

Julie's Journal 1.0

Ed's note: One of the first Home Cluster documents to be translated into English, this recording was taken from the diary kept by the named author. Her existence is corroborated by several of Bill Gulbransen's letters, published here as part of 'The Xerox Reports.' Julie and Bill appear to have been lovers. The latter's historical bona fides as one of the first convicts transported from Melbourne prison have been well proven.

I was fortunate to be an early recipient of news that contact had been made with an alien civilisation. Following the first official announcement, the plethora of news and data services that inform our Home Cluster were soon awash with a tantalising salad of fact and speculation. Not only was the way the information had come to hand being doubted, but the very existence of the advanced toolmakers said to have been discovered was also being doubted. Some even viewed the whole story as either fake news, or an example of a sophisticated conspiracy theory.

A Warlike Species, Obsessed with Procreation and Drugs was the headline that grabbed my attention. The story was accompanied by images of creatures that looked just like me. Those few of us who later came to be labelled humanoids, were all spellbound by the news. That we might yet have kith and kin, even warlike and, like us: sex-obsessed, from the far end of our known galaxy, was a source of unbridled hope for me.

For a few days, my wildest imaginings kept sleep at bay, a heightened anxiety dulling my appetite. Even during normal waking time, I found myself walking about like such a befuddled Zombie that my keeper family felt bound to take turns at keeping me under intuitive observation. Their calming sing-song mind talk helped me survive those first few days of incredulity. It was the mixture of hope and fear that was the most difficult to manage – hope that I might yet meet the gene pool of my source species and produce a family, fear that the story could be a grand hoax.

Peppered lightly throughout the planets of Home Cluster, all of us humanoids, the progeny of the Water People's fabled genetic experiments, hung onto the news with a quiet desperation. To discover how our species should behave was a hope we all shared. And the chance to bond, to mate, to reproduce, was something we all felt the pull of, but weren't quite sure if the impulse was authentic. Those of us who had proven fertile had all been taken to a specially designed, EG congruent human habitat of unknown location. A strategy to maximise our biological viability, was what we had been told. And having never been treated with anything other than consideration and kindness, I had no reason not to believe them.

Despite my own best efforts and the close attention of my family, I still found the heady prospects too much to cope with. So, I took refuge in the narcotic that had kept me in good spirits for much of my short adult life. 'Am I being true to my species?' I wondered as I viewed my circumstances from a chemically enhanced distance.

Raised by the senior matriarch of my family, I had only been recognised as mature a few solar cycles earlier. I was subsequently advised that my longings for sexual intimacy with my own kind were sure to soon wane. This was despite the many solar cycles during which I had been used as a sex toy by my family before finally being chosen as a companion for our most senior matriarch.

Although I missed the sex play, being of a kindly disposition, my mother encouraged interaction with the few fellow girl humanoids that resided in our family hamlet. We all dreamed of real male humanoids, and often imagined what they might be like. I imagined them as being short and stocky, furry, with barrel chests and a special sheath to carry their huge penises. Little did we imagine at the time, that the highly managed, and very seasonal reproductive cycles of our hosts, was far from the norm of the chaos and anarchy that characterised our fellow human reproductive behaviour.

At the time I made this recording, Home Cluster media were running vids about a multi-species, Cluster-wide, Expeditionary Force designed to visit the data source. Local media and entertainment milieu reported on the debate covering the engineering and scientific challenges ahead; of the need to design, to build, and to test suitable vehicles; as well as to develop the protocols required for travelling such vast distances.

All species within our Home Cluster were well versed in the methods of short-haul, Faster-Than-Light travel. After all, according to historical archives,

they had been invading, visiting, fighting, and trading with one another for at least 20 Bruin generations. However, the distances being considered for the joint visit to Earth, my planet of origin, were off the scale of what was then considered biologically safe. The transmission of anything that could be rendered virtual had long been common practice. But for 100% biological living creatures, it was feared that the distance might prove too much of a stretch. The random outcomes of F.T.L. * had never been fully resolved, so it was expected that bionics, robots, mutants, and other, expendable crew, such as my fellow humanoids, would most likely be deployed.

**Ed's note: Apart from the civilisation here known as "Brahman", which possess a quite unique flight mode.*

Despite my family's heartfelt entreaties, I volunteered as crew, but was turned down. Too valuable, our boffins explained; your family can't do without you. Being so important did give me a much-needed fillip. Little did I fully appreciate at the time, that a shortage of crew was never going to be a significant obstacle. The Cluster-wide tradition of kidnapping crew from off-world and other politically neutered sites would be employed to make up for any shortage.

During the time I spent combing through Bruin historic archives, I had discovered Xerox civilisation had already visited my home planet, Earth. And when I really thought about it, where else could we humanoids have come from but a planet of humans such as Earth? On that occasion, the loss of life, of crew and live cargo, was such an embarrassment to our scientific reputation, that apart from the genetic leftovers from which we humanoids were crafted, most references to, and records of this initial trip, were deliberately buried or lost. Just as the planetary re-alignment experiment that vented half our atmosphere to space damaged the credibility of our science community, so too did the failures of that F.T.L. expedition to my home planet further erode trust in our science community.

Overcoming a widely held public cynicism towards both scientific and political decision making was recognised as the biggest challenge that faced our planet's capacity to participate in the proposed joint expedition. Most news sources, however, suggested that we wouldn't be able to resist the challenge. The prospect that other civilisations in our Home Cluster might gain any kind of

technological ascendancy was such a sure crow to the throat of our citizenry, that it was certain any debate would be short-lived.

REVIEW
COPY