

Verdatia

The Journal Entries of Marshat, and Arion Prime, and the continuation of one of the biggest conspiracies ever to rock the very infrastructure of Arion society.

Part Two

Journal Entry 7

I ran for a very long time yesterday. I wanted to make sure that I could be anywhere by the time the Velorian found out I was gone. I'm pretty sure I'm safe for now.

I found the most interesting animal in the forest last night. It looked like a predator from a distance, with close set eyes set forward for binocular vision and knifelike claws, and legs built not for a swift getaway but for a sprinting attack.

I was upwind of the beast when I spotted it. I picked up a rock and threw it with all my might at the creature. My strength had returned. I hit it just above the left front leg, and the rock continued through the entire body creating an exit wound the size of my fist. There was still plenty of good meat left on the animal.

Upon closer inspection, I was surprized to find that the beast had teeth totally insufficient for tearing through meat. It was an herbivore, without a doubt. Then I remembered the nature of the Hicondae. If they evolved from less intellegent plant creatures, then this sort of a predator would be their natural enemies. Herbivore by diet, but built to attack and kill.

I started a fire with my heat vision and had a good meal that evening. I considered writing in the journal but opted for sleep instead.

It is currently the morning after that occurance, and it's time for me to move on. I'll think of something on my way to wherever it is I'm headed. I can't wander aimlessly forever without running into something.

Can I?

Journal Entry 7 continued

The wildlife of this planet has not failed to amaze me yet. I found a small animal this evening that looked a bit like a cute little Arion skraw, only with smaller ears and a longer tail. I tried to coax it closer with one of the shiney buttons from the prison jumpsuit's cuffs, hoping it might be attracted to them like a skraw is.

And it was. It toyed with the button for a while between its paws, pouncing on it and flipping it into the air. It was the cutest thing! I've named him Shill the second, after the first skraw I had as a child. Shill loves the button, and comes back to me every once in a while to play with it. He hasn't run away with it yet, and every time he gets a little more daring and comes closer to me. If this keeps up, I may have a new pet.

Journal Entry 7 continued

I've never had to continue a journal entry this many times before, but so much has happened today. Shill

came back twice more since I last wrote, but that's not all.

As I was walking through the forest, I found a large flat flower on the ground. It had yellow petals with orange spots, and was about 3 feet in diameter. The stem was very thick, and the whole plant lay flat on the ground like it was too heavy to stand. As I was getting closer to it, I heard a chirping behind me. It was Shill, and he was very excited about something. I tossed him the button but he ignored it and chirped louder.

I failed to make the connection between Shill's excitement and the large flower. When I got too close the flower expelled some kind of pollen or dust in the air, which made me cough and my voice sounds hoarse now. If that dust was inhaled by humanoids they wouldn't have long to live.

When I turned back around, Shill was gone and so was my button. He'd taken it with him for the first time. Maybe he thought I would die from the pollen. Any Verdatian would.

Later that evening, I found what I thought was a dirt path through the forest. Actually, it was a row of mushroom-like plants, rock hard and able to support several hundred pounds of weight. They were obviously planted in even rows and probably intended for use as a road. I went to sleep by the side of the road in the hope that some passing traveler would find me.

Actually, Shill found me. I awoke to a soft pushing on my nose. Shill found me laying down and probably thought I was dead. I startled him by waking up and he ran off. He was back moments later, though, and brought my button with him! He's just the cutest little thing I've ever seen. He's with me now, watching me write. He's fascinated by the way the pen leaves marks on the paper and is probably wondering why I'm doing it.

The little guy is all curled up on my lap as I write, I can't believe he's so tame all of a sudden. All fear of me is gone. I wonder if he'll still be with me tomorrow.

| Journal Entry 8

Shill is still with me. I don't feel nearly so alone anymore. He loves the shiny button, we play fetch with it. He's pointing out the dangerous plants to me too. Not that they're dangerous to me, but when he's not chirping I know that something is good to eat. At last some variety in my diet.

Shill learned a new trick. When I click my tongue, he scampers up my jumpsuit and sits on my shoulder. I hope I can bring him with me if I ever get off this planet.

| Journal Entry 8 continued

I've been following the mushroom path for a while now, Shill ever at my heels. Suddenly, he grabbed my leg and wouldn't let go for anything. Then I caught sight of a group of Hicondae down the road. I must be in their territory now. A plan is beginning to form in my head. I might be able to ally myself with them, and if so I could extract my revenge against the Protector and maybe even get off the planet sooner or later.

