

Galactic *Overtures*

a Living Starship Prelude

NUU'ONEE



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LINGUISTIC NOTES

Two of the major aspirations I hold for the Living Saga (comprised of the fantasy **Living Empires**, the superheroic **Living Metropolis** and the space opera **Living Starship**) is to realize a truly POST-GENDER fictional setting where culture and society did not develop in any way influenced by a person's reproductive biology. Gender and gender expression therefor do not exist.

To that end, the English language needs some adjustment. In the Living Starship series I have chosen exclusively to use THEY/THEM/THEIR as singular pronouns. I have codified THEYZ/THEMZ/THEIRZ as exclusive plural pronouns. *This also means that YOU/YOUR is singular and YOUZ/YOURZ is plural.*

I am also experimenting with my own version of phonetic English. I am assembling an alphabet where every letter has ONE and only one sound. This means, for example, that the letter "C" has been excised completely since "K" and "S" cover the same sounds. You will also notice a lot of double vowels. These represent the traditional *long* sound of each vowel.

There are a number of other changes which you can peruse, if interested, on the Cheeky Dingo website (Living Starship Stories section - [Language Primer](#)). These new linguistic rules only apply to proper names of characters, locations, space stations, and starships.

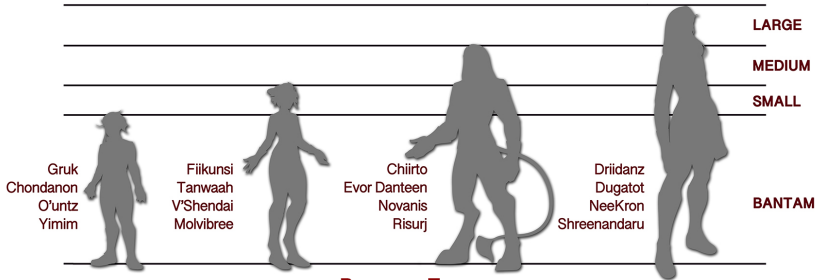
In the manuscript some words or names are called out (in **blue**) as terms detailed in the glossary at the end of the story.

NUU'ONEE PRONOUNCED:
[New - Ah - nee]

GENOME: V'Shendai **CULTURE:** Labor (civilian)
ANATOMY: Quadragon
AGE: 29 (Galactic Standard Cycles)
HOME: VeeShen Prime (colonial planet)
HABITAT: City
MOTIVATION: Achievement

ENGINEERING **ENVIRONMENT** **RANK**
Division Department SR. SERGEANT

ENG **ENVR** **ENLISTED**



PERSONAL TERMS

Genome or **Species** is the term used in place of **RACE**
Hominid(s)/Hominidity is the term used in place of **HUMAN(s)/HUMANITY**
Culture or **Ethicity** are terms referring to groups of people sharing common lifestyle or background

REPRODUCTIVE ANATOMY

Insem: has only a penis (derived from *inseminator*)
Jestat: has only a uterus/vagina (derived from *gestator*)
Amalgron: has both Jestat & Insem parts (derived from *amalgamation*)
Androjin: has neither Jestat nor Insem parts (derived from *androgynous*)

PRONOUNS IN LANGUAGE

They/Them/Their = singular individual
Theyz/Themz/Theirz = multiple people

PHYSICAL ANATOMY

Ungulate: evolved from gazelles • have 3 fingers + thumb, hooves, reverse-articulated legs
Primate: evolved from monkeys • have 4 fingers + thumb, toed feet, forward-articulated legs
Agregate: has qualities of both Ungulates & Primates
Quadragon: 4 fingers • hooves and/or reverse-articulated legs
Tripagon: 3 fingers • toed feet and/or forward-articulated legs

BRIJPOINT STUDIOS



"I don't understand why you feel the need to go through with it."

Nuu'Onee wrinkled their brow. "Go through with what, Kaal'Onee?"

"This boot camp rigamarole," Kaal'Onee replied as if it had been obvious. "Enlisting in the [SitFleet](#) is only going to tear you down."

A muffled squeal of pure delight emerged from underneath a massive, shaggy wolfhound. Nuu'Onee glanced over to the carpeted part of the dressing room where a V'Shendai child rolled around with the dog. Currently, the animal was placidly chewing on a silicon bone. All that could be seen of the child were two tiny hands and two tiny feet poking out from under the dense fur of the dog. The child had, somehow, managed to get trapped beneath the gentle mutt and was screeching with utter joy at being buried.

