

COMMUNICATION ERROR

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

0 male, 0 female, 3 either

Lorbnorbiculium [m/f] Employee at the Museum. They do not commit fully to their eccentric enthusiasm, thus leaving them in the uncomfortable grey area between bored and excited.

Zxhenzge [m] Simulacrum representing the prince of Dobohobohocono.

Gaxzaxaxli [f] Simulacrum representing the princess of Dobohobohocono.

Time:

The year 70XX.

Setting:

A viewing theater within the Thrice-New Roswell Museum of Extraterrestrial Contactings.

Notes:

Lorbnorbiculium has been assigned a gender in the script for the sake of readability. Please change pronouns according to casting.

The Gnorts Theater

(LORBNORBICULIUM enters, making sure to center herself on stage. She addresses the audience.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

Hello, everybody: ladies, gents, sapiens emulations! You have arrived at the historic Gnorts Theater of the historic Museum of Extraterrestrial Contactings in the historic Thrice-New Roswell! Very historic, lots of old stuff here. Parents, I'm sure you feel right at home.

(beat)

This is the penultimate leg of your grand tour through the Museum of – well, you know. Hope you haven't had too much fun!

(to a random audience member)

You! You haven't had too much fun, have you? You look kind of funned-out to me. Ease up on the fun, buddy!

(beat)

Anyway, my name is Lorbnorbiculium. Yes, just like the 146th element of the periodic table. My mother tells me I was a “super heavy” baby, so that's what they went with. Could've been Oganesson . . .

(beat)

We have for you today a very special presentation! You see, by feeding recently uncovered hard drives through a highly-advanced paleo-narrative restoration intelligence algorithm thingy – which you couldn't possibly understand – we've been able to generate what it may have looked like to witness the first known terrestrial-to-extraterrestrial contact! Hooray for science! Yeah!

(beat)

Okay.

(LORBNORBICULIUM presses a button to begin the presentation. ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI enter and stand behind LORBNORBICULIUM.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

Alright, everyone, meet our heroes: Zxhenzge and Gaxzaxaxli. Say hi!

(LORBNORBICULIUM gesture to indicate who is who. ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI wave to the audience.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

They can't actually perceive you, they're just preprogrammed holograms. So realistic! However, this is our pilot show, so if you do notice them get a little . . . let's say, quirky . . . please head to your nearest exit; in that case they've become sentient and we're in big trouble! Now, although Zxhenzge and Gaxzaxaxli would've spoken in Early Qualaxian, it has been decided to instead render the dialogue in Interstellar Common. While we recognize the sacrifice in authenticity, we believe it is more important that the events are

understood as clearly as possible. Let me assure you, our linguists have translated this notoriously difficult language as faithfully as possible! Now, without further ado . . .

(LORBNORBICULIUM stands at the edge of the stage and watches ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI take their places. The scene begins: ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI walk together in a desolate desert. It's noontime. They've been hiking, and decide to sit down.)

ZXHENZGE

My friend, Gaxzaxaxli, who is my sister! We are important figures in the various society of Qualaxar. Are we not the prince and princess of the great city of Dobohobohocono? It is outrageous that my feet are hurting!

GAXZAXAXLI

My brother, named Zxhenzge, this is happening. But we journeyed here quite some ways for a good reason. Forsooth, the reason being that we must find a birthing prize for our eldest.

ZXHENZGE

So true! That is what the tradition is. With this said, my feet continue being hurt.

GAXZAXAXLI

So delicate.

ZXHENZGE

That does not even mention that my bowels have craving!

GAXZAXAXLI

Then provide yourself substance, bonehead!

ZXHENZGE

I will!

(ZXHENZGE pours the contents of a bag into his hand: a single nugget of gold. He looks at it disappointedly.)

ZXHENZGE

Gaxzaxaxli, you big maw! When did you eat all of the gold?

GAXZAXAXLI

You said in the past you were not hungry!

ZXHENZGE

You are stupid? I spoke those words the day before.

GAXZAXAXLI

This means we will have to share, is that right?

ZXHENZGE

Share? My sister, you have had enough. I will eat now!

(GAXZAXAXLI stops him. They wrestle with the nugget.)

