

Generation Gap

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I didn't go to school to learn about genocide; I learned it on the bus with Jerzy and Moira and Hammurabi, and we made beautiful corpses. The light was blue and the time was five diurns from sunset when we caught on to the idea; and it was slick. Slick and smooth as my inside parts when I come. My Wisdom pipes me that there's a type-descriptor for what we were – juvenile delinquents. Pejorative, maybe envious context is implied. (Envious of what? We shone with youth. Wouldn't you be envious?) Anyway, I guess you'll want to know why we did it, or at least why I went along, so here goes...

School was irrelevant. That was the initial factor that started the tree growing. It's public knowledge, I guess; all there is to learn in life is search strategy and people-moving. If you can dig the data and move masses you can roll. The moon's your runway.

Why the earth we reference it as the moon is beyond me, by the way; moon of what? Some radioactive dirt-ball? I guess we should redefine "the world" too, while we're about it. In case some of you are new to this frame of reference, I am Farida Ng-3, junior registered native, Lunar Administrative Zone. Age thirteen years. Crime: intentional genocide. Guilt: likely. Sentence – that's running ahead.

Anyway, there were seven of us in this crowd. We weren't the only crowd in Armstrong, but where age distribution peaks at around a hundred years and has a distinctive skew to it you just know you're in an etymological minority. The old are a different administrative bloc; they think things differently. They're mostly kiddies; kind of indistinguishable to us, you understand. They've got aux modules and life support 'till their cortices crumble and all the old neurones trip out to make room for brand-new widgets that may not even exist, except in that logical parahyperspace they use for higher functions. They're not subject to boolean logic; no more TRUE/FALSE dichotomy.

I sometimes met my genetic predecessor, five rungs up the DNA ladder, and he was ancient. Saw Armstrong himself on a monitor, in real-time. Said he had no face, just a golden mirror to stop the sun frazzling his bioptics. Great-grandfather wanted to know what it was like to be a "little girl" – I had to access my Wisdom to parse the referent. Told him I wasn't, never had been, a "little girl": I was an intermittent/dominant. His synthesiser laughed for him and told me not to be silly. "Silly" means non-survival oriented. How can it be survival-oriented to sublimate copulation? Like I hypothesised, the old don't use self-consistent logic structures any more. Simulate Godel, Von Neumann, spinning in radioactive graves.

I guess if I revert to consensus reality it might be easier on your referencing. Gives a rational kind of subset, anyway. Nothing rational about kiddies; they were about as relevant as dinosaurs and birds and things like that, useless for any purpose. We – the gang – existed between towering walls of calcite and the most complex biosystem of Solospace. Certainly the second-oldest, if you disregard Soyuzshells. Armstrong City was domed in diamond slightly thicker than I'm tall, filled with streams and trees and branching herbivores and insects coming out of your ears. Earwigs, ugh, horrible; use malathion on sight, guilty of ecological crimes. So what?

That was my introduction to nihilism. A bug that bit me.

School was irrelevant, as I've already noted. I don't need to learn things to know them; all I need is to know where to find them. Ditto Jerzy, Moira, Hammurabi, Piet, Pallas, and Kid Inkatha. So how were our activities allocated?

We were hard-ish cases, about ten percent of our generation in Armstrong City, all born/decanted/activated in the two-hundred-and-eleventh year of foundation. Armstrong City and associated robotnik industrial zones had a total human population of over 4 EXP 7, of whom about ninety-five percent – out past the median to nearly two standard deviations – were kiddies. That made us deviants. Perverts of the moon, network!

We sat in a ruddy earthlit glade, with the sun a glowing patch twenty degrees above the horizon. The trees were perennial, from some subtropical zone – a sweet, sickly stench rose from them, mingling with the burnt-meat smell of a Goliath beetle that Piet had cornered and slaughtered noisily. You'd be surprised how big they grow here. All seven of us were around. We'd taken hours to reach this place, high among the foothills near the edge of the dome.

