

Quick Note: the thoughts of Ryalto will be enclosed in ^^ . The speech enclosed in ^^ is Cyantian, while the speech not is in English. This is because I needed something to distinguish the two languages, and Ryalto will always think in Cyantian in this story. All parts of it.

'Sleep, Brother of Death.' - Lunzie, The Death of Sleep by Anne Mccaffery

### **Part 1**

*^English. Why do I have to learn English? Why can't they just speak normal Cyantian on Mars?... Probably just to keep the number of students down. Certainly not to help those humans that are supposed to be there. 1200 cyantians to each human that freighter pilot said, hardly a reasonable excuse. ^*

Ryalto is slouched over a desk in a small room, holding a stylus beside his ear, tapping it every few seconds. On the walls are a calendar showing last month, a chronometer which says 23:57 and a poster of a golden wolf riding a Macrarri 401 hoverbike. There are two beds, each on opposite sides of the room, with the desk between them. At the end of each bed is a small chest. On the desk are several opened books containing English/Cyantian translations, and an article written in English.

*^Stupid phrase. Can't find it in any of these books, or on the net. What's the use of giving us articles to translate if we can't translate it? Stupid English teacher...^*  
Ryalto yawns and sits up. The door opens and in walks a Brown wolf carrying a coat over his shoulder.

"^You still doing that homework? Red, I thought you said it was an easy mark, man. ^ "

Yes, I am still doing this work. You said help me do it. And speak English, you KNOW it, and I need help speaking it."

"You got that right." The wolf smiles openly and sits down on the bed. He throws the coat on the floor. Ryalto gives the wolf a dirty look, and the wolf picks it up and hangs it on a hook by the door.

"Anyway, you missed heck of a Resolution Day party. Lask spiked the punch and Hedtra drank too much of it. Hilarious." The wolf yawns.

"Hedtra drunk?" Ryalto shudders. "Don't think I wanted to be there then. Remember she the last time she got drunk around me?" The wolf's grin gets impossibly wider. " ^Knock it off, Geran. It was not funny. 'Specially from my perspective. ^ "

"Now who's not speaking English?" Ryalto's ears go flat. Geran gets up and opens the chest by his bed.

" ^Anyway, just came by to pick up a few things. Torik, Rich and I are going out for a few days. I hope you can defend yourself from Hedtra for that long? ^ "

" ^Where you going? ^ " Ryalto gets up and looks in the chest. Inside are several sets of clothing, a few data storage devices and a small ornamental dagger. Geran takes out a few heavier sets of clothing and the dagger.

" ^Just going to Centralis for a few nights. There is a big concert going on there, Rich's sister is one of those playing, and she got him four tickets to go. You're

free to come, but it's not really your kinda thing. It's that Neo Genesis concert...^"

" ^Get the point. So, I won't see you for a few days? Sweet. Enjoy the concert.^" Ryalto goes back to the desk. "Besides, I need to finish this work. Hopefully there is a decent translation source somewhere..."

"If you would just listen to my advice, get a translator and use that. It works, look at me!" Geran opens his arms wide, the cloths in one hand and the dagger in the other.

"Never seen a better reason not to do something." Ryalto grins. Feigning disgust, Geran stuffs the clothing and dagger into a bag that was under his bed. He fastens the bag and lifts it to his shoulder.

"See you in a few days Ryalto. Try not to hurt yourself." Geran walks out.

"^Wish you wouldn't call me that. Rather be Redshirt any day. ^" Ryalto sits down. Placing his stylus to the article, he traces the words.

*^Don't even know how to say it. Who ever wrote this should be tied up and tortured by sugar-high nalokets...^*

Ryalto yawns again, and then slumps onto the desk, fast asleep.

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Ryalto is in a lobby. In front are two sets of double doors which go into a large hall, and a corridor leading left. To his right are a desk and a corridor. Behind and to his left are glass walls with a set of doors, but nothing can be seen outside as it is raining very heavily. Above is a skylight, but again nothing can be seen due to the rain.

