

Red-Panda Nanny

by some Alotians
and some Red-Pandas
and Mike Rozak
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Me, a Red-Panda

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_panda)

“Take off your clothes”

We stood hiding behind some thick, shrubby bushes.

Choochoon peaked over the leaves to spy on the two picnic tables on the other side. No-one sat at the tables.

The previous family that had used the picnic tables, about half an hour before, didn't meet our requirements. They were a husband and wife. They didn't look all that wealthy. And their two children were very young; one was a toddler, while the second an infant.

“Do you want to live in a house with a toddler and an infant? They'll be pulling on your ears and tail all of the time,” commented Choochoon.

“No,” I answered, still irate at Choochoon. She HAD told me that we were going to be camping-out for a week, not this.

“Let them finish breakfast, and we'll wait for the next family.”

The couple finished eating their egg-and-croissant sandwiches. They seemed to rush their meal; their infant was getting cranky.

Half-an-hour later:

Choochoon peeked over the bushes to watch as an old station-wagon drove up.

I also looked.

The station-wagon parked. A business-looking husband and his wife got out of the front seats. Two children opened the passenger car-doors. One was just-about a teenager, and the other was half her age.

The father unpacked a blue esky (cooler) from the family station-wagon, and hauled it to a picnic table. He unloaded the food onto the table, some cellophane-wrapped sandwiches on

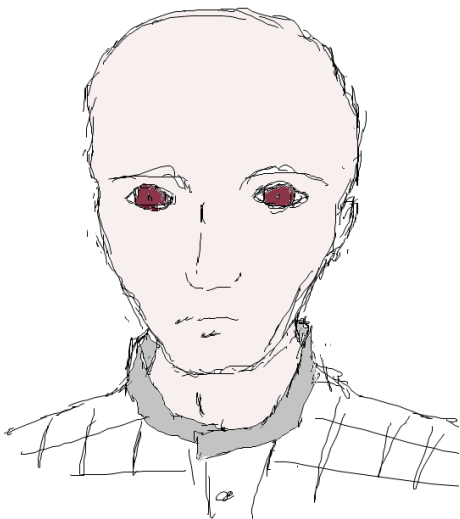
rolls, and potato salad. The mother pulled four fruit-coloured drink-bottles out of the esky.

"We'll wait until they've eaten a bit," whispered Choochoon.

I was still wary and uncertain about Choochoon's holiday plan. I crooked my head and pulled my left-lip back. *"You're really going to go through with this?"* I whispered.

Choochoon nodded her head with a smile, *"You bet."* She had done a brief stint as a nanny on another Alotian planet two years before.

This was my first time.



Alotian husband

Choochoon waited for the right moment. Her tongue stuck-out between her lips in anticipation, off-centre and to the left. She rocked her body back-and-forth, getting ready to pounce.

Her eyes sparkled.

“Okay, it’s time. Let’s go,” whispered a concentrating Choochoon. Her eyes narrowed, ready for the hunt.

She turned to me, and whispered flatly. *“Take off your clothes.”*

“What? Now?”

Eyes wide-open and nod, *“Yes.”*

I peeked over the bushes, and nervously looked back at Choochoon. *“But I’ll be naked!”* I whispered less-quietly.

Another nod with raised eyebrows, *“Yes.”*

“But...”

“That’s the best way to get the job. Page 136 of the guide!”

“But there are children there!” exclamation-whisper.

“Don’t worry. It won’t phase them,” whispered-stated Choochoon, the expert.

I stalled.

“What do I do with my clothes?” I asked.

“Just leave them here.”

By this time, Choochoon was disrobing.

“Won’t someone take them?”

Choochoon pouted her lip on non-concern. *“It won’t matter. You’ll get new clothes.”*

I capitulated with a head-tilt right, and a sly “smile”. She was in the lead; I was going to follow her plan. I pulled my shirt off.

Choochoon was now baby-skinned. She took another peek, her concentration-tongue sticking out.

She turned to me. *“Okay. Here’s the plan. I’ll enter the scene from here. You,”* Choochoon pointed circular-wise with her hand and finger, *“head around there.”*

My pants dropped. I stepped out of my shoes.

“Remember,” whispered Choochoon. *“You have-to behave like a wild Red-Panda for this to work. Follow my lead... but from the other side. We don’t want to look like we’re working together.”*

With that, Choochoon grunted animal-like, stooped-low to make herself appear stockier and shorter, and rumbled through the bushes.