Feeling defensive, Nuu'Onee raised their voice somewhat, though part of that was needed to be heard over

the sounds of Kaal'Onee's child. "Kaal'Onee, I won't get 'torn down'. I'm not nearly so emotionally delicate as most people."

Now it was their sibling's turn to sound defensive. "Is that what you think of our kind? That we V'Shendai are delicate flower petals to be handled gingerly by the other, more robust, species of the galaxy?"

Nuu'Onee picked at imaginary lint on their designer silk pantaloons. "You know that's not what I mean." Another particularly loud screech interrupted their conversation.

Kaal'Onee lazily shifted their gaze to the child, now halfway extricated from beneath the fluffy dog and making a dramatic scene out of the process. "Raz Nuu'rik. Would you please take your antics out in to the hallway," they asked placidly of the child, using its full formal adult name for emphasis.

Raz looked crestfallen. "The last time I went out there the vidCrew asked me to go all the way outside. It's raining today. I wanna stay inside."

Kaal'Onee tilted their head to one side letting a bundle of cream and rust-colored head feathers dangle across one shoulder. Their voice remained calm and quiet but the inflection left no room for debate. "Your [sibrent](#) and I are trying to have an adult conversation. So please go out into the hall, play quietly with the dog and don't get underfoot of the camera crew or any of the candidate's team."

Raz's eyes widened. "Are you getting elected to the Parl'ment, Nuu'Onee?"

Nuu'Onee chuckled softly. "No, my sweet [nibling](#). I'm just here to help get a citizen elected to Parliament. I can't get elected to anything, and neither can you even when you're grown."

The child looked puzzled and pulled at one of their black and cream head feathers. "Can [Jesmo](#) get 'lected?"

Nuu'Onee shook their head. "Nope. Kaal'Onee can't get elected either. Nor can your [Inspa](#). All of us are civilians. Our grandparents weren't given First Colonist status, even through theyz were part of the initial settlers here on VeeShen Prime."

Raz had already lost interest in the history lesson and was tugging on the dog's gravHarness to get it up on its feet. "Be careful with that, my child" Kaal'Onee cautioned. "You don't want to change the gravity settings and have your dog floating on the ceiling."

"I know that, Jesmo," Raz said with dramatic exasperation. "You keep telling me that all the time!"

Kaal'Onee swished their head back and forth as their offspring and the pet left the tidy dressing room. "I would say 'thank you' for getting that dog for your nibbling, but it's proving to be more of a hassle than I thought. We have to siphon off some of our family food tokens to keep it fed. And I swear that thing is going to be a giant."

"Well, it is a Dugatot dog, and quite rare in these parts," Nuu'Onee clarified. "Everything is big about that [kinset](#). And I believe the Dugatot genome is predominantly arctic, which would explain the shagginess of the dog. Has Raz come up with a name for it yet?"

"Nothing that has stuck for more than an hour. How did you even acquire such an exotic breed? We don't see a lot of dogs in our part of the city, V'Shendai or otherwise."

Nuu'Onee shrugged. "It was nothing, sib, I swear. There's this famous actor who owed me a favor. They were willing to spend the votes to have the dog imported because I made a guest appearance on some drama-fantasy show with

them. I didn't think about the food situation though, especially since it would be best to have the proper [geneComp](#) food for it. I'll ask around and see if I can round up a stable supply for you."

Nuu'Onee's sibling sounded mildly reluctant but did say thank you. Nuu'Onee turned back to the mirror and took out a poofy brush. They dusted it inside a round container of teal powder, a tone of blush the makeup artist assured them would work well on Nuu'Onee's magenta complexion. Despite Nuu'Onee's concerns that the color would clash with their cream and magenta feathers, they went ahead and applied it liberally. It always felt extravagant to be able to use someone else's supplies and not be worried if you had the credit to refill your own stash when it got used up.

Kaal'Onee took a series of deep breaths and pressed the palms of their four-fingered hands together. They pulled one leg up at a time, taking advantage of great flexibility, to cross one all the way on top of the other. Nuu'Onee knew they couldn't duplicate even half that leg pose.

After a few minutes of silent introspection, Kaal'Onee asked quietly, "So what *are* your reasons for wanting to enlist?"

