is a large separate toilet for the disabled next to the entrance. Not only it is larger and I can sit there, the water temperature is more stable. Is it just me or the water temperature is never stable in Shue Yan? Either it is boiling inferno, or it is frozen hell, rarely in between. Clever people know to let the water run for some moments until it is comfortable, but good times are always short lived, and the best temperature can only sustain for at most one or two minutes. I don't know how can others endure the heat or chill. I already gave up and step in nude before testing the water. The water comes out lukewarm, I take this chance to wet myself, turn off the water, and rub myself with shampoo and soap. I turn the water on again, soon it becomes boiling hot despite switching on the cold side. Must be the sunshine in the afternoon boils the water in the tank, and I am not fast enough to avoid it. I stand there with bubbles all over me, waiting for it to

cool down. I cannot stand it and get in the shower once the water is cooler.

Quickly I dry myself with my towel, and put on some clothes. I use the hair dryer back in the TV hall right next to the lift hall. I hate showering in the dorm.

When I return room, Alex enters with wet hair too, wearing earplugs.

“You went to shower?” I ask an obvious question.

“Yes I went to shower.”

“I thought water will damage your computer brain.”

He takes off his earplugs, “these can block the water. I am just kidding,” he continues, “water doesn’t damage robot. I wear these to avoid hear people singing in shower.”

I laugh, “really? Can you borrow me sometime?”

“I am serious.” He blows his hair using the dryer I lend him.

Then he suddenly looks sick in the air conditioned room.

“The windows are closed. Why?” he complains.

“I feel that too. The oxygen level must be low.” Then I turn to Bobby, “can you open the windows?”

“I have the ability to open the windows,” Bobby replies, not looking at us, “but I don’t want to. This is comfortable to me.”

“Please, you can open the windows?” Alex pleads.

“No.”

I sigh, “Luckily the AC is on. AC means air conditioner. You really don’t want to open some windows?” I address Bobby.

“No.” he says.

“I have air filter in me. I am okay,” says Alex.

“I don’t.” I groan. “Anyway I am out of here. I have to meet up with Meander. See you boys later.”

And so I leave the room at six, and head to the studio Meander is working asap.

I am a little bit late to her programme. But I am just in time for the programme count down. Meander is working part-time in a broadcast called ‘The People’. Their studio is located by the Victoria Harbour.

The director gets noticed that the previous programme has just ended. She turns to the crew and counts down. Five, four, three, two, one. And the programme begins.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, welcome to ‘The People’, guardian of your right to information and your voice. This is your host Meander Lee. Space, it is the final frontier for human beings. For years we have been sending elites and advanced technology to space. However, all seems to be changing since billionaires started to travel to space via the Blue Origin projects. Since then, space travelling such as Space X is funded by our society’s top persons. Today,

we have with us, Mister Preston Bezos, the son of Jeff Bezos is said to fund project Blue Origin NS-21. Welcome Mr Bezos.”

“Thanks for having me here Meander. I am not anywhere older than you, so please, just call me Preston.”

“Sure. So Preston, can you tell us more about Blue Origin NS-21?”

“Well Meander, space travelling has been something limited to elected astronauts, or highly trained individuals. In recent years rich people. But with NS-21, things will be changed. Blue Origin NS-21 will be the first space travelling opened to the general public. In other words, space is not just opened to Neil Armstrong or Elon Musk, but the upper middle class. It may open the public to a set of space experiences including, of course, space-walking.”

“Interesting concept. But why decide to fund the project? What motivates you to pour capital into it?”

“One, we have the capital. It is an investment all top ranking individuals would love to make. Second is a bit more personal. A few years ago, my father Jeff Bezos took part in Blue Origin NS-16, went to space and returned. Two years later, he decided for the whole family to go for a space trip. And so it did! And Blue Origin NS-18u was a brilliant experience. My mother is a novelist. She is particularly excited with the idea of space travel. Since I was a child, going to space, meeting aliens, these have been bedtime stories my mother tells me. Meanwhile I have been inspired by space movies such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. I dream of going to space. Therefore at the end of the journey, when

we were back on Earth, the engineers quickly promoted their next plan. Plus I know that some of my scientist friends have been working on spaceships for better space travel, I am excited. Father agrees with me too, and therefore funding the project.”

“I see. But with Blue Origin NS-21, it seems that space travelling will see a revolutionary change. How do you envision the future of space tourism?”