If the Protector is the goddess of the humanoids, and the humanoids are at war with the Hicondae, then the Hicondae must hate the Protector. After all, she could single-handedly destroy entire armies of these plant-beings. I would most definitely be an asset to their side. I'll try approaching the scouting party tomorrow.

| Journal Entry 9

Success! Well, in a manner of speaking. I'm not a prisoner. I approached the scout party with my hands in the air to show I was unarmed. They appeared nervous but their curiosity got the better of them when I began to speak in their language.

I told them that I was a friend, that they would want to be my friends, that we could help each other. I must have sounded like a two year old to them, my vocabulary is weak. They listened to me with suspicious interest until I told them that I was Kal, and I was with them several days ago.

Then they snapped to attention and became very concerned. They didn't lower their weapons for an instant after that. We climbed into a vehicle that looked like a giant armored beetle. They called it the Volk Way-on. Most of the rest of their conversation was too fast for me to pick out more than a few words here and there. When they addressed me directly they spoke more slowly but I lacked the communication skills to effectively answer most of their questions.

As we progressed, the forest got thicker and the trees got larger, and the plants got weirder. I could swear I saw a few of the larger plants moving. When the beetle came to a stop they escorted me to an enormous tree with beehive-like bulges in the branches. The trunk was for the most part hollow and had a spiraling staircase in it. They led me to a Hicondae quite unlike any I had seen so far.

This Hicondae was a good 10 feet tall, four feet taller than the others. In general he looked the same, but some of his leaves were brown and the bark that they all had up to their knees was up to his chest and on his arms. In the conversation that followed I heard the word Kal several times, with good and bad inflection in their voices.

I can't believe I remember all this in so much detail. I remember inflections, my feelings, my surroundings, I could fill books with just my descriptions of the buildings I was in. I remember the high domed ceiling and the organic look to everything around me. I could swear the walls themselves pulsed with a life of their own. It was all simply incredible. I'd been to numerous civilizations across the galaxy, but this was by far the most "alien" I've ever seen.

After their conversation was over, two Hicondae grabbed me by my arms and attempted to pull me away out of the building. I would have none of that. I lifted them both into the air instead by raising my arms. It took the slightest effort on my part. Several more surrounded me with weapons drawn but before the situation could get out of hand the large one stood and addressed them all. I have no idea what he said. They lowered their weapons and returned to their places next to the large one. Then the two that grabbed me before tried again, with words this time. I could make out "come with us" and a word I believe translates as "please."

The two took me outside and I had a chance to look around this time. It was a surreal experience. The mushroom-like growths I found in the forest stretched for miles like roads, organic buildings sparsely dotted the landscape, Volk Way-on of various sizes traveled the roads with Hicondae inside of them, visible through a transparent membrane in the front. The sun shone bright and warm in the sky and I had the feeling of being inside of some great beast, flesh and organs all around me. This would take some getting used to.

They led me to a small building that they said would be mine. They left guards at the door and left me alone. I took the opportunity to write this in my journal. The next few days will be very exciting for me, I'm sure.

| Journal Entry 10

I should mention that it's been a few days since I wrote. I've learned so much. Not the least of what I now know is the Hicondae language. But that was only the first step, now that I'm fairly fluent a barrier has gone down between the Hicondae and me, and a few revelations have occurred.

The first of these is that the Hicondae do not utilize any sort of technology. They've instead unlocked the power of life itself and use organic "machines" instead of metal and plastic. Everything is alive around me, the building I live in, the roads, the Volk Way-on vehicals, even this pen that I've been using ever since I started these journals.

The Hicondae war with the humanoids is a little more documented here in the Hicondae lands. Centuries ago, it seems the Ancient Ones, when they seeded the galaxy with the humanoid race, overlooked the Hicondae and thought this world was uninhabited. The Hicondae lived so closely with the environment back then, and looked even more plant-like than they do now, it would have been easy to overlook them as a non-sentient species.

The humanoids brought their primitive technology with them: fire, the wheel, edged weapons. These things frightened and threatened the Hicondae, and they tried to fight the humanoids and drive them away. But the humanoids were stubborn and fought the Hicondae to a standstill. The war has been going on ever since, with technology on both sides rapidly escalating. A world at war for thousands of years with invaders who never even wanted to be here.

Then the Hicondae created a new weapon, a massive creature that must have been fifty feet tall. It was virtually impervious to all the humanoids' weapons. It possessed enough strength to destroy entire cities in a day. The humanoids were finally on the losing side of the war.