The location appealed to my aesthetic sensibilities. My muse was noting pastoral scenes from my optic chiasma; I downloaded some sensations to Lunar Administrative Zone,

who swallowed the engram without complaint. I watched Piet as he spitted the beetle under a Fresnel lens held by Hammurabi. Hammurabi never complained; he was a dark, silent, beautiful child. All he wanted was to be loved. I think Piet had promised to love him after the feast – an archetypical social algorithm within our gang. I'll never know, now.

A smoky aerosol containing appetising oxidation products drifted towards me. I sniffed, salivating. Jerzy squatted near the cooks and broke off two substantial legs. He brought one of them to me like some kind of pre-space savage in g-string and war paint. The paint was blood; we were here to help LAZ with ecological control, culling landpussies where they clustered and squirmed too thickly in the branches.

I accepted the joint and he collapsed in a heap beside me. Very black hair, Jerzy, long and oiled and falling in ringlets, and dark skin engineered in among the genes of his caucasian precursors. He's regular/dominant so we don't often interact positively, but sometimes his presence has a strange effect on me.

"Farida my lovely, why is it – " he paused – "that when I look at you I feel as if my eyes are deceiving me?"

I bit into the leg before replying; spat out a fragment of shell and chewed on the hot, spicy meat inside.

"Unlikely," I said, when my mouth was vacant enough for polite speech. "Didn't you have them replaced just before Landing Day?"

He looked annoyed. "Shit Farida, when I go to the trouble to script a dialogue for us do you always have to ignore it?" I caught his meaning, consulted my Wisdom and felt embarrassed. His objective was gentle seduction and physical copulation, in a sun-dappled glade by a stream. Dropped silently into the database. The cliches were so old they weren't even funny enough to laugh at; he meant it. I flushed prettily and felt selected bits of my vascular system dilating in response.

"Okay!" I said; "Let's re-start." One for the memory banks. He smiled at me and said:

"Farida, why is it – " pause – "that when I look at you I feel as if my eyes are deceiving me?"

I smiled at him knowingly and replied; "Beauty is only skin deep. Did you ever have the inclination to get in underneath and find out where the real me begins?"

He put his left hand on my right thigh. It was slightly damp from holding the charred beetle, and slightly hot. He put it right where I'd had trouble with an autonomic reflex, and he knew it. I began to feel warm and wet. And all of a sudden I was irritated. "Break," I said, chopping the air with my hands, palms turned downward.

He looked hurt. "What's wrong now?" he demanded.

I looked him in the eye, slightly abashed. "This isn't going to work. I don't need to hide behind a dialogue box, and I don't like cliches, and I don't like hanging around!" I waited for a dramatic response; sometimes impromptu outcuts make the best memories. But I had this nagging sense – even without my Wisdom – that my deep meaning was being obscured by noise. Jerzy looked confused now, as well as hurt. He took his hand away.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, dangerously close to giving up. I reached over and took his hand, not noticing Moira glaring at me, and stood up.

"I want you to take me to this glade of yours," I said, "and lay me down for a dreamy good time. With no script. And stay with me afterward and talk."

"By bus?" he asked, dubiously.

"Via bus," I affirmed. Our logic gate was now true: we went off and coupled in a secret glade, beneath a tree dripping with torpid landpussies and peaches. That was how it was before this started.

It's about now that I must insert personal values into this narrative. Distasteful as it may be, I've got to tell you something about me, myself, my speciality. We youth are not parasitic drains on the community. Absolutely the contrary. Our simplistic logical modes ensure continuity for the processes of "science." "Art" is another matter, but "science" you can safely leave to us children!

To be brief, my speciality is applied pharmacokinetics. Not to be confused with pharmacodynamics, which is an entirely different subtree. Pharmacokinetics interfaces with thermodynamics; it's the principle of diffusion across phase boundaries, biomolecules providing the context. Rates of reaction mechanisms are a vital component of the field; they define interface phenomena.

I was attempting to develop a revision of a classical, almost extinct application of rate kinetics called kinetics of kill.