“Like I said, Meander, we democratize it, popularize it. Travelling to space has been orchestrated by the nation, or trillionaires. With this project, space travelling won’t be something only the riches can afford it, but the middle class can afford it. The entry fee will be drastically dropped. If this is successful, next project is Blue Origin NS-22. NS-22 will go further. Previously, only humans physically fit were capable of space travelling. With the NS-22, anyone, elderly and infants can travel to space. This is how space travel can be in the future.”

“I am excited. Oh, before I forget, just a reminder to our audience. Shall you have any questions, message us via our CloudSound The People 2027, one word all lowercase. Back to our topic. You said to commonize space travel, but how to achieve it? I mean, do you understand how will the funding be used?”

“Simple answer, to develop technology. Space travel is expensive, because it needs to ensure safety when going through the Earth’s atmosphere. That means enough fuel and a tough hull for the space ship. These are difficult tasks limited by their technology of their time. Now that with more and more science discovery, making use of nanofuel, micro materials, and even implication of

dark matter outside the Earth, it only takes research and development for the suitable fuel and suitable hull. I am funding the R&D, happy knowing that funding a spaceship that can reduce the risk of space travel for everyone to the lowest. Besides, I just heard from my research team that they have developed a fuel which is extracted from space that is highly efficient and long lasting. Every day, we are having new discoveries to move us forward. And I will be glad to be part of it. We can make space travelling available to everyone.”

“Right. Since you are talking about space travelling, I want to get one thing straight. Space travelling to our understanding is just, tie you in a seat, send you outside Earth, let you feel weightless, and send you back. Wouldn’t that make travelling to space be...far fetched?”

“So as going to the Himalayas or diving in the Mariana Trench! Well, yours is an understatement. Think of how few men can fly beyond Earth. What matters is not just about the events, but the location. Space, it is the most hazardous place for humans. Going to it, even in a metal hull, is a breakthrough. Space travel is so attractive simply because it is the best technology in human evolution. And who experiences it would say it’s worth a billion. Imagine the first time we send technology to space, a certain someone must be looking up, saying ‘this is just out of this world’, hahahahaha.”

“Hahahahaha, I like that. Now, we have the first question from our audience. Eel On Musket asks ‘What is the estimated cost for a trip to space?’ Yea that needs answer. Preston?”

“I like the word cost, because the ticket would be much less with us sponsoring it. I would say a million, US dollars. It is already many times less than the last project. But I want to make clear here, that already includes tax, service fee and insurance.”

“So, can I imagine the price to be similar to taking the world’s finest first class flight?”

“As we are aiming to provide this to civilians, we wish to reduce the cost with all the funding and technology. NS-21 is just the first step. Yes, it makes space travel a top-class plane flight. But our goal, is to make it cost merely a thousand. Perhaps one day, we can make space travel costs like a train trip.”

“Wow, I hope I live long to see that day. Next question, we have question from Ben Tan ‘Is there any risk for the public to engage in space travelling?’”

“Death. I am really honest here. When I mention developing a spaceship hull safely return humans to the Earth, such a technology is still in development. Quotas will be opening to the public, but the selected have to be heavily trained for months to withstand the pressure of space travelling. Physically speaking. Just in case you die during the journey, we need insurance to cover. That’s part of the cost as well.”

“Right. Michael Resnick asks, ‘now average people can go to space and even to other planets, how do you view aliens?’ somehow that scares me. Preston?”

“Frankly cross-planet travelling is not on my list, yet. But it is something I’d like to imagine in my spare time. If we can travel to space, how would we face aliens? I personally haven’t met one. But you think about it, we are the aliens in space tourism! You know, tourism be like, you go to a country that is foreign to you, and think that everyone is foreigner, but you are the foreigner there! That’s how space tourism may feel like someday. We are just lifeforms of another planet to them.”

“Final question. Stephen Berg asks ‘Are humans ready to contact with aliens yet?’ Oh no I want to know that too! Preston?”

“That interests me as well. Since I fund it, I want to see aliens as a surprise. Now, aliens may share different technology and language from us. So far we don’t have the technology to land on a planet. Therefore, I am not planning to see one. It would be exciting to meet one tho.”

“That’s a really open attitude for aliens. I wish to hear more. But this is the end of our programme. Thank you for joining us Preston.”

“The pleasure is mine.”