“Fuck!” I whispered to myself. Time to walk around to the other side.

I began tiptoeing.

Crap. The twigs here were prickly.

All of my attention was directed to avoiding the spiky pine-twigs on the forest ground.

Ouch! And the small pinecones, also.

It took me a good five minutes to tiptoe myself around to the other side.

I didn’t get to observe Choochoon’s performance at all.

Crap, I thought, as I walked behind the bushes to an entryway opposite Choochoon. I was naked on a foreign planet, and I would soon be exposing myself in front of children who I might be a nanny for!

Photo-click.

AND THEY HAVE CAMERAS!

I looked towards the camera-click, coming from the picnic-table area. Choochoon and the family were hidden from view by the thick bushes. The Alotians couldn’t have photographed me, I realized with relief.

Two-thirds through of the way through my travel-arc, I reached the edge of the bushes. Myself and my nakedness were no-longer hidden by shrubbery.

I glanced at the activity. The family was paying attention to Choochoon, who was performing rolling summersaults on the ground.

I crept around further, using the parked station-wagon as cover. The automobile was a bit beaten-up.

I felt like I was in a Lemur cop-show.

Photo-click. Someone took another photograph... hopefully of Choochoon, and not me. I checked my visibility. All but my feet were obscured by the station-wagon.

I reached the font of the station-wagon. The bumper was dented on my side.

I peeked above the bonnet to see what was happening. The Alotian family stood in a line, two children, and mother and father. Beyond them, Choochoon frolicked around.

What was she doing that they found so interesting?

I had only-ever seen one documentary on wild Red-Pandas. And I hadn't even seen much of that; I was doing calculus homework at the time.

Choochoon's "wild" Red-Panda antics were obscured behind the family. I needed to learn from her moves.

To see through the gap that existed between the children and the parents, I crept past the station-wagon's front-engine. My view of Choochoon improved. She seemed to be eating a slice of ham that the family had thrown to her.

Choochoon was still mostly-obscured. A large camera that the teenage girl held in her hand blocked my view. I stood-up straight to get a better look at Choochoon's technique.

"There's another-one!" exclaimed the teenage-girl as she whirled around.

Photo-click.



Shit!

My eyes opened wide.

The girl took a full-frontal nudity-shot of me!

What would my university buddies say when they got a-hold of that photo?

No time to think about that!

Suddenly, all eyes were on me.

Choochoon sat behind my Alotian audience, finishing up her ham-slice.

My mouth opened-wide, eyes even wider.

Stage-fright.

What should I do?

I looked around for something to play with.

I slapped the station-wagon's bonnet a quick double-slap.

I looked at the Alotians.

Stage-fright.

This wasn't working.

Mouth still opened, my eyes rolled-up in nervousness.

Think.

Think quickly.

On the ground!

I crouched onto the ground, and rolled to my right.

Whack! My foot hit the underside of the auto's engine.

Ouch!

No time to hold my foot to soothe the pain.

I did a few more rolls.

The prickly pine-twigs and bumpy pine-cones were forgotten.

What was I supposed to do now?

More stage-fright.

Find something to play with. I remembered that-much from the wild Red-Panda documentary.

I rolled into a kneeling position.

I grabbed a pinecone and began examining it.

I sat down, cross-legged with the pinecone in hand. I had seen wild Red-Pandas do that on television.

I began mouthing the pinecone.

What else did wild Red-Pandas do?

Think!

"She's hungry also," sympathized the teenage Alotian-girl.

"Quick mom, throw her some food!"

The parents were ready. The Alotian mother frisbeed me a ham-slice, right into my lap.

What would a wild Red-Panda do?

I picked-up the slice of ham, pretended to sniff it, and nibbled. I pretended to analyse it for flavour. It wasn't bad, actually.

And then I slowly chomped it down while I thought of another antic.

The parents chuckled.

Photo-click of me.

The teenage-girl turned-around to get another snapshot of Choochoon.

With eyes returning to Choochoon, how would I now steal-back the limelight from Choochoon?

Did I really want to?

No, not really. At least, not yet. I needed to analyse her techniques. And even then, I felt silly sitting naked on the ground pretending to be a wild ancestor.