It was a requirement of an obsolete biotechnology where bacterial contamination had to be avoided because death could be caused by microbial overgrowth. The rate of death of a

population of organisms can be viewed as a statistical process akin to a chemical reaction; time/environment dependant autolysis. Potentially a mathematical description of genocide; harmless, in itself, but it had military implications. Which became obvious...

Jerzy lay in my arms, a leg resting across one of my hips. The grass was warm and the turf springy from subdome support systems. We lay there, breathing shallowly in the aftermath of our exertions, and the landpussies presently began rustling in the branches. Ignoring us. A particularly bold one flopped down from a low branch and squirmed towards a fruit that lay, rotting, just beyond my fingertips.

As it crossed from sunlight into shade and back again, it switched from grey to green to dull. Patterns rippled across its skin. It extended a tentative tentacle, and I wiggled a finger at it; natural curiosity warred with fear, won out, and we shook manipulators. Then I picked it up bodily, flipped it topside down and bit it between the eyes, killing it instantly. Curiosity is not a permitted survival trait among 'pussies.

Jerzy opened a sleepy eye. "Why d'you do that?" he asked, lazily.

"Think," I said. "We're on a cull, aren't we?"

He whistled something improbably convoluted in modemspeak, at a baud rate I couldn't follow. Every dangling tentacle vanished instantly, and I heard a rustling of branches. "I don't like it," he said; "we've stuffed our quota, haven't we?" His lips were beautifully full, ideal for pouting, kissing, and modemspeak – they were enhanced with piezoelectrics. He grimaced. "I didn't want to be disturbed."

"Oh." I was silent for a while. "Do you want to bus, now?" I asked. He licked the base of my throat gently, and transmitted a synchronicity pulse. I lay back, relaxed, and left my skull behind.

The "bus" is identifier for a private communications mode used by us anachronisms. It's a wetware bus; a kiss on the lips of the cerebral cortex. You can't bus with a non-linear thought processor like a kiddie. Some of them are so out of it that even duration loses significance; a subjective timespace inversion takes place, so that they can think backwards and sideways at once. That makes bussing a kind of private code, a childspeak language. Quickspeak, too. It would be better than copulation, except that it locks out your Wisdom at the same time because it uses the same pathways. It also locks out LAZ, because Wisdom is a sub-function of LAZ. Jerzy became my Wisdom, I became his, and as a consequence we were unaware of certain interesting ethical paradigms.

The sensation was of a snowball melting in my stomach: of an orgasm freezing between my thighs. I was part of something very powerful, very ignorant, with thought processes unlike any neonate of our experience; describable by analogy. Two bodies, clasping beneath the ruddy glow of earth.

I vaguely felt someone else joining in. It turned out that Hammurabi, Kid Frank and Moira had eviscerated the goliath beetle with efficiency to be envied by army ants. Piet and Pallas were too busy exploring a subjective universe of hunger, which included both nutritional and emotional deprivation; they had given in while the rest were eating, and their mutual secretions were lubricating the forest floor even as ours were. Afterwards they all bussed, and Jerzy and I daisy-chained instinctively. A sevenfold hookup; an orgy.

I was very warm. As half of a command node (regular AND intermittent/dominant is a strong combination) I began to be more than warm. I was hot. I loved it. So did Jerzy. This was turning out better than usual. Usually after we fucked we didn't feel like networking with each other for diurns. Here we were bussing, in monopole position... I felt a level of emotion for him that was previously unzoned, and I'm sure he experienced something similar. Sometime during that endless skinless time the concept occurred to us. So that's why when we executed it we didn't know who was the origin node. I know part of it was my study of time/survivor curves: but who could have thought of the Cannonball Express?

We came out of it, eventually. My right arm had suffered a partial circulatory collapse where Jerzy was lying on it; he smiled dizzily at me and rolled off it. Feelings of static echoing up and down painful nerve trunks as movement and afferent sensation returned to my fingertips. I stood up.

"It's a beautiful view," I said, looking towards the perimeter of the dome. Jerzy stood behind me, holding me round the waist to stabilise himself.