Nuu'Onee took a few slow breaths of their own before answering. "Well, once this election cycle is over, I'll have a lot more free time on my hands. It's been quite an honor to be an on-vid contributor for Ber'Theler's campaign. They really do have the interests of *all* people at heart, not just citizens. Especially not like that kooky candidate - Gam'Grin. *They* only care about super powerful and voteWealthy citizens."

"I would think you get mistaken for a voteWealthy citizen all the time," Kaal'Onee said, eyes still closed as if in meditation.

Nuu'Onee put the makeup brush down and turned to face their older sibling. "Why do you say that?"

Kaal'Onee retained their meditative pose. "Because you jaunt around with famous people, you have a fancy airSport vehicle, you live in a trendy neighborhood in a designer loft. All the hallmarks of a popular citizen."

"But those are all gifts and stuff from my friends and compatriots. Some of themz are very generous folkz. I can't acquire stuff like that, not without votes of my own. And they'd have to be heavy votes on top of that. Seeing as I never have many voteTokens to use, when out in public, it should be obvious to people what I am."

"How many heavy votes did it take to import that Dugatot dog for Raz?"

Nuu'Onee waved their hand and went back to finding a good shade of lipstick. "I don't know. Ber'Theler ordered the dog as part of their thanks for me helping on the campaign. I wasn't about to take care for it so I figured Raz might enjoy the company."

Kaal'Onee peeled one eye open. "And exactly what do you do for this campaign, other than babble on the transVids about equality for all?"

Nuu'Onee felt they were on the verge of getting heated. Their sibling's distaste for Nuu'Onee's lifestyle had never been held far below the surface. A few more slow breaths kept their ire in check - for the moment.

"My title is Civilian Liaison. Not only do I advise the candidate on how their viewpoints and topics relate to us - the so-called two-thirds of the galaxy - but I also act as a juncture point between the campaign and their non-voting constituents. Ber'Theler feels we will soon be seeing a

whole new batch of citizens, especially when VeeShen Segun gets terraformed and settled.”

Both eyes were now open on Kaal’Onee’s face. They focused squarely on their sibling’s back, though Nuu’Onee kept their own gaze on the mirror in order to apply the last touches of makeup. “So is *that* why? You think maybe you can get yourself positioned to be sent as a first colonizer to the new planet? I suppose it *could* time out about right. You’ll have your citizenship after five years in the Fleet.”

“That’s correct, my dear sib-Kaal. By the time my tour of duty is over, VeeShen Segun ought to be fully terraformed. If I can get enrolled in the first wave of the colonial settlement expedition as a citizen, I can grant our family and all our future offspring - yours included - as birthright citizens forever into the endless future.”

“I suppose,” Kaal’Onee admitted grudgingly. “That’s a whole lot of ifs, though. Like the time when we were teenagers and you said ‘what if I were an insem?’ and you had surgery to get a penis. *If* you hadn’t done that you might not have gotten caught up with in terrible first relationship where you were made to feel the need to switch back to a vagina. Then when that fell apart you might not have retreaded the whole situation and gotten your penis back when you met Karsun. I just feel as though you let *IFs* rule your thought process. Meditation would help center you if you’d just give it a try.”

Nuu’Onee turned around sharply and briefly considered throwing the eyeliner at their sibling. “I bet I already have the connections to get myself on the first wave, even as a civilian, but I want to be able to do something to help *all* of us, not just myself.”

“That’s certainly admirable.” Kaal’Onee languidly closed their eyes again. Nuu’Onee had never gotten into the

cultural habit of meditation and self-reflection that the V'Shendai so espouse. They was considered to be hot-headed, fast-talking, and impulsive; traits that probably helped bring Nuu'Onee to the attention of their citizen friends in the first place. Right now, Nuu'Onee just felt their sibling's introspective demeanor to be performative. It served only to keep them distanced from the conversation. Nuu'Onee preferred to live in the now and not to wallow in dreamy examinations. It was better to confront your emotions in the moment. Maybe that was one of the reasons why the V'Shendai had not gotten their first colonial planet until nearly a millennia after galactic expansion began. Too much sitting around and looking inward rather than stepping outward and working for what theyz wanted.

The dressing room door opened and a middle-aged face peeked in. "Five minute call, Nuu'Onee," the page said. "Will you be ready to go live?"

"Sure thing. I'm all set now," Nuu'Onee responded. "Did you happen to see my nibbling out and about?"

The page smiled warmly. "Sure did. The little nipper and that big puppy are tromping about the forest set on Stage 2. Don't worry, theyz're not in the way. The show that shoots in there is on hiatus for the week."

