

## The Other Side

It is a grand day for the new Coalition. As a symbol of the new interstellar peace, an exploration vessel is launched toward a distant yellow star approximately 1,000 light years away from the boundaries of the Coalition. It carries a representative of each of the three races in the Coalition: the Telinsni, the Oidra, and the Rowharlix. You are Ornian, the representative of the Telinsni. Your crewmates are Bophic and Ottwabelter, representatives of the Oidra and the Rowharlix respectively. Before leaving, you are briefed on how to operate the spacecraft and briefed on where everything on the ship is including emergency weapons in case you encounter hostile lifeforms. As you board the ship, you notice Bophic checking and double-checking with the engineers of the craft to make sure the ship and suits have the proper radiation shielding that all Oidra require when setting forth into space. The engineers reassure him of this and Bophic proceeds to enter the spacecraft after you. The launch proceeds successfully and the ship enters into the galactic slipstream, a particle wind that travels from the center of the galaxy toward its edges.

As the spacecraft approaches the system your instruments pick up the three potentially habitable worlds and you are able to gain a better perspective on them. The two closest to the sun are far too hot, one even has liquid water, nothing could survive there. But the little red one looks promising, just the right air pressure, temperature, and enough carbon dioxide for the air to be breathable.

The decision is put forth to land on the fourth planet and do some reconnaissance in search of life on the planet.

As the spacecraft begins to land on the planet, you notice something strange. The planet has artificial satellites orbiting around it! This proves the existence of life on this planet! As you and your crewmates rejoice whilst entering the atmosphere of the planet, one of the satellites passes over your craft. Your laser guidance system begins to falter. The spacecraft's sensors begin to fluctuate and soon the whole ship goes into a wild spin. The spacecraft impacts with a mountain, ripping off a large piece of the hull. You and Bophic are able to brace yourself but Ottwabelter is hit by one of the support beams as it is ripped out of the ship. The impact alters the course of the ship and it skims over a rocky field and you watch the radiation shielding being sheered away before everything goes black.

You pick yourself up from what used to be the ceiling of your spacecraft and wake up Bophic. Together you recover Ottwabelter's body and prepare it in his culture's traditional ways: secured onto a board sideways with his tendrils facing the red giant in his home world's night sky. Once the funeral is finished, you go into the storage room only to discover that the radiation suits have been destroyed. You are uncertain how this will affect Bophic as the Oidra are uncomfortable about discussing the effects certain forms of radiation have on their bodies. Without shielding or a suit, Bophic will be exposed. The two of you decide to start exploring the field.

As you and Bophic walk, Bophic begins to complain of hearing voices in a variety of alien languages. The radiation sickness must be setting in. As you walk through the field, you catch brief glimpses of a reflection through the corner of your eye but think nothing of it. Bophic says some of the voices in his head are getting louder and you presume it is his radiation sickness getting worse. Eventually, the two of you stumble upon a machine of some sort. Upon closer inspection it looks to be a small robotic vehicle. The decision is made to take it back to the ship for further inspection. When you return to the ship, Ottwabelter is missing. Strange tracks lead from the site and the two of you follow them. As you follow the tracks, Bophic says the voices are getting louder until you reach the edge of a crater. Bophic can't hear your voice anymore, only those of his imagination. A rustling from behind. You turn around and there stand two strange looking creatures. They appear to be in suits of some kind, perhaps to protect from the harsh sandstorms. It seems rather odd that such a creature could potentially evolve, it only has a few limbs and its skin has a reddish tone. How is it supposed to fully replenish energy if it can't take it in from the sun? They seem to be gesturing something with their breathing holes, perhaps communication? Yet there is no noise. Their helmets must be blocking any sound they are producing. You gesture for them to remove their helmets. Bophic seems to be reacting to whatever the creatures are speaking. Frustrated, you touch one of the creatures on its upper right side. The creature and its friend seem visibly displeased by

this. The creature you touched acts like it's being crushed by your limb and its friend is trying to lift the limb off. Not wanting to hurt the poor thing, you quickly remove your limb. Unfortunately, you slash a large hole in the creature's suit. Gas vents from the creature's suit. You can now hear a muffled cry coming from the creature as it collapses to the ground. Its friend runs into the crater frantically which you interpret as fear. It enters what appears to be a larger version of the vehicle you found earlier and drives away. The vehicle carries the body of Ottwabelter. If he isn't allowed to rest in peace, he will never become one with the twelve wise men in Grenoam. You ask Bophic to take the creature's body back to the ship but he is too far gone to hear you. You decide to chase after the creature.

Telinsni are known for their great speed and you find it easy to catch up to the creature's vehicle. He pulls his vehicle into a small structure and shuts the door. You have him now, the structure is made of a rather weak metal found on your home world as well. There it is common to give the metal to children so that they may gnaw on it. You should have no trouble breaking through it and getting your friend's body. Before you can reach the structure, however, it launches into the sky. It is then that you realize that the creature wasn't native to this planet. Distraught at a poor first contact, you retreat to your ship. There you wait for three months. Yet those three months seem like an eternity. Bophic divulges everything about his culture including why his people react to certain forms of radiation. It

turns out female Oidra emit radiation when they are in heat. Male Oidra detect this radiation and interpret it as sound. Could those creatures have communicated in a similar manner? It seemed probable. After three months of waiting, a Coalition ship arrived after receiving no cosmic waves from you. They ask you if they should colonize this planet. You say yes.