Choochoon was cleaning pine-twigs off the ground, in a curved arc. I didn't know that wild Red-Pandas drew on the ground with their flattened hand.

"Can we keep him?" asked the teenage girl, who was looking at Choochoon.

Her father was astute. *"I don't know. Maybe we should think about this first."*

He continued. *"It's a big decision. What about that other one over there?"* He pointed at me.

My jaw opened in shock, left-and-right sides opened wide. Eyes wide-open.

Crap!

They were looking at me again!

I had to figure-out something-else to do.

What else do wild Red-Pandas do?

I couldn't steal Choochoon's trick of drawing on the ground.

I licked my nose!

That should do it.

The lick occupied four seconds.

What next?

I rolled to the right, with the plan of ending-up in a sitting position. My limited acrobatics failed me. My roll finished with me on my knees, looking away from the family.

Hopefully the girl didn't photograph a bending-over butt-shot.

The last time someone caught me in that pose, my butt-photo was pinned to the dorm-corkboard for months... even when I managed to take-off and tear-up nine copies of the photo.

No photo-click yet.

I had only seconds to change my pose.

Quick action! Think!

I spun around on my right foot, and into a sitting position. All those weeks of cheerleading weren't completely useless. I had dropped "Cheerleading" as soon as I realized that I never-ever-ever wanted to do cheerleading.

By the time I had spun around, the girls' attentions had returned to Choochoon. The Alotian husband gave me a look, and a left-right nod to say... *"No, I don't think you made the cut."*

He tossed me some more ham.

I sat and ate.

A few minutes later mother asked, *"So have you decided yet girls? Which one do you want?"*

"I want him," said the teenage girl, pointing at Choochoon.

The youngest-one only squealed.

Mother, *"Okay then, let's corral her into the car."*

Father added, *“I’ll start packing up. Maybe we can lure her into our car with some food.”*

....

Fifteen minutes later, I had slunk back behind the bushes. Choochoon tongue-curved goodbye to me from the back of the station-wagon as she was driven away.

The family had left me a plastic-bag full of sandwich buns to munch on.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

The station-wagon stopped half-a-kilometre down the park road.

“Just a minute, dear,” said the husband.

He hopped out of the car, and set the time-plank for *Picnic Table #47* to *“11:00 – 12:00 reserved”*. It was only 9:30.

The Alotian man pulled out his mobile-phone, and dialled a number.

“Hello, Frank.”

Blah blah blah, from the phone.

“Picnic table forty-seven. You’re already reserved. The one we got came highly recommended. Her friend also should be good.”

The Alotian man hopped back into the car. The station-wagon

The night before

Hoooh parked the spaceplane.

"Are you guys all ready?" asked the Deer-evolved woman.

"Yeah, we're getting there," telepathically-grumbled

Choochoon.

Choochoon turned to me and spoke, *"What do you have on you Wen?"*

I checked myself over. *"A flashlight, GPS, and a backpack with spare clothes."*

Choochoon finger-pointed at Hoooh, kind-of a wink.

"Put the GPS and backpack down for now," Choochoon requested. *"Um. I want to check through them."*

A buddy sanity-check of camping-gear was always handy. I pulled-off my backpack and lay it on the ground in front of Choochoon.

She bent over to scrounge through my gear, her heavy backpack nearly toppling her.

"Crap! I have too-much gear on me. I can't even bend over to double-check through your bag. ☺"

Choochoon pulled off her hat, her backpack, and even her shoes. She then opened my backpack, and rummaged through it.

"Hurry up guys! The Alotians will detect us soon." Came Hoooh's telepathic warning.

"We're getting there," yelled Choochoon. It was getting louder near the exit door.

Choochoon rummaged through my pack some more.

"Shit!" That was Hooh. *"We've been spotted!"* She was a terrible liar, but I didn't notice her lie at the time. *"I'm opening the door now. You have ten seconds to get out."*

Choochoon, who was a much-better liar/deceiver, *"Fuck! There's the door! Let's go Wen!"*

I was so excited and rushed that I nearly leapt out of the spaceplane door without my pack. *"Crap. I almost forgot my bag!"*

"Don't bother with it. No time! Hooh will drop them off later."

Choochoon was behind me. As she also ran for the door, Choochoon pushed me out.

The spaceplane's door had materialized about 30 centimetres above the ground. As we plunged into the dark, both of us stumbled onto the forest ground.