“And thank you audience for joining us. Thank you for tuning in ‘The People’. This is your host Meander Lee, signing off.”

“Why don’t you ask me more about the aliens?” Mr Bezos groans, “I have been dreaming a lot about aliens!”

“Perhaps one day we can set up another interview if you really want to share it.” Meander replies.

“Anyway I shall be leaving,” excuses Preston, “I have a meeting soon.”

“B-B-But just one thing,” he stops, “our research team detects an organic matter falling to Earth a few days ago. See if that interests you.”

“Mr Preston, that would be something related to our director if you need more interviews. Such a nice talk. My boyfriend is here for me.”

“Where has the matter landed?” I don’t wait for my introduction, “and why does no press report it?”

“Braemar Hill. It is an unknown secret,” says Mr Bezos, leaving.

When we are back at the dormitory, the windows are shut tight, and it is not air conditioned. The smell of coriander is weaker, replacing it is the smell of sweat and rust metal. Meander doesn’t seem to like it, and she says,

“Umm, we need some fresh air.”

Both of the boys look at her, and none knows what she means.

“She means,” I explain, “can someone open the windows? But Meander, I have tried,

Bobby will not open the windows. You can try tho.”

And so Meander tries, “Bobby, can I open some windows?”

“Of course you have the ability to open the windows. You have hand. I don’t know why you are asking me,” Bobby doesn’t get the request. Just as I expected.

“Then,” she continues, “may I invite you to open the windows for us?” Bobby is going to say no, or kindly refuse it.

Bobby sighs. “Sure!” and he rises.

Well, that was unexpected. Unwillingly, he walks to the windows, and opens two of them. But shortly after, he runs to the windows to close it.

“I need it,” he claims, “I need the window closed.”

“On come on!” I am on my feet and frustrated. Meander intercepts me, and she turns to Bobby, “do you really insist on letting the window closed?” he nods.

“Well, I will turn on the AC then,” Meander suggests, “I need to go for a bath.”

“Why are you listening to Meander?” I ask him when she is away, “you never listen to me.”

“I respect women. In fact, females provide population. I listen to them. It turns out to be difficult.”

“You do really need a breather,” Alex asks, “or you are just stubborn with windows?”

“It shall be ‘do you’ and ‘are you’. But yes, it makes me comfortable.”

“It must be weed in the breather! Bobby is taking weed!” I exclaim.

“What does randomly grown plants have to do with me?” Bobby asks.

“I want to ask the same thing too,” says Alex.

“We call an additive drug weed. It seems that Bobby needs to depend on closed windows as if he is addicted.”

I want to talk more, but since they are willing to turn on the AC, I am fine with that and prepare to sleep.

It’s Friday night, the night for Meander, Zedekiah, Athena and I to have dinner together. Zedekiah and I have been good friends and good roommates. We started this tradition long ago. Tonight, I am the host. Usually we will buy some food, the girls cook them and the boys wash the dishes afterwards. Tonight, I got notice from my mother that we don’t need to.

“Ma,” I ask my mother once we are all seated, with the dinner table strangely facing the TV, “why are we having take-aways today?”

“Are you done with the TV Sam?” Mum is checking on dad who is plugging a hdmi wire to the TV, “son, we are having dinner with your brother. I don’t want him to get jealous.”

“Don’t worry auntie,” Athena says, “I am fine as long as we have food.” “Zed,” she smacks her boyfriend who is already eating, “can’t you wait for us?” Finally we get the TV connected with the computer, and my brother Joshua is projected.

“Hi Zhuang Wu, mama misses you!” and my mum tickles the TV.

“Hi ba, hi ma. Hi guys. What are you eating there?” “Seasoned trash!” I show my box of things to him.

“Well,” Meander comments, “your brother is not wrong.” She is lingering in her oily and salty noodles.

“At least you get food!” Joshua complains.

“What does food look like there Wu, are you well fed?” Mum asks him. Joshua shows us a plate of red things and whines, “spicy, everything is spicy.”

“You are in Sichuan son,” my father chews and says, “what do you expect.”

“Joshua,” Athena suggests, “you can try some milk, they counteract the spice.”

“Yes I know. But milk is rare here.” he complains, “I don’t know, it feels like another planet. I live on the mountain, wash clothes by the river, and buy food once a week. I feel like an alien here.”

“Mama can mail you some milk powder!”

“Well, at least they don’t grow coriander everywhere.” I jest.