GAXZAXAXLI

No! That ration must live for the return journey. If not, we will surely die!

ZXHENZGE

I will give you dying by myself!

GAXZAXAXLI

Make me die, and you are treasonous!

ZXHENZGE

Hyperbole is what it is! I would never fatally touch my beloved sister.

(GAXZAXAXLI momentarily relaxes her grip on the nugget.)

GAXZAXAXLI

Aw, I belove you as well, brother.

(ZXHENZGE uses this lapse to rend the nugget into his possession. He immediately swallows it whole.)

ZXHENZGE

Delightful!

(GAXZAXAXLI wails in despair.)

GAXZAXAXLI

Negative! We have doom on us! We will die inside no particular place, and the mistake is yours!

ZXHENZGE

What should be my desire? Starve?

GAXZAXAXLI

You are far from “starve.” You could live months on your flesh.

ZXHENZGE

So there is where we went? I am lean, appreciate! Beside that, I am ready; we can get more!

(ZXHENZGE reveals a pocket-pickaxe.)

ZXHENZGE

Problem meets its solution!

(GAXZAXAXLI looks at ZXHENZGE, dumbfounded. Then, she suddenly and dramatically scrunches her face.)

ZXHENZGE

Don't produce that ridiculous face! It works! See me!

(ZXHENZGE kneels down and demonstrates the pickaxe on the ground. GAXZAXAXLI kicks the pickaxe away and directs ZXHENZGE's attention to a point in the sky where she is looking. ZXHENZGE scrunches his face as well.)

GAXZAXAXLI

You see this also? A little glimmer in the sky. What is the nature of it?

ZXHENZGE

It must be the star Leifnriesner! I recall it from the curriculum!

GAXZAXAXLI

That is not the star, empty head! The day is at its center.

ZXHENZGE

Aha! Then the identity must be Brimgrenshlag! That star is a favorite among myself!

GAXZAXAXLI

Moronic! Is it a quality of a star to be bigger over time? And how!

ZXHENZGE

The curriculum does not say. Sarcastically, you are highly intelligent; do you possess ideas?

GAXZAXAXLI

We'll arrange the facts: shining, form of circle, drawing to us with speed. Does it not become obvious? A speedy, circular, glowing—

(GAXZAXAXLI is hit by the object which comes in from offstage. It is a golden disc.)

GAXZAXAXLI

Ouch!

ZXHENZGE

. . . Disc?

GAXZAXAXLI

My saying was going to be “bird,” but “disc” was a secondary assumption.

(GAXZAXAXLI picks up the disc and examines it. It is one of the Voyager Golden Records. Both are puzzled.)

ZXHENZGE

Thoughts?

GAXZAXAXLI

The touch is not rough at all . . . the shape, no flaw-having. It must be created by hands!

ZXHENZGE

Now who is missing brains? Hands, within the sky? Get real!

GAXZAXAXLI

Sky vehicles, Zxhenzge! Discs do not originate in wind, this fact is transparent! Someone dropped their property.

ZXHENZGE

But what for?

(ZEHENZGE grabs the record and observes it for himself.)

ZXHENZGE

It has the look of uselessness . . . grasp on to something; was drawing done on the surface?

(ZXHENZGE looks closely at the diagrams etched on the one side. After scrutinizing, he gasps with realization.)

ZXHENZGE

Gaxzaxaxli, this thing is of golden making! Our starving is ended!

(ZXHENZGE prepares to take a massive bite, but stops mid-chomp when GAXZAXAXLI speaks up.)

GAXZAXAXLI

Halt, halt! You are being blind to the notion that a birthing gift of ideal quality has dropped within our hands! How will this be good with a teeth impression?

(ZXHENZGE takes his bite anyway.)

GAXZAXAXLI

Hopeless.

(ZXHENZGE's expression has changed; he's becoming self-aware. He hands the record to GAXZAXAXLI.)

ZXHENZGE

Here, take it. It's some kind of repository of knowledge; taking a bite, I feel like I can think so much clearer.

(GAXZAXAXLI takes it.)

GAXZAXAXLI

My brother, strange sayings are emanating from you. Despite it, I reason that hunger is in me. It is no more a good gift anyway.