"Yes," he said. In front of us the dome arched upwards into the empty vacuum. Beyond it loomed the jagged wilderness of the lunar surface, pock-marked with robotniks and factotums. Their power lines and cold fusors gridded the airless desert off into rockfarms. In the distance, the hyperbahn slashed across the surface like the scar of some cometary impact. I knew that power plates lay beneath the surface of the road, that it was totally featureless and as smooth as a Futurists personality, but still I searched for induction loops.

Someone else wrapped an arm round my waist. It was Moira. Somewhere in the bus she'd erased her resentment and reoriented for polymorphous eroticism. I detected an invitation in her fingertips, but I was null to accept. Jerzy had left me drained, both of fluids and of endorphins. Her time would come. The others arrived. We clustered together, tired, happy, motiveless. We had a theory to test; somewhere in the business we had synergized a formula to test out a use for my general theory of genocide. It would be invaluable in a really major disaster, we reasoned; so it should be tested, confirmed beforehand. We needed a very tiny disaster, really, to test it on; a disaster under controlled circumstances. We knew that much. Collective we, the local network.

"The beetle population," suggested Piet, tastelessly, still licking his mandibular extensions. Hammurabi shook his head.

"Would be of indefinite consequence to biome," he said, frowning. Meaning; don't you dare! There were less than 10 EXP 5 species in dome of Armstrong City; less than 10 EXP 6 in Solospace; previously greater than 10 EXP 7 on earth, before it became Earth As We Know It. But at least 10 EXP 2 of Armstrong City species were unique – either genedits or genuine endangered species. The sundews, for example. There are categories of genocide, you understand.

"Problem:" announced Kid Inkatha, throwing back his mane of silverblue fur and then curling it demurely in front of his left shoulder. "Identify a species possessing attributes [1] non-endangered, [2] non-productive, [3] non-sentient, at least in terms of root human referents, and [4] non-interactive with ecosystem. Then kill them." He grinned, baring wickedly filed dental implants.

I looked for a landpussey, but Jerzy had frightened them all off. Kid was looking at me

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Let me present to you the Cannonball Express. Fastest surface transport mechanism ever developed. Here on Luna we have this economic problem with hydrogen, deuterium: there is none. Like you we use low thrust mass drivers for deep space work, but you can afford to use H₂ for reaction mass to get into orbit. We've got O₂ in abundance but there are problems. Second-best oxidant out. We need rusty rocket motors like we need holes in the biome. So we use a flinger to get into orbit – a big linear accelerator, two hundred kilometres long. One t-gee, six local gees, boosts into orbit at zero metres altitude, except it chucks over edge of a synthetic cliff. How to get back down?

Cannonball Express, hyperbahn, is fastest road in universe. ("Road" is old referent from pre-death earthside; look it up, you'll be amazed.) It works like this: you put your orbiting module onto a surface-grazing trajectory. It intersects the lunar surface at start of expressway, with downward vector about equal to one lunar gee. Big smear on surface, you think? Wrong. Express has wheels on it – big wheels, titanium discs, spun up by turbine before impact, brakes cooled and operated by open-circuit LOX feed. Orbital minimum groundspeed is about 3.7 EXP 3 kilometres per hour – earthly fast.

The module touches the dragstrip at orbital velocity, very gently. Begins braking interface. The downward vector component maintains surface contact, while vapourized LOX bleeds off kinetic energy as heat. Pretty soon module not racing at orbital velocity any more.

We agreed to divert Cannonball Express, nip the dome, and produce a localised atmospheric deficiency over, say, one hundred square kilometres. Then we'd move to patch the dome when about ten percent of all kiddies went onto permanent downtime – enough to predict consequences of a wider deployment. Genocide theory is neat.

Next field test: New Rome Triumvirate. Serve them notice for earth.

But kiddies are resistant to vacuum. I discovered this a while ago, by accident. Examination of a memory of great-great grandpa confirmed; skin like elephant. In old days you needed thick, dead epidermis to protect against some frequencies of radiation. Needed hypercharged oxygen capacity in event of dome fracture. And it got thick anyway, natural response to an irritant environment. I compared engrams with realtime vision of parent.

