

The Crrrv

Tao-Ceti-2 is a jungle-like planet, most of whose continents are populated by mammals (of new order: *liperatae*) with six digits on each hand/foot and a 40 cm prehensile tail. The extra digit is a second opposable thumb on the outside of each hand/foot. Each digit ends in a hairless finger pad and a fairly heavy (and modestly sharp) retractable claw.

Resembling a large spider monkey, covered with 4-6cm long sable-like flat black fur. Color variations in fur are subtle and seem to change with viewing angle and light. Head is larger and more feline than a spider-monkey. Face is more elongated, and the cranium is much larger than a cat would have, but the facial features are quite gentle.

They are arboreal creatures, and watching them brachiate through trees is an experience not to be missed. They delight in doing flips and other gymnastic feats as they swing, leap, and bounce from limb to limb. They put terrestrial gibbons to shame.

They can move fairly silently on the ground - although not nearly with the grace they enjoy in the trees. They are equally happy walking on two or four legs - although they always run on four. They are capable of reasonable sprints, and long hikes at typical humanoid speed - but they are not built for long distance running, and they can move much farther and faster in the trees.

They call themselves the "*Crrrv*", but this appears to be the only sound (somewhere between the purring of a cat and the cooing of a dove) in their spoken language

Mytho-history of the Crrrv:

The Crrrv believe that their world was the Creator's finest work, and that they live in paradise. Further, they believe they are the most gifted creatures in all of creation. They feel sorry for all other creatures, especially off-worlders.

The creator introduced them to the garden and told them that they could live and play there to the end of their days, but that the garden would not be theirs until they had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

For millennia, Crrrv attempted to eat the fruit and the results were always horrible (agonizing death, paralysis, insanity). Finally they developed their empathic abilities to the point where they could heal those maladies and one family survived the ordeal. Whereupon the creator came back to them and told them that they now had the knowledge of good and evil, and he gave them dominion over the garden, and they have been caretakers of this world ever since.

There is in fact a tree all over the planet with three lobed fruits. It is called the "Tree of Wisdom" and the Crrrv warn all other creatures that they must not eat from it. The lobes of the fruit are

red, green and white, and each produces a very unpleasant effect for about 24 hours:

- the red lobes cause intense abdominal cramps
- the green lobes cause paralysis
- the white lobes dull the senses and completely block out all psychic/empathic abilities

Crrrv Religion and Cultural rites:

Any Crrrv over the age of three can tell you what good and evil are:

- Good is friendship, comfort and fulfillment.
- Evil is isolation, pain, and restriction.

They all attempt to live their lives in accordance with these principles.

There are six rites of maturity into Crrrv society:

- on the eve of your sixth solstice, you eat a red lobe and know great pain.
- on the eve of your twelfth solstice, you must feel the pain of someone who has eaten a red lobe, and you must heal them
- on the eve of your eighteenth solstice, you must eat a green lobe and know complete paralysis
- on the eve of your twenty-fourth solstice, you must help someone through the horror of paralysis
- on the eve of your thirtieth solstice, you must eat a white lobe, and know complete isolation for the first time in your life
- on the eve of your thirty-sixth solstice, you must help someone through the isolation, without being able to use your empathic abilities to reach them

After this sixth rite, you have the knowledge of good and evil, and are an adult member of Crrrv society. The Crrrv take these rites very seriously (this is about the only thing they take seriously). They measure time in terms of them:

- a Winter Solstice comes every 200 earth days
- a rite happens every six solstices
- a cycle is six rites

The life span of a Crrrv is approximately 15-20 cycles, but they hold that their life-span was ordained by the creator to be 36 cycles.

Crrrv Society and Communication

Because of their highly social nature and their affinity for other creatures, they have evolved to be highly empathic - both as transmitters and receivers. Crrrv are organized in tribes/clans. A tribe may comprise anywhere from a few dozen to a few thousand individuals ... most of them related. A tribe has stewardship of an area ranging from a few to a few hundred square km. Tribes are proud of their individual histories, but at any given time about 10-20% of the young adults in a tribe are traveling the world. Travelers are always welcome (bringing as they do new stories and genes).

The Crrrv love the company of other creatures. They sleep in huge piles - and the best place to be is in the very middle of the pile. That place is often reserved for someone who is sick or otherwise hurt. The healing power of a few dozen empaths is quite impressive. They will also give this spot of honor to a visiting guest - although most off-world visitors don't understand/appreciate the offer. Empathic visitors who have experienced the peace and joy of sleeping with Crrrv generally decide to stay on Tau-Ceti-2.