Then the Protector showed up. Like a goddess from the heavens she appeared out of nowhere and began to help the humanoids. She could kill the huge, slow moving city destroyers with her bare hands and wipe out battalions of Hicondae soldiers single-handedly. The Hicondae wept.

But the prospect of being a goddess went to the Velorian's head. She set up a magnificent city in the humanoid territory and stopped participating in the battles. She was a figurhead of society to be worshiped rather than an ally to be counted on. The Hicondae would no longer create their city destroyers that would bring her back into the battlefield, and the war returned to its stalemate.

For almost a decade since the Protector showed up, the Hicondae have been trying to find a way to destroy her, so they could bring the city destroyers back into the fight and exterminate the humanoids. If it takes too long, they might develop a weapon capable of destroying them without her help and their greatest weapon would remain impotent. Then I came to the planet and dared to challenge her. Although I failed I gave the Hicondae hope, and they now ask me to join them as Kal.

I also discovered the meaning of Kal. It is the Hicondae pronunciation of the humanoid word for demon. The Hicondae have no religion or mythology, but when the goddess (the humanoid word for her is Leyan) showed up they adopted Kal and Leyan into their vocabulary for the unstoppable forces that would side with each of the warring races. And now I have fulfilled that role.

I am going to prove myself to the Hicondae soon. During the next major conflict I will join the Hicondae side and help destroy the humanoid forces. Perhaps soon they will be able to use their genetic science to provide me with a way to destroy the Protector. There is so much that the Hicondae do with their genetics, they put the limited Velorians to shame.

| *Journal Entry 11*

It has only been two days since my last entry. Two major events have come to pass. First of them, I had my chance to join the Hicondae in their fight. A large city to the West was attacked today by a humanoid armored division. They attacked without warning on a city they knew was lightly defended. The instant I got word I rushed to help. I covered the few miles in no time at all, and arrived before the force had pushed the defences too far back.

I wasted no time joining the fight. The Hicondae and the humanoids both battled impressively, for pathetically weak species. It seems war was all the two sides knew anymore. Much like our own Arion race. But I digress.

The humanoid forces were basically large armored gun turrets on treads, easily 7 feet tall by 15 feet long, and 6 feet wide, backed up by foot soldiers with flame throwers and large bladed weapons. The mobile turrets moved slowly but their main weapon was devastating. The Hicondae forces were bizarre beetle-like vehicals with six legs and pincer jaws that could pull a foot soldier in half, and the Hicondae themselves threw clear sacks with tentacles at the mobile turrets. These sacks would crawl around on their tentacles and attach themselves to the hull, and begin a rapid corrosion process the likes of which I have never seen before. The metal literally rusted before my eyes.

However, the humanoid forces were clearly winning the battle. The foot soldiers were able to burn the jelly creatures before they could do much damage to the mobile turrets, and the beetles were of no use against their armor at all. My first action was to leap onto the lead turret and bend the barrel 90 degrees up. It tried to fire and blew its own barrel off, rendering it useless. The explosion knocked me down but I was back on my feet instantly.

A second turret attempted to run me down, but I was able to tear the tread from the slow-moving vehical, badly damaging it, and stop it in its tracks. A third fell to my Arion might when I tore through the soft metal hull and ripped the driver from his seat. Most of him came out of the vehical anyway.

All this happened in under half a minute, and I was on my way to a fourth turret when the foot soldiers concentrated their flamethrowers on me. A nearly useless gesture, but they did manage to obscure my vision with all the fire around me. So I jumped into the air, above their reach, landing behind them.

"So you want to play with fire, do you?" I asked in their language, mocking them. "Your toys are worthless!" I trained my heat vision on the fuel tank of the middle soldier of a group of seven in a cluster. His tank exploded, and he died instantly. One next to him was killed by shrapnel from the blast and the other five were set ablaze. The sight was unforgettable as they rolled around on the ground, trying in vain to extinguish the huge blaze that slowly roasted their flesh.

There were two mobile turrets left, and as I turned my attention to another group of foot soldiers one of them managed to get his main weapon turned in my direction and fired. Fortunately, the huge weapon was never meant to be used on small targets and he did not get a direct hit on me, but the explosion knocked me down for a moment. I realized that I would have to keep moving or one of them would get lucky and hit me. I have no desire to test the full limits of their weapons.

