

Memory transcription subject: *Vila Gojid cattle from unknown Arxur cattle farm*

Date [standardized human time]: December 27, 2136

I stand alone on a hill overlooking vast fields of grain. The sky is placid and clear. I breathe in and hold it. The warm scent of the colony farms fills my lungs and leaves me with a heady feeling. As if I haven't breathed in years. The details fade as I sit in the moment.

It's safe

I'm home

I'm-

As I breathe in my chest blooms with pain. Air leaves me as it spasms. Hissing laughter erupts from the Arxur as they pull the cattle prod from my chest. I finally draw a shuddering breath as the electricity fades. Instead of the smell of grain and field my nose is met with that of urine and blood. Looking back at my cagemates as they had pulled back to the edge of our already cramped quarters. My blood runs cold as I'm thrust back into reality.

I am cattle

The Arxur whose prod had shattered my sweet reverie steps up to the door of our cage. Still chuckling to himself as he approaches, "I had to get one last laugh outta you all before you left, meat".

The Arxur flanking him steps in holding a rod with a loop at the end. The other Gojid recognizing this as a culling scramble into the corner. Each one claws to be closest to the corner. Spines and paws scrabbling against each other. One cries out as they're slashed by another. Navy blood spills as I realize my mistake.

I'm alone

I'm exposed!

No no no!

Panicking, I scramble to join them. Not caring for safety I leap. Better to dive into spines than end up in the mouth of a waiting demon. However, right as I reach the edge of the pile, my foot catches. Snared, I'm sent face first into the back of my cellmates. My face ripples with pain as I am already being dragged away. My claws dig into the concrete as I'm pulled away from the safety of the herd.

I'm doomed

I'm dying

Curse those waking dreams

My mind goes white with panic as I am pulled bleeding out into the pathway to my doom. I hear squeals erupt from one of my fellow cagemates as two more victims are pulled out of the throng. The walkways between cages converge as we head to the loading bay. The walkway becomes crowded as more victims begin to join the procession as we are herded into a cattle ship. An Arxur takes a tally as each of us is brought on board.

We're going to be slaughtered

I don't want to die

I want to go home

The doors close behind the last of my fellow unlucky cattlemates, plunging us into blackness. The trip lasts what feels like days. Alone in the crowded darkness I alternate between quiet sobs and fleeting dreams. Only the feeling of anonymous spines jabbing into me to remind me I haven't already met my end. When the doors finally open I recoil knowing that while we were in that anxiety ridden purgatory, at least we wouldn't be slaughtered while it lasted. I hear yelps as those at the back of the cage get prodded forward. As the crowd shifts, I am shoved towards the yawning doors of the ship.

I don't want to go

I don't want t-

Wait? What the hell are those things?!

Memo forwarded to Sam Wilson Premier of the state of New Zealand, Australia from the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs

Date [standardized human time]: November 28, 2136

Due to the massive amount of strain the Venlil Health Network has experienced due to the influx of released captives from the Arxur Dominion. It has been proposed and sustained that select UN states with adequate resources shall begin pilot programs to determine the viability of Earth-based rehabilitation and resocialization of these individuals. Due to its relatively similar environment to ideal federation habitats New Zealand has been selected for this program. The UN will supply funds to establish a discrete facility to house and resocialize 32 Venlil and 25 Gojid arriving December 29, 2836. Zurulian and Venlil volunteers will arrive 2 weeks after to aid in the resocialization process and run a standard behavioral analysis on the subjects.

Memory transcription subject: *Gilra Venlil born on Rixis cattle farm*

Date [standardized human time]: December 29, 2136

As soon as we landed I roused myself. I hadn't gone in this blind since my first transfer when Rixis farms got the axe. What I learned since then is that the first couple minutes after landing were the most important. They told you a lot about the new farm. Who to cozy up to, who to avoid. As soon as the doors opened we were prodded down the ramp of the cattle ship. I couldn't help but stumble as I saw what awaited us. These aren't Arxur... This had my mind whirling. Were these new predators? Who am I kidding, of course they were. They wouldn't buy us if they weren't. The only important thing was to pay attention and figure out what made them tick before it was too late.