The spaceplane's light dimmed, and then disappeared. It had departed.

It was dark.

"Where's your flashlight?" inquired Choochoon.

"I set it down in the spaceplane."

"Crap. We'll have to wait until sunrise then," said Choochoon as her silhouette stood up. *"It's only a few hours away."*

"Did you manage to bring your pack?" I asked.

"No. No time." Choochoon was lying. She continued, *"Don't worry. We're right next to a picnic ground. There's a water bubbler, and if we really need help, some Alotians will be by. Sure we're here illegally, but they won't mind."*

My own “capture”

Waiting for another Alotian family

By sunrise, Choochoon had explained her plan to me. She had arranged a surprise-Holiday for me. We were supposed to be here for a short hike, but we were actually going to get a play-job.

She had explained her plan to me VERY quickly. I didn't fully-understand all of the small details, mostly because I mostly-thought she was joking about the far-fetched scheme.

Now, I was abandoned by her. Her “wild” Red-Panda antics had gotten her a ride with total strangers. I was left alone on a strange planet, with only fragments of her plan floating around my mind.

I had no mobile phone.

I had no money.

I had no friend... for the moment. I was only temporarily pissed-off at her. 😊

And I was naked!

I tiptoed my way back to where we were hiding.

Out clothes were still there. No-one had taken them.

Fuck!

What was I going to do?

I was stuck all-alone in the wilderness, on a foreign planet, without the rascal that got me into this.

We were supposedly going on a weeklong hike in our native country. Alotians now lived there. The allure of hiding from (friendly) Alotians, who wouldn't have done anything whatsoever to us, only added to the excitement.

It was going to be a week of easy camping. No tents were needed because there were no bugs, and it wouldn't rain.

We didn't take much food because Alotian fast-food restaurants were evenly distributed along our planned-path, and/or our path was selected to evenly-distribute Alotian fast-food restaurants.

Alotians prefer to live on Alotian-only planets, without any other races around. Legally we shouldn't be here. But if we happened to wander into an Alotian fast-food restaurant with some money, they'd feed us and not mention anything to anyone.

I didn't even have my money!

I left \$400 of my money behind on the spaceplane. It was safely stored in my backpack. Having only \$4500 left in my university bank-account, that was a sizable chunk of money for me.

This was supposed to be a cheap holiday. 8 days, times \$10.89 a day for an Alotian Value Meal #3 ... #5, plus \$5.00 a day for snacks, and I'd only spend \$128.00 for the trip. Add the \$20.00 that Hooh charged me for the flight, and I was going to have a very-inexpensive holiday.

Fuck!

This trip was all Choochoon's idea.

It was a post-graduation trip for me, at Choochoon's suggestion. I had just completed my "*Social Engineering*" bachelor's degree, which is the equivalent to "*Basket Weaving 101*" on Earth-Sol. I had a half-a-year break before I would resume my higher education. I still had four-more years before I could get a decent job.

Crap!

"Let's just go for a week-long hike in the wilderness!"
Choochoon broached the subject a few months ago. *"I did the same thing on a different Alotian planet a few years ago. Alotians*

are friendly people. They have good food. And their children are lots of fun," she had said.

I didn't clue in on the *"And their children are lots of fun,"* addendum until just now.

"Yeah, well, fuck you," I non-angrily grumbled to a virtual Choochoon, as I fumbled through our pile of clothes.

I began putting my clothes on.

When she first told me her plan this morning, I was sure it was a joke. Even when I was exposing myself near the station-wagon, I one-quarter believed she was pulling a prank on me.

"We're here to get a play-job," she had told me in the dark.

"Alotian laws prevent non-Alotians from being hired. So we have to pretend to be wild Red-Pandas first."

Seriously, doesn't that sound like a sorority initiation-prank to you?

"They're all in on the gig. Well, most of them usually are."

"Just be careful. Some of them actually think we're wild Red-Pandas, so we sometimes have to play-along for awhile, and break it to the parents slowly."

The Sedan

I had just put my clothes on.

What was I going to do?

Hopefully, the Deer would come back to pick me up.

But why would she do that?

Oh yes, she had to drop our bags off.

I widened my eyes.

But if Choochoon had her in on the prank... I hoped it was a prank... then the Deer wouldn't pick me up, would she?