My parent was pretty good for a factotum; the best. Not my human parents, you understand, who I never met, but my appointed guardian, Sheila.

Sheila was just like human in appearance, behaviour, many other capabilities. But wasn't: not human, not machine either. I'm not sure I ever forgave them for that. Told great-great granddad, who cross-referenced me Santa Claus, mythic pre-space benefactress who was used to initiate consumerist behaviour among neonates. I found it, quite frankly, improbable; why would consumption be required? Why would simulation of human parent be required? They lied.

Great-great refused to answer my questions, faked sleep. In the warm comfort of our homenode, where G-G was physically guesting at the time, I slipped a sweaty hand behind

his neck. My hand was wired with sensors to locate neural input vectors; I logged his Wisdom protocols while he slept. But as I pulled away he opened his eyes wide, smiled at me with an artifice born of centuries, and said "Try it," in that curiously cracked voice of his. I didn't dare. It would probably have worked. And then what? Invasion of mindspace is no laughing matter. People have been structurally reorganised for less. G-G knew it; don't tell me alternatives. He looked at me, eyes wrinkled and ancient and knowing, with the lazy power of dragon-age, hot intelligence of abdicated authority. Old monsters, leaving the running of worlds to children. It served them right.

I went home. Sheila swept me up in passing through the compartment. Held me just like a neonate. "Hello there!" she said, blue eyes glowing. One path to identify factotums; they have no epidermal pigmentation, unlike real humans. All of them modelled on obsolete nordic complexion; pretty, blonde, ersatz. I wonder what they think of it.

"Hello, Mom," I said, subdued in my desperate haste to reach the bathroom. I felt grimy, sweaty, result of lying on grass and fucking. Also a bit sore. I still get that way a bit, afterwards.

Mom – Sheila – held me, moved to arm's length, looked me in eye. "Good time, Fa?" she asked.

"I think so," I said, and grinned back. "Need a bath."

"Uh-huh. Killing things, at your age!" She switched track abruptly. "I've invited Syrinx for supper. Interested?" Syrinx was her lover. Only lover, long-term. So factotums don't have lovers where you come from; then how the earth are your neonates expected to learn – from heuristics? I nodded. "I'll be there." At a formal meal. Must arrange for Sheila and Syrinx to be elsewhere at time of test, I decided.

She let go, shaking head distractedly, and I followed through to the water bath. (Now I bus with the others she has time for her own life. For hooking up to her peripherals, scattered on the surface, for making love and robots of her own. A true, inorganic life-form in our own image. But we don't claim to be gods; as a species they are better than us. So we made them mortal. Humans are a nasty lot at root terminus.)

I bathed in milk from an extinct species, and had myself dried by an affectionate towel that cuddled me in all the right places and told me stories. Tall stories but true stories. I thought for a while, flopped on a temporary bed, then pulsed LAZ for a call. Got Jerzy, on EVA of all things. Taking hike up side of rimwall, wearing skinsuit, carrying parasol.

"What you wanting, pussy-killer?" he asked. I could see my image reflected in his eyes, gridded over by life-support data. Serious business, walking.

"Wanting you," I said. "Got an upcoming small social, want company. For two twos. Are you not flattered?" I waited for him to think of something. He seemed to be on interrupt overdrive from his response.

"Flattered? I'm flattened! When, where?"

"This diurn," I said. Consulted Wisdom. "Four hours, my node. Formal dinner with parent, parents' associate."

"Um. Can intersect. That adequate?" His eyes, wide, disingenuous, interrogated me.

"Better be! See you." I cut out and buried fists in foam bed. Maybe here, in six hours or so. I knew I needed him. This was becoming an embarrassment. (And don't tell me that referent is abstruse. I don't accept that; some things are universal to human experience.) Thinking about need, I slept.