The first thing I noticed once I regained my composure was they looked *strange*. They oddly lacked any sort of tail or large ears. Oddest of all their faces were obscured by masks. Leaving very little room for any sort of emotional communication. Even the Arxur had tail signs! My stomach grew uneasy as I continued to survey them. There had to be something that I could read! However I drew a blank while I reached the end of the ramp. Maybe their words would tell me something! The throng obscured my view ahead as I drew level with the rest.

As the herd finished filing out onto the loading bay. The Arxur behind us gave a derisive snort as one of the predators cut sharply in between him and our herd. Muttering something in his native tongue about "leaf-lickers" he stalked back onto the ship. It seemed like these predators carried some weight if they could stand up to an Arxur. I wasn't sure if that was a good thing. Before I could decide a voice piped up from beyond the throng.

It didn't speak in a manner I understood which was *not* good. However almost half of the other Venlil recoiled at the words of the predator. Damn captured cowards. Even with their translators they still couldn't handle a predator speaking to them. I always hated when I had to follow their lead. They never could keep their heads when they needed to. However, after a moment a robotic voice sparked to life in Venlil saying "Sorry, I forgot not all of you have implants. I am Dr. Kaur and will be doing intake for the ***** program". Well, that helped. But I couldn't understand what those last couple words were supposed to mean. I had learned all the important words in Venlil from an early age... Things just kept getting more and more suspicious.

However, before I could wonder too much more about my apparently lacking vocabulary, the two guards behind us began marching towards the exit. Herding us with little effort as the cowards began retreating from the advancing predators. Barely registering their surroundings and moving like the good cattle they were. I followed along with the herd. It didn't pay to run when you didn't have anywhere to run to anyways.

As we were led down the hall I noted the floor was *unusually* clean, unstained of any kind of grime or... fluids. I let out an internal sigh of relief, newer farms needed to build their numbers. And with how few of us there, we were most likely breeding stock. As long as I didn't screw up, I had time. As we were being led I fell back to inspect the two guards tailing us. When I did so, I realized *neither* was carrying a cattle prod. Weirdness was building upon weirdness. Either these predators were incredibly inept at their job, or something else was afoot.

Either way the weapons at their hips reminded me they weren't to be taken lightly. They were still predators. However as I walked, trying to be discreet about my intentions. The larger of the two turned its head directly toward me. Reflective mask projecting back my not so inconspicuous gaze. Instead of looking away immediately or dashing into the crowd like any captured coward would, I made my first move towards claiming prime breeder status. I quickly turned my head towards it fully and then shyly bowed my head feigning embarrassment with a little squeak. Looking away just as quickly I moved to return to the crowd. I had practiced this maneuver over and over at Rixis when I saw the prime breeders do that on culling inspections.

The guard didn't seem to react much at first, which was to be expected. However after a few moments he muttered something to the smaller guard which caused them to vocalize in a series of barks that caused the Venlil around me to surge forward in fear. Which caused the short one to bark even louder. Noting to myself after that display, that was probably their way of laughing.

Keeping pace with them we quickly arrived at a set of double doors held open. Through them I saw the most beautiful sight. A whole field of green carpeting with sunlight shining down upon it. Benches lined the fencing surrounding the space. Not even the largest farms would deign to make a space like this for their premium breeders... What in the *hell* is going on? Most of us stood in shock, however a few capturees almost immediately rushed outside. I don't know how long I stood there, but after a moment. I looked at the guards behind me and watched as they motioned towards the field. More and more of the herd began to rush out ahead of me.

This was all wrong

This isn't how this works

It's so beautiful

As those thoughts came into my head, the last one took hold. I wanted to be out there, no, I *needed* to be out there. Giving myself no time to think I rushed headlong into the sunlight. The guards barking laughter was the only thing left behind me.