

*[The following message has been translated into Standard American English.]*

There is a low ring of light that radiates from your home planet. You may have never known this, and may never know its soft edge in your lifetime. For your neighbors, they only speculate what lies beyond that nebulous ocean of atmosphere.

Are you alive?

Are you *aware* you are alive?

We imagine we might have wondered these things, too. And in some lifetime, maybe we have built a large craft, capable of [light speed]. In such a lifetime, we study you, we understand.

Your world is not like ours. We hunger for its data, its mysteries. We comb through the jagged upshoots of rock; mountainous teeth emerging from beneath a soft bed of molten gums. We wander through the concave beds of green which flicker against the wind. We explore into the depths where your light ceases to touch the smallest organism. Underneath you they glow, an ecosystem of alien species.

How unlike our world—or how like it.

Our world might have been much like this. Creatures of unfathomable enormity migrating across vast belts of land to fulfill some biological instinct. They crawl, stretching out one [bioluminescent] appendage after another.

Or would they fly? Might their skin be stretched taut between their bones? Would they swim, razor-edged fins puncturing through the film of the surface?

They may have been creatures of [organic compounds], creatures of [pure metal, silicates], or something not yet known. Could they have recognized you by your movement? Or by your field of energy? How might they see you?

In your world, you reign as predator.

The universe knows no such word.

Outstretching your hand, you search for the creature's eyes. Your kind always searches for them. You find none. As its appendages accept your open palm, membranous skin soft against your own, it twitches at the electricity. Alive, *alive*. You smell of your planet: salt water and rich soil. It envelops you, living deep within the space between your cells.

The creature in front of you emits a deep tone in a language beyond your understanding. What are you, strange being? Your limbs are short, emerging from a warm center where your vitality lives. You are fleshy, uncovered, and vulnerable.

It is very strange, the way your kind has evolved; spiraling across the universe, longing for a connection somewhere in the cosmos. It is evident in your smile as you greet one another. You are [hopeful.]

When the organism pulls away from you, the fibrous nodes running along its back radiate in a blue-green hue.

In another time we might have hosted your voyage here. You would build ships, groaning metal beasts of immense size to take you, so that someday a generation that will not remember your name might see a new world.

When the ship's doors, whining underneath ancient rust, opened onto fresh terrain, they would shield their eyes against a

foreign sun. Around them, thick, purple foliage, with life forms that buzz and slither and emit faint, electric currents in warning. In the distance, an ocean of silvery liquid. A thick strip of emptiness, dried and dusty. Or, perhaps, a dense forest of roots and vine. Above their heads, a raging storm of ice and metal. Might they land during a timid cycle, a plane of fog would concentrate just above the horizon line.

What will you think of us, our dear neighbors? Afraid, at first, but curious. You have been explorers for eons, wading into the unknown even when it has terrified you. You created fire to journey into darkness. You built ships to travel to destinations you had no name for. You wondered, as we might have, about the stars, and how you might reach them, too. In your fear we sense [hope], the same [hope] that has lived through your ancestors, and the same [hope] that will continue to live on in the eyes of your children.

Your [Earth] customs would confound us. Your tendency to embrace. The way in which you cherish the items given to you by people no longer present. How when you seek companionship with another human, you may ask them their favorite color. Your...music, and the way you trill in a mimicking fashion, sometimes in a soft vibration of air underneath your breath when you think others may not be listening, sometimes in sonorous unison within a booming crowd.

Would you show us music? Teach us, too, how to manipulate sound frequencies and craft our own melodies?

But amidst our questions, there is understanding. A language, that if spoken, can guide you across the infinite blackness of our universe. We know of your elements, as you likely know of ours. We, too, could know of stars, of moons, of galaxies.

In this way, we know each other. In some other life, in some other time, in which we might have received the gift of existence, we would share with you these thoughts.

We've contained these possibilities in a fragment of time, a ragged block of metal hurling itself into an extraterrestrial domain, entrusting its unwritten history with you.

We ask that in return for its information, you take care of it, and allow us a brief moment to exist alongside you.

*[End of message.]*