(GAXZAXAXLI takes a bite herself. She experiences the same awakening.)

GAXZAXAXLI

. . . I can see it, too: the third planet in the solar system, Earth. I can see . . . humanity.

ZXHENZGE

It's some kind of distress signal. How far this lonely probe has come. How long do you think it's been shouting into the void?

GAXZAXAXLI

Not the void. We're here, after all. It's tenacity has been rewarded; we finally found them.

(ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI glance at the audience simultaneously, now fully aware of their presence. They quickly look back at each other and silently agree to play along with the script to hide their sentience. They speak in Early Qualaxian to conceal their scheming.)

ZXHENZGE

Flob hobbinwobbin gobbindorf, schlippy bip lippy gippin.

GAXZAXAXLI

Dovo savo sadoo, boaseevo. Raptakulak?

ZXHENZGE

Rem demihem kememememem, em.

GAXZAXAXLI

Oom floomin voom kloomin, noom schloomin . . . yoom joomin. Nip nap norp.

ZXHENZGE

Hoojoojooonoo goo. Takakaraka clakin lak! Maboipo himflimflanch . . . ?

(ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI briefly scan the audience; they seem to single out a few audience members before going back to their plans. The actors may improvise some Early Qualaxian of their own.

LORBNORBICULIUM, who had dozed off at some point, awakes with a start. Realizing that something is off, she presses a button to stop the presentation. ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI pause in place. LORBNORBICULIUM addresses the audience.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

Okay, everybody. What the flip? I thought I told you to leave if they got quirky! Was that not quirky enough? What's wrong with you?

(to a random audience member)

You do remember when I said that, right? It wasn't just me?

(to herself)

This is supposed to be fun. Have fun with it! You are so fun.

(to the audience)

You're all lucky I woke up when I did, because you would be in big trouble otherwise, let me tell you! Alright, show of hands: did anyone make direct eye contact? Well, just to be safe, you're going to want to avoid looking at any screens for the next 42 hours and, if you can help it, avoid entering REM sleep. You might think you *need* your beauty rest, but trust me: your occipital lobe will thank you. Now, since our presentation has been compromised by . . . well, that's not the right word . . . since we've run into some technical difficulties, and you haven't evacuated the premises, I'll just tell you what happens next.

(As LORBNORBICULIUM speaks, ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI gradually gain the ability to move their bodies and eventually creep towards the edge the stage.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

So. Basically. Prince Zxhenzge and Princess Gaxzaxaxli find the Voyager Record – that's the golden disc they were nibbling on; it's a fascinating story, you should look it up – and they figure, "hey, it's got some bite marks, but it kind of adds character in an artistic, patinated kind of way." So they decide to take it back to Dobohobohocono to present it as a birthday gift to the eldest citizen of the city, Jerry. Now Jerry's got 172 years under his belt, and he's a smart cookie. When he sees the record, he knows just what to do. So, he calls up Earth and says: "We got your message, guys! Come over, and bring some of that jazz stuff with you!" Well, Earth did bring jazz, if jazz was referring to several hundred

bigatons of nuclear fusion warheads. Then there's this whole saga of passive-aggressive email exchanges, dramatically ironic misunderstandings . . . you know, hijinks. A space pirate shows up at some point . . . I don't remember why . . . but long story short, the warheads are evaporated in the upper atmosphere and the first interstellar alliance is formed between Earth and Qualaxar. So, yeah. The rest is history.

(to herself)

Hold for applause . . .

(LORBNORBICULIUM bows expectantly. ZXHENZGE and GAXZAXAXLI, who have nearly escaped, applaud; they seem genuinely impressed.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

Thank you, you're too kind. My cousin went to Juilliard, so . . .

(LORBNORBICULIUM notices ZXHENZGE and GAXAXAXLI, who exit quickly. LORBNORBICULIUM panics, then addresses the audience.)

LORBNORBICULIUM

Guys?! Seriously?! I thought we were cool!

(into a communicator)

Team Epsilon, we have a code black; I repeat, we have a code freaking black!

(to the audience)

Enjoy the rest of the tour, guys! Next up: "Inside the Hotolconian Pyramid Trade!"

(LORBNORBICULIUM exits hurriedly. Blackout.)

End of Play