"Good to know, thank you." Nuu'Onee gave their feathers one last tussle and stood up. "Wish me luck, sib-Kaal. This is our last solo promo before elections next week."

"There is no such thing as luck, my dear. But you have my regards nonetheless. You'll do fine. You always do fine."

Not a ringing endorsement, but Nuu'Onee was glad to have it. They made their way down the long hall to the recording studio the V'Shendai government had booked for the week. Each of the five candidates, chosen by random

selection from the citizen populace, each had one day of studio time allocated to theirz use. Theyz could record any type of video content theyz desired.

Each candidate was assigned a team of electoral professionals to help guide them through the process of running a campaign. Nuu'Onee had been brought onto Ber'Theler's team as a favor to the candidate. It was quite unusual, nearly unheard of in fact, for a civilian to be afforded the opportunity to work an actual job, let alone on a bid for Galactic Parliament. Of course Nuu'Onee would not earn any voteTokens from the experience, but the notoriety gained from just being on the team, compounded by appearing in face on many of the candidate's transmissions, ought serve Nuu'Onee's future endeavors quite strongly.

Nuu'Onee took the kneeler indicated by the assistant. They squinted in all the bright lights focused on the set hoping it wouldn't make them them look like a noob simpleton when the cameras started rolling. A soft-looking sofa was where Candidate Ber'Theler would sit with a series of different guests. Nuu'Onee's place was to the side of the Representative-contender where they could easily chime in when the discussion warranted their involvement. A number of tall, frondy, and flowering potted plants had been set about giving the setup a sense of verdant vibrancy.

Ber'Theler arrived on set wearing long, gossamer robes, purposely styled to be reminiscent of official Parliamentary attire but constructed of fabric evoking a dream-like aura of self-consideration. It was hand sewn, not printed, in colors V'Shendai considered fashionable but not overstated. Their head feathers were naturally short and stubby in simple indigo. Monochromatic feathering was recognized as belonging to familial lineages that once held great respect on the [Cradle World](#), Evorstrom. Nuu'Onee didn't know if that was genetically-traceable or even true, but it was a

common belief in theirz culture. The idea that Ber'Theler was of prestigious descent had helped keep the candidate rated highly in the polls so far.

"Good day, my friend," Ber'Theler said in greeting. "I hope you have found the accommodations to your liking?"

"I have indeed, thank you. My older sibling and their offspring have even joined me. Theyz are quite bedazzled by the spectacle of all that goes on behind the scenes of both this recording studio and your campaign."

The candidate chuckled airily as they unhurriedly stretched out on the sofa. The crew shuffled about in typically enervated fashion. Other cultures were quick to view the V'Shendai as slow-moving and slow-thinking, notions Nuu'Onee tended to share, but theyz were deceptively more focused than theyz appeared. Nuu'Onee had no doubt the live transmission would start on schedule. The crew of the Brijpoint Studio was well-regarded across the planet as being efficient and professional.

Ber'Theler shifted their sloe-eyed attention to Nuu'Onee. "I'm going to open this transmission with some poetry I wrote last night. Then I will switch to the topic of civilian food allotments on the *Hiis Wikman* gate base. Maybe you can talk a little about what getting gen2 food supplies is like and what it means to your kind."

Nuu'Onee tried not to gulp. That was *not* one of the subjects the producers had said would be covered today. Nuu'Onee had done no research on the matter and had nothing prepared to say, especially not about that specific V'Shendai-controlled space station located in a distant sector. "I will endeavor to be insightful, Your Honor."

"I don't deserve that honorific quite yet, Nuu'Onee," Ber'Theler said. "Let's win this election first, shall we?"

“Just getting in the habit, Your Honor.” Theyz shared a smile just as the director signaled that the transmission would about to begin.



When the contender’s interview completed, Nuu’Onee felt wrung out. Each of the guests brought on to chat with Ber’Theler wanted to question Nuu’Onee as well. If the elector-contender was irked by the distraction and mis-aim of focus, they did not show it. A hallmark of their professional demeanor which would serve them well in the Parliament.

When Nuu’Onee got back to their dressing room, their nibling was fast asleep curled up in a bundle with the dog. Kaal’Onee was still (or had returned to) their lotus pose of meditation.

“My child takes strongly after you, I think,” Kaal’Onee mentioned with closed eyes.