*^Where am I? I don't think I've ever been anyplace like this. White walls and blue doors... reminds me of EG, but its not as streamlined. I must be dreaming...^*

Ryalto walks towards the glass doors. *^Never seen rain this heavy... I wonder if this is normal... What am I thinking? I'm dreaming. I'm dreaming of a place I've never been, and yet it seems so familiar...^*

Ryalto walks over towards the hall. He tries to open the doors, but they are locked. Looking to his right he now sees a stairwell and another set of double doors. To his left is the corridor, which we now see has two more stairwells leading off it and another corridor. It bends around a corner, and a curved mirror can be seen at the end.

*^I feel strangely drawn towards this corridor... Ah heck, why fight it? It's only a dream. What's the worst that could happen? ^*

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Human male sits on a red sofa in a yellow and blue 'L' shaped room. To his left is an active computer with several disks lying around it. In front of the desk is a small worktable and close to the opposite wall is a pool table. There are windows in the wall to the humans left. Music can be heard playing from the computer. The human is 6'2" and has dark brown hair. He has a tanned complexion and has chestnut brown eyes. Around his eyes are large dark bags. On the table in front of him are several opened books, a pad of paper and a blue backpack.

*Wha? I don't remember putting 'Temple of Love' on... better turn it off, or at least turn it to something more fitting...*

The human gets up and starts fiddling with the computer. Ryalto enters the door.

*^Who is that? Hmm... This is a dream, so he must be some subconscious representation of something. Probably my English problem. Those marks around his eyes look like a mask... Wonder what caused them? ^*

"Why won't Winamp switch tracks? Stupid piece of..." The human looks up and sees Ryalto. *WTF? A big racoon? I must be dreaming... That's the last time I eat from the school canteen...*

"Hello. Who or what are you? Do you speak English? Uh... ¿Habla Espanol?"

*^Great, it speaks better English than me. Why does my subconscious know more English than me? ^*

"I am Ryalto, and I am a Sirac, technically. What is haba espanol?"

*Whew! It speaks English..."Uh, nothing, nevermind that. Oh, my name is Jason. This has got to be the weirdest food-poisoning induced dream I have ever had... Never dreamed of giant racoons, that's for sure. Ack! Sisters of Mercy is still on!* Jason tries the power switch, but nothing happens. He then pulls out the plug, but gets the same level of action.

"Uh.. Sorry about the music, can't seem to turn it off."

"That is fine, this music is... interesting." The song reaches the lyrics 'Cry like Rain'. "Very fitting of the weather."

"Wha?" Jason looks out the window. "Great, and I still have to cycle home... Wait, this is just a dream, probably not really raining"

*^Why would he say that if.. What is going on here? ^* "Uh, Where am I?"

"Hm? Oh, uh, where are you from?"

"... Good question. What planet is this?"

*What planet? Ok, no more late night star trek and no more eating at the canteen.*

"This is Earth. I think... This is my college, at least."

"Your college? Where on Earth is that?"

A smile spreads across Jason's face. "If a certain friend of mine was here, he'd say the mouth of hell. It's in England, near London. That help you?"

*^Earth? Squid... Well, might as well get some use out of this. ^* "Yes. Uh, you know the language English very well, yes?"

"Well, yes, but doesn't mean I can always speak it right." *Damn English pronunciations...* "And I can't spell to save my life. Why?"

"Um, I am learning English at the moment, and I am having trouble translating a phrase. Could you help me?"

"Learning English? You came to the wrong guy, but yeah, I can help you. What is it?"

"I don't know how to say it... I can spell it!"

Jason grabs the pad and takes a chewed pen out of his pocket. "Sorry about the pen... Here."

Ryalto takes the pen and pad and starts to write next to the computer.

H A S T A L A V I S T A

Jason grins. "Well, to start, that isn't English. It's Spanish, also known as Espanol."

Ryalto looks up at Jason. "Espanol? As in haba espanol?"

"Habla espanol. It means 'do you speak Spanish?'. That." He points at the pad. "That is a famous film quote. Loosely translated, it means 'see you later'."

"My English teacher is a very evil woman..." Ryalto's tail starts twitching.