I leapt to my feet in a heartbeat and ran in a zig-zag to the turret that fired on me. It never had a chance to fire a second round. As I got close, I slid on my side underneath it. Assuming a classic bench-press position, I used my full strength to lift the right side of the machine. My muscles flexed to proportions unheard of on this world as I strained under its weight, I could see the stunned look on the faces of the humanoid and Hicondae foot soldiers alike. With a mighty roar and a final push, I toppled the vehical on its side, rendering it impotent.

The humanoid soldiers had finally come to their senses and ran off into the forest. I trained my heat vision on the last machine and quickly brought it to a red hot glow. I could hear tortured screaming from inside, as the crew was cooked alive. Finally, the cries ceased one by one and the battlefield was silent save for the tortured creaking of metal as the steel of the mobile turret continued to expand for a few moments after I had finished.

A great cry of victory rose up around me as the Hicondae ran to me to congratulate their new hero. I truly felt like their Kal at that time, I had sealed my bond with these people. And the humanoids learned to fear me.

That night witnessed the execution of 15 humanoid soldiers captured during and after the battle, in my honor. In groups of five they were forced to approach a platform, kneel before me, and a device that looked like a massive set of jaws was placed on the back of their necks. A whistle was blown and in an instant their heads turned on an odd angle, cracking their spines. This occurred three times, and the final group of five begged for their lives as the jaws were placed on their necks. They died without a shred of dignity.

I returned to the city with my temporary home in it later that evening. I'm getting used to the 28 hour day here, I get an extra hour of sleep every night and my active day lasts three hours longer. I thought I saw something out the clear membrane that made up my window, and went outside to investigate. That was the second major event of the night, it was Shill! He found me!

Shill curled up in my hands and made a cooing noise, as if he had found the most comfortable place in the world to take a nap. I brought him inside and he's sleeping soundly on the table as I write.

I guess I should take a moment to describe this strange abode I live in now. It is colored inside and out a pleasant beige, and has smooth, organic walls. It is dome shaped with clear membranes for windows. If you look closely at the windows you can see faint veins running through them, but it's not enough to obscure vision.

The house has three rooms, the large main room has a table and several comfortable chairs growing right out of the floor. There is also a closet of sorts growing out of the wall near the door for coats and such. The table has a group of flowers growing out of the middle of it, a permanent centerpiece.

The kitchen area is truly peculiar. There is a sink that seems to salivate rather than run water. I find it disgusting, and have not yet used it. There are two counters and they have, rather than drawers, orifices for utensils and cooking items. I have not yet figured out how to use the oven.

The bedroom is very comfortable, but very small. The bed is furry and very comfortable, it adjusts to the body's contours by itself, but I cannot bring myself to get under the covers without feeling like I'm being eaten. There is no area for clothing, as the Hicondae do not need it. I still wear only my prison jumpsuit, but it is showing signs of damage. I will get rid of it soon, the Hicondae have promised to bring me clothing from their next successful raid.

In all, the house is a unique experience. Since everything is growing out of the floors and walls, there's not much in the way of redecorating options. I cannot get used to the fact that it is alive, and I am inside of it. I wonder what happens when a house dies? They must have a disposal method of some kind. It's getting dark now, and the artificial lighting in here is dim. Or at least I don't know how to turn it up. The ceiling glows, much like a firebeetle from Aria glows, when you touch a certain place on the wall. It seems that these Hicondae have an organic counterpart for most technological inventions. A unique culture. It is time for me to rest.

| Journal Entry 12

Double good fortune. I have been in need of a change of clothes and other provisions for some time now. After yesterday's display of my power, I have been asked to lead a garrison of troops and their "monsters" into humanoid territory. Besides that, I have been told that one of the Velorian's "acolytes" or "blessed ones" (I believe the words translates as such) is in the city we plan to attack. I can only assume they mean the enhanced humanoids she left me with that damnable night. Revenge, we say on Aria, has a taste so sweet for the avenged. The victim should not be left to ponder the flavor.

Oh, and Shill has become my constant companion. He never leaves my shoulder, or at least my side. I have been teaching him a few new tricks too. He learns quickly. He can play dead, fetch an object on command, and other basic tricks. I will try to move up to more complex tasks for him soon. These are too easy for him.

The attack went badly in some respects, but very well in others. As I have noted, war is all these two races have known for centuries. They are both better trained, mobile, and quickly organized fighting forces than any army I have seen in the galaxy. It took a mere two days to organize a city-sized invasion of humanoid territory, from conception to implementation.

