

Abort, Retry, Fail?

BY JOHN FULLER

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Shame gnaws at them incessantly,
the juveniles are preyed upon,
and it is impossible to protect
them from the gun. It is time to
decide whether Earth is right
for us. +Please advise.+

Defeated at last by this culture — mutilated, really — I finally understand how inadequate reconnaissance was. Now three locals are dead, maybe because of me.

The first host you get is pretty much random : whoever picks up the Transfer Pod is going to be your First. My First was a juvenile *blacpheemale*, and turned out to be a low-status individual. Six months after I *Insinuated* myself, she was beaten to death, inexplicably, by her parent. For the duration of the assault, he called us *filthy c.* She was effectively dead in less than 2 local *minutes*. The *blacpheemale's* mind had frozen in terror, and I was unable to help her recover her reason. I escaped her body as she died when a unit of hair of the medical personnel attempting rescue touched our cheek.

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Everyone I asked about the parent's murderous proclamation mentioned females but were otherwise evasive. I keep asking myself if I could have saved her if I'd known. She was so small.

Recommendation : Future Agents to Earth must recognise declarations of intent to murder females. Athletic, adult host may improve survival odds.

My Second host, a *wightmale*, medium-status, was the failed rescuer of my First. Local language was his secondary, and my limited linguistic training sometimes made his thoughts unintelligible. Regarding the *gerl*, however, his emotions were plain : a deep sense of failure, and a crushing grief. As is customary here, he transmuted these incapacitating emotions into more manageable ones; hostility, self-abhorrence, fury. Their resulting emotions bear so little resemblance to the truth that I often forget that locals' behavior frequently belies their true feelings. (When my First collapsed, her predominant emotion was shame. Imagine — after being betrayed!)

My Second began dulling his faculties, delivering various low-grade poisons to his nervous system. While severely intoxicated, we evaded examination at the airport, and received five electric pulses from the sidearms of two *gun-mans*. I could find no way to *Seize* my host through all that panic. Could I have saved him?

His last thoughts — clear, vivid — also puzzled me. *She'll never know it wasn't my fault*, and, *It's finally over*. Disbelief and relief — it simply makes no sense.

Sheer chance helped me switch hosts in time. A nearby worker had resuscitation training. He opened our shirt, bending over our body to listen to the circulation pump. When his auditory organ touched our skin, *I Traversed*.

Recommendation : Future Agents to Earth must err on the side of caution, Seizing hosts at the first sign of non-compliance with gun-mans.

My Third, a *blacmale*, wasn't constantly ashamed — such a relief! My Second had quite demoralized me. But now my Third's

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life ebbs in its turn, and any opportunity to switch Hosts seems dubious. I am transmitting this Final Report before it is too late.

Soon after *Insinuating* myself into my Third, we were detained while driving, by a *gun-man* using descriptors I didn't know. His cruel pleasure was strong and honest, though.

This time, I was prepared. I *Seized* my host's mind before fear paralysed him. This only seemed to infuriate the *gun-man*, and we were apprehended and punitively confined. *Gun-mans* there, savoring our helplessness, tortured us, hatefully penetrating our body. My host *Reseized* his fear. His terrified cries made me *Scatter* in his mind. Thwarting a subsequent attempt at penetration, we were sent to isolation. Locals consider this worse than death.

Utterly forsaken, we lost track of time, then rapidly declined. A merciful *gun-man* delivered my Third a honed metal strip to drain our circulation apparatus. Although I

beg clearly in his mind for him to rescue our body, today's *gun-man* ignores my pleas, when just a single touch would permit me to *Traverse*. Instead, he dreams of performing tortures on his mate.

Should I have let fear overwhelm my Third when the *gun-man* detained us? Might he have avoided confinement and torture if he were *more* frightened?

Recommendation : Future Agents to Earth should select host with pink-orange covering whenever possible.

His incessant dying thoughts rebuke himself — not his oppressors! — and cannot fail to impress you in their incongruity with reality.

Abandoning Jaylen with no daddy. Going out like this. I'm one dumbass mutha-fucka.

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