Woke to touch on shoulder. Rolled, foam surging and dissolving beneath me; it was Sheila. She belly-flopped beside me, face to face. "Farida, please accept my humblest apologies for waking you. I wanted to talk to you before Syrinx gets here, and you were going to sleep right through." She lay there like a big whale, mammalian, floating. "Right, Mom," I said. Breasts at my face against which I'd suckled until too old.

"Right," she agreed. "I haven't been seeing much of you lately. Any particular reason?" Straight to the decision point, Mom. I yawned.

"Not really," I said. "Been with the crowd, culling landpussies, hiking, plugging. Got someone you should meet coming, three hours minus, eat with us. Okay?"

"Uh huh." I could see her wondering, is that all? But I didn't want to know for sure what she was thinking. It takes all the pleasure out of life to know everything. That's what's wrong with the kiddies, I think.

"Is there a name to match this identity, perchance?" she asked.

"Yes. Jerzy." Pronounced Cher-Tsee. "Hope you match abstracts."

Mom rolled off the foam and bounced to her feet. "Do you, Fa?" She grinned like an electrical discharge in air. "See you in person."

"In person," I echoed. Feel so distant, I wondered. What's wrong with me?

Jerzy arrived, glamorous and beautiful. We spent minutes in rapt mutual admiration. Basking in a glow of self confidence. He sat at the base of our tree, outside the bole which concealed the door, and I sat beside him. Careful not to disturb his cosmetic artifice by contact; tigerstriped microtexture to face and body converted him into a baroque feline sapient. His skirt matched, too.

"Did you find what you were looking for on your walk?" I asked, artlessly. He draped an arm across my shoulders, casual and superb.

"Yes," he admitted after a lengthy pause. "Optic homing beacon for express. If we can fix the backup systems – " he left the rest unverballed. A passing police videomouse might overhear and correlate (direct mindtap being violation of human rights). Secrecy lay in bussing or in ellipsis.

"I hope this is the right way to test it," I verbalised. "It's got to be done as a double blind, but the panic... " He hugged me.

"Unquantifiable. Can kiddies panic? Some emotional states may be non-mappable. How old's your mother?"

"My what?" I was taken aback.

"Your mother. Physiological originator." He flushed slightly at such irreverence, but paused for response.

"I never met him," I explained, "but I should guess at least a century. Maybe more – great-great-granddad is ancient. And he shows up pretty often."

But just then Syrinx arrived; I could see this leading to identity interpolation, subsequent confusion. "Jerzy," I said, "meet Syrinx. Friend of Mom's." That was mega understatement. Jerzy looked up, bared teeth, gaped in what looked like a manic vampire attack, and said, "Hello." (Big anticlimax.)

Syrinx grinned back. "You could say so," he insinuated. A thought occurred to me; had they met? I asked Wisdom, which asked LAZ, who didn't know.

"Am I too late?" I asked neither of them in particular. Jerzy recovered first.

"Definitely," he agreed. "Met on surface, not long ago."

"Precisely," said Syrinx, grin down-modulating to scowl. "Not in best of circumstances." A man of tungsten, notwithstanding his kevlar infrastructure. "Well, cheer up. You're not disrupting dinner, either or both of you. Injustice to food!" Somehow I didn't imagine the food cared. I made a Wisdom scratchpad entry to query Jerzy at leisure.

Took man and factotum by the hand, stepped up through bole, and arrived.

Remembered, blindingly fast, as passed entrance; Syrinx is police analyst! Terrible oversight – should never have invited Jerzy. But it was too late. Mom had ordered dinner; multi-course spectacular. Main item was braised long pork, probably synthetic but tasted like real thing.

We ate and chatted and filtered perceptions through a matrix she'd developed for the event, a hallucinatory experience in which senses became confused, crystal-clear. Syrinx seemed distracted; I asked him why.

"Busy," he replied, "doing downtime for LAZ. Trying to trace suspected Triumvirate infiltration among insect life. Never let anyone misinform you: biological vetting is boring!" He scooped a chunk of meat into his mouth, sizzling hot. With gusto. I wondered if he suspected he was sitting opposite secret weapon. Jerzy restrained himself, no stolen glances detected.