And if it weren't a prank? What if Choochoon was actually serious about being a nanny to Alotian children?

How many hours or days should I wait to get picked up?

I had the plastic-bag of bread rolls with me. The water bubbler wasn't far away.

Shit.

I didn't even remember where the nearest hamburger place was. Choochoon had shown me on the map, but I had all-of-about ten seconds of attention directed that way while I was putting-on my shoes.

And I didn't even have any money.

Maybe the burger restaurant was our meeting place?

A car drove up.

Crap!

What was I going to do?

The car was a dark-green sedan.

It wasn't the same car. Choochoon had left in a station-wagon.

Maybe she hadn't pranked me.

I stood behind the bushes and watched. A husband and wife opened the car-doors from either side. They didn't look like the same people either.

A pre-teen girl opened her door and got out. She was younger than the other girl. The mother opened the other door, and released a boy, just-older than a toddler.

The husband opened the boot of his car, and pulled out a blue esky. The blue eskies matched.

He hauled the heavy container to the table and began unpacking.

The boy rubbed his eyes as he child-wobbled to the tables, perhaps tired.

What was I going to do?

Should I mimic Choochoon's actions?

Was that what I needed to do to get out of this situation?

I hoped this was a prank. I was going to KILL her.

Fuck.

I didn't want to act like a fool again. I was too embarrassed the first time. I'd stutter all-over with my second attempt.

And I didn't want to get naked again. If I were caught in a prank, Choochoon already had one high-value snapshot of me.

But how could Choochoon arrange a prank that included three arbitrary Alotian families? I could believe the Deer was in on the prank, but not three Alotian families.

I decided to watch the family and think about things.

The father unpacked meat slices, mayonnaise, and a clear-bag of bread rolls. The mother made sandwiches, and the father handed them out to the children.

Meanwhile, he was looking-about.

Crap!

Duck down!

He might have spotted me.

Shit!

Could they really be in on the joke?

What if this were a joke?

What if it weren't?

According to the prank hypothesis, if I were to go out and play Red-Panda, I'd have to pull-off my clothes. I'd embarrass myself again. Choochoon would get another photograph.

If I wasn't embroiled in a prank, I'd need to be naked to pretend to be a "wild" Red-Panda.

That last statement only kind-of made sense.

Perhaps the Alotians were real, but Choochoon's "*you need to pretend to be a wild Red-Panda to get a job*" was the prank?

But if that were the case, then her nakedness seemed to have gotten her a nanny-job.

Fuck!

What if I didn't take off my clothes?

They'd look at me.

I might be fed.

Then what?

Then they'd go away and leave me. They wouldn't report me to the police.

Then the Deer would pick me up later.

Hopefully.

But she would only pick me up if this were a prank!

What if this weren't a prank? What if the Deer didn't pick me up?

I could wait-out this family and think about it. Another family would eventually stop by.

I could watch families come-and-go for several days, surviving on the bread-rolls I already had. If the Deer didn't return after three days, I could still pretend to be a wild Red-Panda.

Or, I might be able to get a job at the nearby fast-food restaurant, wherever that was. At the very least, the restaurant employees could call the police and get me deported home.

Now, back to the hypothesis that this wasn't a prank.

If I stumbled out of the bushes naked and successfully pretended to be a wild Red-Panda, and if the Alotian family was

looking for a nanny-pet, or they were just looking for a clever-pet and mistook me for a wild Red-Panda, then I would be driven to some stranger's house.

Shit.

With Choochoon's perhaps-a-prank explanation before sunrise, I half-thought that both Choochoon and I would end-up in the same house together. Why would she involve me in a plan that would leave me all-alone on a strange planet?

My confidence was failing.

I peeked over the bushes to watch the family. They were already eating their sandwiches. The boy had mostly-discarded his on the ground.

The husband glanced about.

Before the children, or wife, or husband had finished their sandwiches, the husband announced, *"I'm going to pull out the cake now. What do you think? This is supposed to be a fun day? Eh, kids?"*

The girl's sandwich went down immediately. The boy's was already on the ground. And the mother looked perplexed.

From the bottom of the esky, the husband pulled-out a clear-plastic encased chocolate-cake. He placed it on the table with flourish, briefly glancing my way. After removing the hard-plastic top, he cut the cake with a clear-plastic cake-triangle-spatula. That-too came from the esky.