To an outsider (not trained to appreciate changes in tone, volume and cadence) they only make one sound: "crrrv". In the centuries preceding "the Great Pastoralization", they evolved a large vocabulary of nouns, verbs and adjectives - but these are only used to fill in the details of complex or highly specific concepts. The bulk of the meaning is always communicated empathically.

This fact is not generally understood, and it explains the problems that aliens have with the Liperate language. Communicating with a Liperate is one of the easiest things in the galaxy. A new-born child can do it perfectly. Anybody who works on it for a few months can master their aural language; It is rather subtle, but not at all complex. The problem is, that the aural language is not really sufficient for communication - unless at least one of the communicators is a natural empath.

Would-be translators spend a year with the Liperates, master their language and find that they can communicate perfectly with the Liperates on any subject and in arbitrary detail. Then they try to translate their discussion into some other language - and they find themselves at a loss for words. A few translators (probably gifted with some natural empathic ability of their own) did fully master Liperate communication. These people inevitably chose to remain on Tau-ceti-2 for the rest of their lives.

After a few centuries of such failures, Terran authorities concluded that studying the Liperate language caused people to become hopelessly bewildered, and wrote it off as too complex and alien to be mastered by human beings. They also concluded that the Liperates had nothing to sell and weren't interested in buying anything. The Terran League decided that there was no point in pursuing further political, trade, or cultural contacts with the (obviously primitive) Liperate race. This was the best thing that could possibly have happened to the Crrrv.

Crrrv-Tourist relations

Once Tau-Ceti-2 was written off, the only aliens who came to visit it were tourists and wanderers who were curious about this peculiar world of friendly and pseudo-intelligent creatures. The Crrrv are always fascinated by aliens and have always shown them considerable attention and the greatest of cordiality. Occasionally, a non-friendly visitor would come to Tau-Ceti-2, but for some reason they were never able to find any Liperates.

Different tribes inevitably differ on points of mytho-history and their tastes in music. They also

tend to differ on their views of off-worlders, and humans in particular:

Most have noticed that humans have nascent arboreal and empathic abilities and believe that there is hope for the human race, that they will one day evolve into creatures of merit.

Some, who have studied humans at greater length believe that they actually used to be more arboreal and empathic and that they have somehow devolved to their current wretched state. Their theory is that the humans were enslaved and subjected to some horrible genetic engineering experiment.

A few, who have seen Humans in our own settings, understand that we are fully functional beings, but the tourists were so helpless that nobody would believe this - aside from which such a belief stood in direct contradiction of the obvious fact that the Crrrv were God's favored creatures.

Many consider the helping of humans to be both a kindness and an obligation. The humans in their wards clearly need help (frail and naive creatures marooned far from home). Hospitality and care of lesser creatures in their ward is part of their covenant with the Creator.

There are also those who believe that helping the humans to survive is doing them a disservice. Evolution should be allowed to take its course, and this will ultimately help the humans more than anything the Crrrv can do.

There are also fundamentalists who believe that the humans are intruders in the garden and shouldn't be there. They would not do them harm (as that would violate all three commandments) but they will be very glad when they are gone.

The Crrrv long ago decided that humans were into some strange trips. Moreover, they are sure that the humans would not take well to the caretakership, and so the Crrrv have decided it is best to play dumb. Most humans accept the dumb-act at face value and consider the Crrrv to be on a par with dolphins: clever mammals, somewhat intelligent, and apparently on the friendly side of indifferent. Some people consider them to be like cats ... in that they like and hang around humans, but cannot really be owned. Some people think they are much smarter ... but those people tend to be viewed as not-quite-right-in-the-head.

Some humans have gotten interested in the Crrrv and studied them, and those who have gotten to know them better have a much higher opinion of them ... but as their understanding of the Crrrv approaches truth, they seem (to the other humans) to be going crazier ("he went woody" is the phrase the humans use), so the average human probably has some apprehension about the Crrrv. They are friendly and omnipresent ... but there is something not right about them.

A few of the Crrrv know the humans quite well and hang around town (in a low key fashion) almost all the time. They try to keep people from getting lost, poisoned, or attacked by predators in the woods, and occasionally lead them to food when their farming goes poorly. They also moderate the attitudes of the tourists ... so that there is virtually no crime or mental illness among the human population.

Children regularly chase after Crrrv; This is a game enjoyed by both species, and they almost always make sure the children get back home safely and uninjured. Once every 10 years or so, however, a child with exceptional gymnastic and empathic abilities turns up ... and the Crrrv adopt them ... helping them to fulfill their potential (through years of physical and empathic therapy). These children inevitably grow up to be very happy members of the tribe, well integrated into society. Their children have almost Crrrv-like abilities.

Tourist descendents occasionally glimpse one of these "feral" humans. Some think that the humans have just "gone woody". The parents, of course, think that the Crrrv have stolen their children.