Unfortunately, a number of problems arose just before the attack. They say that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy, but this was beyond reasonable. The first of these was due to the creatures that the Hicondae use for war machines. One of them wandered off unnoticed into humanoid territory and was spotted. The humanoids were alerted to our presence and quickly and efficiently mobilized a defence.

We suffered heavy casualties breaking through their defence, it is always easier to defend than to attack. Once inside the city we fared much better, the majority of their forces were on the defensive line we broke through. I lead the charge, but then I encountered our third problem.

The enhanced humanoid in the city was the male, the one who I was forced to I have no desire to recount the tale. It lies in entry 5 and that is enough said. Ordinarily an Velorian enhancement is much weaker than an Arion Prime such as myself, no match in combat. However this Velorian knew things others did not. I will get to that.

The battle raged on, the humanoids fought with bladed weapons against the foot soldiers and explosives against the Hicondae creatures. The Hicondae had arm shields to defend themselves and fought with short staves tipped with venomous stingers. The creatures the Hicondae employed in this mission were slow but powerful. Allow me an explanation of their appearance.

They walked semi-bipedal, running on all fours but fighting on two legs. Their legs and "arms" were short, stubby, and thick. Their entire bodies were covered with tough, thick skin that the humanoids could not cut with their blades. They possessed strength enough to lift a humanoid in the air and hurl him several dozen feet, or simply crush the life out of him with a well-placed stomp or swat. The explosives were effective but only at a distance. They were the main reason we were able to break through the defensive line at all.

Now this enhanced humanoid was something above and beyond anything I expected of him. Velorian enhanced humanoids are supposed to be several times stronger than a Beta but far weaker than a Prime, and only a select few ever gain abilities akin to the Velorians that spawn them. This man was clearly an exception to that rule. In fact, from what he told me before he died, the other two women were also such exceptions.

As the battle raged around us, we circled. The most noticeable feature about him was his fingernails, a good three inches long and virtually indestructable. When we locked in combat he used them with all the ferocity of a Kintzi warrior. I suffered massive cuts on my chest, face, and arms. He seemed to attack for pain rather than killing blows.

He was also unbelievably strong. He far surpassed any enhanced humanoid I have ever met. It took all my strength to hold him down while I tried to get some answers. I asked him how it was that he was so powerful, how much he knew about the Protector, and what he knew of the Arion race.

He replied to each question with a strained breath, I held him fast. I found out much. The people know almost nothing of their false goddess, she came from the heavens years ago and fought back the city-destroying monsters of the Hicondae. She told them that the Arions, or the Kal in their language, would come one day and try to destroy everything on the planet. Her, the Hicondae, and the humanoids. It was never expected that I would side with the Hicondae.

And most interesting of all, the Velorian seems to have developed a method of choosing which humanoids would be most responsive to her mutagenic juices. I did not have a chance to discover her secret, but I know I must destroy her before she can teach other Velorian Protectors.

When she has found an appropriate humanoid, she takes him or her with her for two and a half weeks into seclusion, for a rite that only she and her enhancements know about. Obviously, he was referring to the usual process of enhancement, that of orally pleasing the Protector for as long as possible, as often as possible, taking as much of the mutagen as possible.

The result is the creation of her acolytes. She has had five so far, two are now dead for reasons I did not question. At this point in the conversation, he was able to twist enough to claw into me again, and backed off into a fighting stance. I'd learned all I could from him this day, it was time to finish him off.

I caught his hand when he swung at me, and spun him into the air. I brought him down hard on the asphalt road, creating a pothole large enough for a small vehicle to fall into. I stunned him for a short time by twisting his arm, holding him down paralyzed with pain. As I pulled I could feel the arm beginning to leave its socket, but that was not my plan.

Instead, I brought my foot down as hard as I could on his fucking dick. Once, twice, three times until I was sure it was crushed and useless. He cried for mercy but I had none for him. I swore that damnable day he would pay for what he did and it was time. He lay in that hole helpless before me, and that was when I killed him.

I brought my heat vision to full power and burned him into an unrecognizable heap, starting from the legs and slowly working up. By the time I was at his knees he was begging for mercy. Half way to his battered groin he was ready to suck me off to save his life. By the time I was getting to his rib cage he had screamed himself hoarse. Almost to his neck he finally died. I have two left to kill.

I left his head in as good condition as I could, it was battered from our fight but still easily recognizable. I stuck it on a steel pole broken from a building during the fight and placed it in clear view among the battle wreckage. I had hurt her back, but I still don't know how I could kill her, alone. One Prime versus a Velorian Protector. Marshat, what have you gotten yourself into?

[On to part 3.](#)