"It has been my experience that most are. Oh!" Jason goes back to the table and picks up the smallest book. Ryalto stops twitching and his ears pivot towards Jason. "You wouldn't know what this means, would you?" He points at a single line: *Nolite te basterdes conundorrum.*

*^That looks like Cyantian, but in English letters. Nolite te basterdes conundorrum... Don't let the something get you down? ^*

"I think it says don't let the something get you down. Does that make sense to you?"

Jason looks ponderously at the book for a few minutes. "... Huh? Oh, that makes some sense. Basterdes... That word looks so familiar. It couldn't be. Could it?"

"Could what?"

"Just an English expletive. Thanks. Uh, how did you get here? For that matter, where are you from?" Jason puts the book down on top of the pad.

"Probalby best for you not to know, I don't know how I got here in the first place. I though this was a weird dream..."

"That's funny, I thought the same thing when I saw you." The song is coming towards it's end.

"So, which one of us.."

"Is the dreamer? I don't know. Here." Jason picks up some disks lying by the computer. "This is an Earth game, called Red Alert. You have it, I'm a bit too addicted to it."

Ryalto takes the disks. *^These humans have weird games... shiny disks. ^* He flips one over and sees a picture of a radar screen. *^Well, on one side at least ^* "Thank you. But will you not want to play this game?"

"I figure if I am the one dreaming, then Red Alert is safe. If your the dreamer, then you've got the disks, at least mentally. Heck, I just felt like giving you something for helping me." The song finishes. The room goes black.

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Ryalto wakes with a start. In front of him is the article, its mysterious phrase no longer daunting. "Hasta la vista, baby. See you later, baby. Now it makes sense!" There are four shiny disks lying next to the article. Ryalto flips one over and sees the radar screen.

"Squid..."

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Jason wakes up and looks around. In front of him are all his books and his pad. Looking at his watch, he sees he was asleep for 12 minutes.

"What a weird dream... Oh well. I feel the need for random violence and squishy." He walks over to the computer, which is off. He turns it on and looks about for one of his disks. Unable to locate any of them, he starts to search the room. Finding nothing, he goes back to the computer and plops down.

*Ok, Where the heck are my disks?*

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In an undefined dimension of space/time, a grey and black furry female in black leather laughs maniacally.

"I am become Death" - Anon.

## Part 2

A grey and black female walks down a corridor. She passes a door marked EA-22, and smiles.

"I wonder when you're going next? Maybe tonight.." She tilts her head to one side, and continues on her way.

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Ryalto is sitting on his bed in EA-22. He looks at his datapad, and sighs.

*^Just past midnight on my first day here, and already I've offended two of my roommates, inflicted moderate head damage on myself, and managed to get lost just 3 times. At least no one's tried to hurt me... ^*

Ryalto gets up and puts his head against the door.

*^Sounds like their all asleep, but I'm not sure... Better get some sleep myself though. ^* Ryalto yawns.

*^Yes, some nice rest, and tomorrow I'll try not to embarrass myself. Can't do any worse than today... ^*

He puts the datapad away in the storage unit and flicks of the light. He lies down on the bed and yawns once more. "*^Maybe in my dreams I'll ... ^*" He falls asleep.

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"Stupid essay. Can't understand why I have to write 1000 word essays on a play I don't understand. I'm not even in higher English." Jason yawns.

Jason is wearing a white shirt with a blue cat-emblem and blue jeans. He also has a thin, dark moustache above his lip. He is sitting in a small room with a bed against one wall and a desk with a computer next to it. Across the room from the computer is a window that looks out onto a dark rain-swept street. In the corner next to the window is a tall wardrobe, a sizeable laundry pile beside that. Strewn across the room is several papers and a few books, one saying 'Advanced Physics', another 'Talking Heads'. On the desk next to the keyboard is a CD case with the words 'Red Alert 2' on them. Jason picks up the CD case and opens it.

"Maybe some random violence and squishy mark two will help..." He yawns again.

"Or maybe some sleep. Ah well, the AI's can get their cyber-butts kicked later. I need that inefficient substitute for caffeine." He stands up and turns off the computer. Closing and putting the CD case back on the desk, he turns off the light.