“Your roommate grows coriander?” my brother asks, “I thought Zedekiah hates plants.”

“I am not your brother’s roommate this year.” Zedekiah says. “By the way, you haven’t told me about another roommate.”

“Bobby? Or whatever he is called.” I poke the pork chop, “he is placing coriander everywhere, he turns on the radio when we sleep, and he closes the window.”

“I believe he does need the windows closed,” says Meander, “but I don’t like the airless room too. I am quite jealous of you Zhuang Wu. Sichuan must have a lotta fresh air.”

“Yea, use chillies to trade then.” Joshua says.

“Don’t worry son,” mum says, “I will find ways to solve the spiciness.” It is mainly the conversation between Mother and Joshua for the rest of the dinner. Yes, online meals can be awkward. Yet he gets me thinking. Live like an alien? What if things go the other way, aliens are already leaving with us without us noticing. And they are having habits different from us?

On Saturday night, we have our church fellowship gathering. Tonight’s topic is Movie Sharing hosted by Zedekiah. We are going to watch a film Prometheus. I didn’t know what is he sharing before he tells me.

“Prometheus? That one film starts with a giant drinking weird stuff then dissolves into cells?” I scream.

“Yes.” Zedekiah is clicking on the film.

“The one with a female opening a door, sees an old man there and says in a strange tone ‘father’?”

“Yes.”

“The one with a scene where a female gets her stomach cut open and sealed back?”

“Yes.”

“The one with a long scene of a head on the ground talking?”

“Yes.”

“Oh. Haven’t watched that before.”

“Seriously?”

After the movie, Zedekiah clicks on his powerpoint and starts some discussions.

“So,” he begins, “just feel free to share. This is a truly overwhelming movie. At least to me. Just my feelings first, it is kinda the first time I ever doubt my religion, asking my mother ‘is that God?’ and ‘why is he destroying us’. Anyway, with this movie suggesting that world might have originated from aliens, How do we Christians view aliens?”

“That is a really unfair question,” Sara says, “there is no record of aliens in the Bible! I mean, humans only start to imagine about aliens when we explore space. There is no guideline or references in the Bible what so ever.”

“Well indeed, but I will be excited to meet one.” Peter suggests. “Afterall, I am quite certain that God doesn’t only create one world. There must be aliens for us, just that we don’t actually don’t know how.”

Joseph follows Peter's idea, "they may even share the same God as us. Perhaps it is the alternate timeline where Adam and Eve didn't eat the forbidden fruit. I am really curious."

"Ah, but what if," Zedekiah asks, "what if our God is an alien? Would that change what we are believing?"

"You know what," says Athena, "that is what kids ask me. Whenever I tell them God creates everything, they'll ask 'did God create aliens'".

"Technically our God is an alien," Tim responds, "we sometimes call aliens ET, which means extraterrestrial beings. Since it is known that God created the world, he must be outside of our world."

"No, I find it hard to believe," says Edmund, "at least not as the movie would depict it. Movies are just imaginations."

"I actually agree with Tim on this one," Athena says, "the idea of God can be cultural projections. We have religion because we are human and we perceive things as human. He is technically an alien, so?"

"Now I can ask the third question. In the movie, the female scientist is a christian. After all the incident, she still seems to believe it. Does space travel have to conflict with religion?"

His question puts us in silence.

"I think we need to know how space discovery may have conflicted with religion first," our mentor Simone says, "if you read the Bible carefully, you will find that it is written according to how humans know God. Only one and he

creates Earth. And there seems to be a suggestion that Earth is the only world, everything centres around it. Therefore, when we discover that there are worlds outside Earth, it crushes our knowledge. Some who oppose science think that it denies God. There might be how things may conflict.”

“I agree, but I can think of more reasons,” Athena says, “to me, a bigger problem is that it may downplay the role and image of God. Our God is the one and only, and is powerful, omniscient. Now that he is an alien kind of taking away this element, claiming that he is just a lifeform. I mean, if God is technically an alien, the question of who created God would be more sensible. Also God is almighty and his appearance is unknown. Now that him being alien breaks the idea. I don’t like it, thinking that our God is just a lifeform when he is far beyond this. I will also blame humans for this too. I mean, we haven’t actually seen a living alien, so we have our imagination. They are all ugly and stuff, attacking us when alive and an eyesore when dead. Many would also depict them invading Earth. We don’t know much about God, we don’t know much about aliens either. When we link these together, we may stereotype God. Yet, my opinion is that, no matter how or what God is, we only need to believe in the gospel and Jesus’ blood, and that is all. After all, aliens are just cultural depictions, but our God is alive and living.”