He and Syrinx, it devolved, had met in vicinity of hyperbahn surface; had watched a landing. The flat grey of the strip split by a silver flash, then a contrail of blue-hot oxygen. The lander zipped past at over 2 EXP 3 kilometres per hour, decelerating fast. Left molten tracks drying on the basalt.

They shared a Moment of meditation, observing. Then branched. Branched again, after meal. Mom and Syrinx left, social circuit fizzing, tube to Gagarin on the other side of Luna. Looked like they'd miss the fun. Jerzy and I subsequently alone in homenode.

He had words. "We should act soon," he said, quietly and urgently; "priority high. Or do you fancy delaying until someone else springs it?"

"Guess not." I shrugged. "Any concepts?"

"Yes. Get the rest, then act. Simple trick; trip-wire."

"Trip-what?" He explained, my Wisdom concurred, and we did it. Went to get the gang. The rest was anticlimax.

We gathered on the earthlit plain, seven silvery silhouettes with parasols. Faces indistinguishable but minds hot; we were bussed, again.

There was a landing every ten minutes on the strip. Kid Inkatha and Hammurabi had tooled up a robotnik to make monofilament rope. It gleamed blue, flickers running up and down its extruded length. We waited for next landing, and afterwards crossed the strip. Pegged it out, taut but held between uneven heights. That way the wheel rims that survived

would be skewed; enough to divert by a few degrees. Interface with dome. Then we sat it out inside, waiting for big splash, killcounters in place.

Now you cannot convince me that kiddies are human. Their response pattern is alien. Their appearance often grotesque. Their thought patterns are non-parametric. Their logic is a virus. A virus infecting us as we age, until we are crippled by memories and Wisdom external and internal. I do not see that their lives matter. Ours do, but we are the future. That's why we needed to know that genocide theory works; subsequently apply it to rival groups. That's causality; kiddies are acausal. A history blockage. Maybe they didn't want to die; but they needed to.

There was a flicker of yellow fire and a jolt through the ground. Moon, earth stood still in respect as the dome imploded. We'd missed a point; catastrophe theory. Dome was a geodesic structure. Damage resulted in chain reaction turning it to gravel.

I think I saw the lander, embedded in a halo of light. But maybe not. We sheltered under a homenode as roof rained gently down. Our suits inflated as air curtain blew away in silence. We waited and watched, then walked.

I saw a kiddie. It was genderized as a he, but large elements were ambiguous. He squatted and twitched, spraying soil around in agonised figure-infinity patterns until he was decorticated by a falling diamond the size of my fist. It was the only death I saw; population density was too low for mass havoc.

A housetree had cramped and iced into a position of agony; around it lay the small, scattered twists of landpussies, strangely pathetic in the twilight. In death they assumed the colour of the lunar surface. Later we camped out in the desert, saw no more corpses, huddled together for emotional warmth. I hoped our deathcount program could verify the consequences of our initiation. In the pale earthglow it seemed almost futile; a waste of time. Erase and restart. Only ...

This node has no door. I await sentence. Trial by statistical probability of neurones firing in order to precipitate havoc; jury is my own brain. Probable sentence is centergrade amnesia; no new memories recorded after crushing sense of guilt delivered. We live in an eternal present, huddled like ghosts against the vapour pressure of the past.

They probably cannot read my texts. I can expect no mercy for my identity. The dead are all dead, remain so, resurrection improbable due to cost. Many of them sheltered death-lust, but still considered murdered by courts. Theory worked, by the way. Kill-level approached hundredth percentile because of dome systems collapse. We used overkill approach, brute force. A bit more finesse might have been a mitigating factor.

I see Jerzy sitting opposite me in this node, guilt rooted in his facial muscles like skin. The others are in a different category; we seem to be viewed as netleaders.

I look at him, and he looks at me; I mouth, silently. "Judgement soon; want to bus?" He inclines his head. I transmit pulse this time, and we lock together in total fusion. Sense of completeness, love unnecessary. There's not much time. I think that the old are an alien species; their state of mind is unknowable, their perspective – eternal.

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