The husband dished-out the chocolate cake onto several styrofoam tea-plates, and handed them out with a fork-each. Everyone dug in, except the mother, who was looking very perplexed.

I continued to watch.

After eating half his cake, the husband told his wife, *“I drank too much water. I have to go behind the bushes. I’ll be right back.”* I hadn’t noticed that they hadn’t actually drunk any water.

The man walked to my right, and was obscured by the bushes.

How to get hired as a wild Red-Panda

I watched the mother and children eat their cake.

From behind me came some rustling.

I automatically glanced back.

The Alotian husband was ten meters behind me, watching me watch his family.

He motioned for me to come over with his finger, and then twitched his head left to indicate a clandestine meeting.

I looked at him, and then “eyed” him to ask if he wanted to talk to me.

Was I in trouble?

Was he going to call the police?

He motioned with his hand again.

If I were in trouble, I couldn’t run. The safest option for me was to be caught without causing a problem.

I ambled up to the man.

“Do you understand my language?” he whispered, as he crouched-down to me eye-level.

“Yes,” I answered in a highly-accented Alotian.

“Here’s the deal. I promised my two children a clever-pet.”

He continued, *“Are you here for the pet job?”*

Surprise hit my face... an open jaw, with open-wide sides of my mouth. Maybe Choochoon was serious.

"Yes," I said. My eyebrows raised, and I nodded. What else could I say? (My voice sounded like an Alotian with a hoarse throat from a very-bad cold, perhaps half-an-octave lower.)

I could have said "No," but that answer didn't occur to me at the time.

"Good. Here's the deal."

"All you have to do, is take off your clothes."

A shocked expression came to my face.

"Not in front of me though."

"Just head over to the bushes..."

"Wait... let me explain the full scenario..." he added professionally before I had a chance to mess it up.

"You hide behind the bushes."

"Two, I head back to my family."

"Three, you take-off your clothes and pop out."

"I'll get the kids interested."

He thought a moment.

"You have to get into the boot of the car, unfortunately. We can't let you ride in the back with our kids."

"We'll lure you into the boot with some cake."

"By the way, my wife doesn't know you're not a wild Red-Panda."

"And my kids don't know either."

He returned to the plan. *"You climb into the boot. I'll close it on you."*

He did some more on-the-fly planning.

"I'll also put the cake in the boot."

The husband looked-up and thought. *"It's about a twenty minute ride."*

"When we get home, pretend to be an animal for a few days."

The man counted on his fingers, double-checking his impromptu list.

"Got it?"

My face expressed a somewhat-puzzled look. *"Yeah,"* I answered, and Panda-nodded.

"Good! See you in ten minutes." The Alotian looked at his watch.

Acting

Six minutes later, the husband returned to his family.

I watched from behind the bushes.

"How is the cake, children?" he asked.

"Great daddy," said the boy, who had frosting smeared all-over his lips.

The husband looked in my direction to give me a cue. He hadn't told me he was going to cue me.

I pulled-off my clothes.

I hoped this worked.

I hoped this wasn't a graduation prank.

Fuck, I was going to be embarrassed.

Two minutes later I was naked.

Idea!

I broke-off a leafy branch, and held it in my right hand.

To look more animal-like, I hunched down as I ambled through the bushes, the leafy-branch hiding my private.

From what I could see, neither of the children had a camera.

The mother saw me and exclaimed, *“How cute! Where’s the camera?”*

Shit.

“Damn,” responded the father, honestly. *“I forgot to bring it.”*

At least there were no cameras.

And now, all I had to do was the embarrassing animal role-playing...

Car-ride home

Ten minutes later, I was in the boot of the car. My leafy branch had protected me all of the way.

The husband closed the boot gently.

Inside was a blanket. And a dog collar, which I didn’t notice.

And half the cake.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

The sedan stopped half-a-kilometre down the park road.

“Just a minute, dear,” said the husband.

He hopped out of the car, and removed the time-plank for *Picnic Table #47*. It was only 10:45.

The Alotian man pulled out his mobile-phone, and dialed a number.

"Hello, Bill."

Blah blah blah, from the phone.

"Okay, I'll wait."

A moment of silence.

Blah blah blah.

"Got her. She's a bit dense."

Blah blah blah.