Puzzled at the notion, Nuu’Onee guffawed. “V’Shendai children should not idolize me. I’m far too much of a blabberer to be considered proper in society.” They plopped down onto the divan next to the makeup desk, careful not to disturb Raz or the dog laying at the foot of it.

Kaal’Onee unhurriedly stood up to stretch arms high overhead, then bent at the waist to touch toes and languidly rolled their spine returning to an upright stance. “What I mean is, Raz exhibits far too much interest in exploring places and mindlessly chatting with people than is comfortable. They remind me very much of you when we were tidbits.”

"Well, isn't that something. Did you watch the interview?"

"I did."

"What did you think of it?"

Kaal'Onee slowly turned their gaze to rest upon their lounging sibling. "You certainly seemed to command a lot of the airtime."

"I can't help that the guests kept peppering *me* with questions and not the candidate. It would be very rude not to answer and would make Ber'Theler look like they had hired a chalk-gobbler for a liaison."

"I fear it could also be seen as upstaging. That can't look good for a citizen's campaign either, can it?"

"Well...no. Aarrgg! You see? This is the reason I want to join the Fleet. Civilians question my integrity and citizens accuse me of vote-digging."

Kaal'Onee tipped their head ever so slightly to one side. "You *do* manage to acquire an unruly number of heavy gifts from the citizenry. Theyz can't be *that* dis-likeful of you."

"Is 'dis-likeful' a word?"

"I don't know, you tell me." Kaal'Onee nonchalantly cracked several knuckles. "You're the one with the well-educated 'friends'."

Nuu'Onee closed their eyes in exasperation and tilted their head back to rest on the divan. "Let's not do this, please? I just want my last week to be calm. As calm as a Parliamentary election campaign can be. I don't need family making things tense for me on top of it all."

"That's what mediation is for," Kaal'Onee chided.

“Well, I’d much rather partake in some aggressive napping.”

“Then we shall leave you to it, my dear sibling.” Without saying another word, Kaal’Onee gently lifted the snoozing Raz into their arms. The dog awoke and obediently followed themz out of the dressing room. Even the canine didn’t look back.

When the room was empty of visitors Nuu’Onee let out a long groan of relief, grateful for solitude once more. “I certainly hope that wasn’t Kaal’Onee trying to be bad-mannered. They super suck at it if it was.”

Epilogue



Two weeks later, after celebrating Ber'Thelen's landslide victory, Nuu'Onee was on a streaming space shuttle taking them to a planet-based Situdel Fleet Boot Camp.

Nuu'Onee found the discipline of life as a cadet to be quite a jolting change at first. Regimented times to be places, to wake up, to go to bed, to eat; all were alien practices for them.

All the schooling in academic subjects was surprisingly difficult as well. None of the sciences seemed to stick in their head for long, which made test days overly nerve-wracking.

With how well they excelled in the social arts, Nuu'Onee was convinced they would be assigned to serve in the Agency Division as a diplomat or recreation specialist. When learning of it, Kaal'Onee was as shocked as anyone by the orders placing their sibling in the Environmental Engineering department. Someday theyz might laugh about that together. At least if Nuu'Onee didn't get dispatched to the war front with the alien Kruu'Koree.

GLOSSARY

Cadle World: term for the single planet - Evorstrom - where all 54 galactic species originated.

Crewper: abbreviation for crew-person, a term for people serving in the Fleet, most commonly referencing enlisted folkz

DataCalc: abbreviation for data calculator (i.e. computer)

GeneComp: term for genetically-compatible, such as food (synonymous with *kinset*)

Inspo: term/name used for an insem parent

Jesmo: term/name used for a jestat parent

Jestat: term for a hominid or animal with only vagina/uterus reproductive biology

Kinset: term for everything biological (flora, fauna and hominid) genetically compatible with one specific species (synonymous with *geneComp*)

Nibling: term for a child of ones' sibling

Sibrent: abbreviation for sibling of one's parent

SimDiv: abbreviation for simulated diversion (entertainment)

SitFleet: abbreviation for Situdel Fleet



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Layman Kingsford grew up in New Mexico and now lives in Denver, Colorado. He has a BFA in music and creative writing but spent much of his adult life as a professional ballroom dancer (one-time US Champion). He has had stints as a professional trombone player and also as Brock N. Alnite, a drag performer and cofounder of Haus Alnite.

He currently spends his time writing Living Saga stories and novels while designing/publishing tabletop games - some of which are also related to aspects of the Living Saga.