Seeing no one else respond, Zedekiah wraps up the topic. “Today’s movie is only for some sharing. But I agree with Athena. We need to know more about our God, and really go and read the bible. Or else, we might be driven by the

world and all its depictions. To me, it doesn't matter that God is Alien, as long as we are Christians."

On Sunday night, I return to dorm with Zedekiah. As I top the card and open the door, I enter and so does Zedekiah.

"It's dead air here," Zedekiah comments.

And dead air indeed, the windows are tightly shut, the AC is on but not cool enough to make people feel comfortable. The corianders are starting to rot. Radio is playing in the background. Bobby is looking at Zedekiah, not sure if he hates the comment, or he has no idea what Zed is talking about.

"I love corianders. I have a bagful of them if you need new ones," he tells Bobby.

"Right," I comment, remembering the time with him, "as long as you only eat it"

Once I drop my own bag, I go with Zedekiah. Soon, we move from my room to his room.

"I mean, who will endure that?" I complain to Zedekiah, "the windows are closed, the radio is on, smelly vegetables everywhere. Oh sorry, I don't mean it, I just don't like smelling them."

Zedekiah sits in his chair, I sit on the opposite, minding the electric guitar.

“Well at least you are not having cross-room rock and roll concerts midnight, or roommates playing video games loud until three, then sleep-talking in the middle of the night.”

“Oh God, Zed, have you slept well?”

“Luckily I am not that allergic to sounds. And they are not here for one or two days. But Jon, yours is too weird. I am not meaning Alex, he is just sitting there. But leaving the windows closed? If you don’t tell me, I will suspect he is from another planet.”

“Well...”

“And Jon, have you ever seen him shower, or seeing evidence from showering?”

“I have seen Alex all wet after shower. But damn! Really haven’t seen Bobby soaked.”

“That’s it! Have you ever heard that aliens, they cannot touch water. They may melt.”

“Those must be really unique aliens,” I say, “what are they called?”

“Windows...Windownesian!”

“Windownesian! That’s good name Zed! I must tell Alex about it.”

“Wait Jon, I don’t think it is ridiculous to suggest that Bobby is an alien.”

“He is not even called Bobby. His ID card is strange. I gave him the name based on his code 80667.”

“Jon, what I’m saying is that, if space travel is a thing, Bobby might be from another planet without us knowing. Let’s try some experiment, to stimulate him.”

“Wait, why don’t we just ask him?”

“Aliens, regardless of intention, may not always reveal themselves. So that they can kill us, or gain intel to invade us.”

“Which movie have you watched recently?”

“Don’t you think he looks like alien too? With the pale face and slender limbs.”

“Sure. But where do we even begin?”

“Well, he never takes a shower, and he closes all the windows. I have a few ideas.”

Tuesday evening, Bobby happens not to be here. So that I contact Zedekiah, and Meander is here with me.

“Jon,” she takes a bucket, “I don’t like it. This is bullying.”

“We are not splashing him, but a small experiment,” I explain. “Besides, if he is not alien, which he mostly is not, it will be nothing.”

As I am wetting a towel, Meander walks to Bobby’s desk, staring at a stack of paper.

“I haven’t seen these before. Look!” She shows me a note.

It is not English, it has no curves. It is not Chinese, it is too simplistic. It is not Hebrew, it says nothing Hebrew. It is formed almost entirely by straight lines, plus some circles. Something linguistics would study. When we are mesmerized by the words, Zedekiah calls,

“Can...someone care to help?” He is lifting a huge pot of plant. I rush to him and lift the other side.

“What’s with this one?”

“Well, as he is closing the windows and not happy with the oxygen level, HA...HUH! This may raise oxygen and reveal his identity.” Alex is touching the leaf as Zedekiah speaks.

“Come,” Zedekiah says, “I have another one waiting in the lift hall.”

“How did you pass the hall gate with these?” Meander asks.

Just as he is going to explain, Athena is behind him and she interrupts,

“Zed, return these to the campus gardener.”

“What do you mean?” Zedekiah protests, “this will work.”