*Wish I knew what happened to my Red Alert discs... But that was over 6 months ago. Tom must have stolen them, he was always playing it when I walked in...."*

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Ryalto is standing next to a post, wearing a red jacket with a strange blue symbol on it. The post extends up to a beam, which juts across part of the width of a large enclosed space, and meets another post. Hanging from the beam are several monitors, all blank. In the wall behind him are several open doorways, which lead into undiscerned darkness. Beside each doorway is a sign denoting 'Platform' and a number. Above the doorways is a large black board with many panels, none of which show any information. In the wall in front of him are several shops, each with a sign, but only one lit. A large sign saying 'Welcome to

London Waterloo' is displayed next to it. The rest of the space is obscured in darkness, only the space around him and to the lit shop is seen

"^Where am I?^" Ryalto blinks. He looks around, but sees no one. "Hello! Anyone here?"

*^Great, another of those weird dreams in a place I've never been. Maybe I'll meet that nice figment of my subconscious again... Well, might as well 'go to the light'.^* He walks towards the shop.

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*Ok, why am I in Burger King when I should be in my nice warm bed? I know I didn't eat anything bad today... Normally it's this place making me ill. Well, at least I can get a shake...*

Jason is sitting at a booth near the counter. He gets up and walks over to the counter.

"Hello! Anyone here? I want service!" He taps his fingers on the counter. *Figures, no one here. Why does this seem so familiar? Besides it looking like Burger King...*

He starts looking around the restaurant.

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Ryalto walks into the restaurant, and sees Jason, who has his back turned to him. "You again! Well, at least something here is familiar." Jason turns in shock.

*What the... A giant racoon? Wait a sec... He looks familiar...* "Do I know you?" Jason walks up to Ryalto.

"Uh, yes. I'm Ryalto. You were in one of my dreams a few months ago..." Ryalto frowns.

*A few months ago?* "Funny, I could swear I'm the one dreaming. Unless I've somehow tapped into some psychic power..." Jason turns away from Ryalto and jumps over the counter and walks up to the ice-cream dispenser. He grabs a few cups and looks back to Ryalto. "Chocolate or vanilla?"

Ryalto stares at Jason. *Chocolate? Vanilla? I've heard those names before... Oh!* "Uh, Chocolate."

"Good choice, I think their vanilla is off most the time anyway." Jason turns back to the machine and puts one of the cups under and taps a button. A brown viscous liquid pours into the cup. A few centimetres from the top, the machine stops. Jason places the cup on the counter and puts the other under the tap. He presses the button again.

"You know you've had way to many milkshakes when you know how to run the machine without training..." The machine stops and Jason puts the other cup on the counter. He then jumps back over the counter.

"Uh, shouldn't you pay for these? I mean, this is a shop, right?" Ryalto reaches into his pocket.

*^I wonder how I'll pay.. Wait, this must be a dream. I'm right now in my bed on Mars, having a stupid dream about chocolate, a human and some place I've never been. Must be my concussion, knew I should have gone to medical...^*

Jason looks at Ryalto. "The way I see it is this. One or both of us is dreaming. That means we can do whatever we want, as it's just a mental setting. I could throw a chair through the glass and it wouldn't matter. Besides, I'm skint." He reaches over to the straws and grabs two. He unwraps them both and sticks them in the cups. "Here."

Ryalto picks one of the cups off the counter and sucks on the straw. *^Hmm, cold and very sweet, I like this! What did he call it? Milkshake. Chocolate milkshake. Have to share this with the others... Maybe one of the humans I meet today will know how to make these.^*

Jason takes the other cup and drinks his milkshake. *Let's see. He is a giant racoon, and seems to like milkshakes as much as I. He claims to know me from one of his dreams a few months ago. How long ago exactly?* "Just how long ago do you say we met?"

Ryalto looks at Jason. "Uh, about 6 months Earth time, I think. Maybe more." He continues to enjoy his shake.