“You imbecile,” Athena slaps him. “Trees do photosynthesis to produce oxygen only under sunlight. At night or enclosed areas, they respire like us. You are making things worse. Here, take this.” She hands him a silver can.

“These are oxygen tanks. These are better.”

“Wow!” I take one can, and suck the mouthpiece, then I cheer upon feeling my brain alive again.

“Come Alex,” Meander hands another to Alex after tasting one herself,
“this is better than Sapient Sabre.”

Alex takes one sip, and his eyes are bright for the first time,

“This...is...Brilliant!”

“Hey, save me a mouthful,” Zedekiah shouts.

“You guys,” Athena groans, “you are using up...” she looks at her bag of
cans, and she takes one, “owo yeah!”

And suddenly the whole room is high. Really high. We actually cannot notice
Bobby is standing at the door, stunned by this satire, already taken off his
breather.

“Jonathan, haha, Now!” Zedekiah shouts.

I slap a wet cloth on his face. He suddenly turns from slight white to slight red.
He grabs a dry cloth and quickly wipes his face.

“What are you doing?” he screams in agony.

“Thought you’re thirsty,” Zed says with a dazed look.

“Not the water. I cannot touch aqua in large quantities,” he dashes in
random directions.

Then he smells oxygen and turns to slight green. He grabs his breather until he
is slight pale again.

“What are you,” Athena comes to her senses, “actually.”

“I think it is obvious,” he takes down his breather, “I am not from this world.”

“Of course you are not,” says Meander, “who will be allergic to water and oxygen at the same time?”

“You guys got me. I am not from this Earth. In fact, I am from a place called Cerulean. Or as you Earthlings would call it, Kepler 22b.”

“Now you have blown your cover, are you going to blast us into smithereens?” Zed asks.

“What is blow cover?” “Blow cover is what?” Alex and Bobby ask at the same time.

I sigh, “it means now that your identity is revealed, will you kill us like all the aliens do?”

“Aliens killing humans is just cultural projections,” Alex suggests, “I want to say, humans don’t know much about aliens. And aliens are unknown. In many movies, humans depict the aliens as invaders. This depiction is because the movie needs an antagonist, and aliens seem to be the best fit. That is why Zedekiah thinks Bobby would kill us all. But we don’t really know.”

“Wait, you are from a planet called Cerulean,” Athena says, “which actually means blue in our language, perhaps because your planet is filled with water. Then why are you so afraid of water? You should be really comfortable with water as a native grown there.” She has a point.

“Well, I am not even native to my planet. I am fabricated by my planet somewhere not my planet. And by accident I fall into this world. That is why my skin cannot touch high concentration of aqua. My skin can take them as moisture to keep me alive. My gills are not suitable in this world, because too much oxygen would make it explode. I need the radio on, because the frequency can comfort me.”

“So you are just AI like I am?” Alex asks.

“Yes Mr Alex. In some ways I am artificial. See, I am not even Bobby, I am 80667.”

“Why is your language so fluent for an alien?” I ask.

“That would be something hard to explain,” Bobby says. “But don’t let too many people know yet. I don’t know much about this world. Now can you remove these moss?”

“Oh he means the plants,” Zedekiah suggests, and we head to the plants, “Don’t worry Bobby, we don’t want to get you dissected too.”

“Last thing Bobby,” Athena asks before she goes with us, “Do you believe in God?”

“What is God?”

“Don’t bother it,” Zed grabs a pot, “he will have time to explain. Jon, you lift the other side.”

And so we leave the girls in the room with Bobby, returning the plants to the hall gardener.

At night, the AC is on full blast. The windows are closed and the radio is playing soft sounds. Meander lies beside me. I don't feel like I want to sleep.

"Hey Meander," I ask, "what do you think about the windownesian?"

"Jon," she looks to Bobby's bed and looks at me, "just treat him as human and roommate, everything will be fine."

"You say Windownesian?" Alex is awake, "I like that name."

"Yea, kind of fits me." Bobby says.

"I can check the oxygen level, it is 13%," reports Alex.

Alex and I look at each other across the bed, and we turn to Bobby.

"Hey, the oxygen level is a bit low for us. Is there any chance I can get your permission to open the windows?"

"No!" says the windownesian.

Drafted on 25th August, 2021

By The Sapient Sabre

Read More Stories



Only at
[https://sapiant-sabre.wixsite.com
/the-sapiant-sabre](https://sapiant-sabre.wixsite.com/the-sapiant-sabre)