*6 months.. Same time as my RA disks going AWOL... "Nolite te basterdes connundorrum! I remember you now!"* Jason finishes his shake, turns and throws it at the bin. It goes in. "More evidence this is a dream, that. No way that should have gone in." Jason turns back to Ryalto. "So, need any more translations? Or have you finished that English course?"

Ryalto finishes his shake, but walks over to the bin and drops it in. "I finished it, and got high marks for that assignment. Thank you for your help in that. You need any help?"

Jason sits down on a tall chair. "Not unless you've read 'Waiting for Godot'. Not any translating there, but it's just too confusing for me."

Ryalto looks at Jason for a few seconds. "Never heard of it. What class is that for?"

"English, same as the last book I asked your help for. That play is excellent evidence that English teachers are evil." His voice raises up, "Evil, I say, evil!" Ryalto laughs.

"Yes, well, yes." Ryalto looks out of the restaurant. "So, what now?"

Jason gets up. "Well, we could have another shake, or maybe try to cook something, but I'm not inclined to either... Maybe try one of the other shops..."

"They're all dark, probably locked and closed." Ryalto looks back at Jason. "Well, it was nice to see you again. Hope one of us figures out who's dreaming. Oh! Do you know where we are?" Ryalto's ears perk noticeably.

"Yep. This is Waterloo station, in London. Another Earth place. You never did tell me where you are from..." Jason leans towards Ryalto. "Care to enlighten me?"

Ryalto leans away from Jason. *Well, it is a dream..* "I am from a planet called Cyantia, but I happen to be on Mars at the moment."

"Mars? As in the fourth rock from the sun? What are you doing there? Wait, let me guess, you're secretly studying humans before you either invade or make peaceful contact."

Ryalto stares at Jason. "No, I'm a student at a academy there. There are a few humans there, though. Maybe one day you'll be on Mars." *^Certainly be interesting...*

Jason laughs. "Yeah, right. Human beings won't make it to Mars for at least a few decades. And I doubt they'll let me anywhere near a space ship in any kind of functionality. You said there are humans there? How did they get there?"

Ryalto looks thoughtful, "Uh, most of them got picked up by Cyantians. I think..."

Jason claps Ryalto on the shoulder and steps next to him, not noticing Ryalto jump. "Ah, then I'll just have to build a beacon to signal them then." A flapping noise is heard outside the restaurant. Jason and Ryalto walk out and see the panels on the black board spinning around.

"Weird, I thought that board had been unplugged months ago..." Jason comments.

A grey and black figure is seen standing in one of the doorways beneath the board, and the lights go out.

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Ryalto wakes up. He is back in his room, and reaches for his datapad. It displays 06:37

"Morning already... What a weird dream..." He gets up and reaches into the storage unit. He pulls out the red shirt and a pair of jeans.

*^Today, I will meet idiots, layabouts and the ignorant. They will not be my roommates...^*

He puts on the clothes and walks out the door, noticing the vid screen is already on.

"Good morning..."

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Jason wakes up and promptly throws his alarm against the laundry pile. He then gets up and starts stretching.

"Weird dreams... What day is it?" He grabs his watch off the desk. *Only Sunday... Good, more time to finish that assignment that should have been in Friday... Better check the 'net first, get a news fix...*

Jason turns on the computer and goes out of the room. A few minutes later a flushing noise is heard and he returns. The computer then finishes booting up. He double clicks on the AOL symbol and signs in.

"Lets see what's on MSN today..." Jason opens a webbrowser. His jaw drops.

'Waterloo station broken into during night - no witnesses or CCTV of event.' is one of the headlines.

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The grey and black female is sitting in the garden beside a stream, chuckling to herself. A grey and brown/black male approaches her.

"So, Muerte, which poor student did you startle today? Or do i not want to know that..." The male sits beside Muerte.

"I didn't startle him, Colin, a human did and he's that new Sirac. You might have seen him around. Anyways, he and some human keep going to other places via the Void, and I followed them last night. Very interesting, as they haven't a clue what's causing it." She giggles some more.

"And you do?" replies Colin. He stares accusingly at Muerte.

Muerte sits up straight. "No, but me and my friends are working on that..." She grins.