"No, there aren't any-more. Sorry. You'll have to wait for the next drop."

The Alotian man hopped back into the car. The sedan drove off.

Playing a wild (but friendly) animal

Snuck into the house

Locked into the pitch-black boot of the sedan, I made an effort to monitor which way the car turned.

The automobile meandered down a curvy road.

It stopped for a few minutes.

The engine noise, underneath me, obscured some speech.

The car resumed its trip.

It then turned right, and followed another winding road.

Then we turned and accelerated, most-likely onto a freeway. After ten minutes, the car made several left-and-right turns. It stopped.

Would I be let out now?

The car started-up again. We may have hit a stop-light.

There were more turns.

We stopped.

The engine shut off.

During the twenty-minute car-ride, I decided to ditch the leafy branch, and instead carry the blanket with me. It would provide nudity coverage.

The boot opened.

The children were there, staring at me, as I lay curled up in a foetal position. The mother was holding the youngest child.

They all smiled at me.

Luckily, I had the blanket over my private.

The husband, who had opened the boot's lid, grabbed the blanket.

I held onto it.

He hadn't seen I was holding onto the blanket.

He tugged even harder, perhaps thinking I was lying on the blanket.

His strength won-out.

"Ready Sarah? We'll corral her into the house with the blanket."

Father handed one corner of the blanket to his pre-teen daughter, and grasped the other corner himself.

"Ready?" he asked his daughter again.

She nodded, too-excited to speak.

“We don’t want the Red-Panda running off. We might never see her again if she gets spooked.”

Some worry on Sarah’s face.

Father didn’t think about luring me out of the boot using food. Nor did I. The blanket was lure-enough, since it was the only clothing I had.

Would I be taken-back to the picnic tables to pick up my clothes?

Father-and-daughter backed-up with the blanket.

I acted as animal-like as I could, and cautiously climbed out of the trunk. I strategically climbed out tail-butt first.

The father may-also have wanted the blanket to keep their neighbours from seeing me. He might not want his neighbours to know that I was living in their house. Rescuing wild Red-Pandas from the wild most-likely wasn’t-exactly legal, but apparently it wasn’t illegal either. Choochoon had implied that it was a tacitly-agreed-to *“pet rental-plan”*.

“Okay, Sarah, let’s heard her this way!”

Sarah pushed me lightly, the blanket between her and me.

I had to play the part.

I crouched down, arms wide, intentionally and unintentionally acting somewhat-confused as I was blanket-corralled through the doorway.

The mother held the wooden kitchen-door open. The boy was somewhere else.

The companion flyscreen-door, being on springs, had closed itself. My hand went to open the flyscreen-door, but I quickly stopped myself. Wild animals don’t open doors.

There was an awkward moment. The door needed opening. Mother was going to step-out from behind her thick wooden-door,

and open the flyscreen-door for me. She hesitated, and clearly didn't feel that standing in-front of a cornered wild-Red-Panda was safe.

Unprompted, Sarah reached her arm across my "danger zone", grabbed the doorhandle, and opened the screen door.

I crept through the doorway, into the kitchen.

My bedroom

"What do we do with her?" asked Sarah, once they and I were in the kitchen.

Father thought for a moment.

"Let's corral her into her bedroom. She can acclimatize there."

"Can I have her in my room?" asked Sarah excitedly.

Mother's jaw dropped.

Father thought a moment.

"No, let's put her in the guest bedroom. Pandas smell."

Sarah's happy-high deflated.

Playing the part of *"wild Red-Panda corralled into a bedroom"* was easy... except for exposing myself in front of the boy. I was nudged from the kitchen into the living-room, where the young boy watched me wide-eyed.

Oops.

From there, I was herded into a hallway.

Since my bedroom door wasn't open, I was corralled against the door. Father reached across the blanket-barrier, and twisted the doorknob to open the door.

I meandered into the room.

Both father and daughter watched from the doorway, holding the blanket half-height to prevent me from running out. Mother also stopped-by for a peek.

I pretended to sniff and search-around the room.

It was a small guest-bedroom, with a high twin-bed, and wall-to-wall carpeting. It had a closet, which I didn't open, because wild-animals couldn't open closets. It also had a dresser that I didn't open.

Strategically hiding my nudity, I put on a show of calmly wandering-about, looking at the objects and knick-knacks in the room. I gently picked some of them up. I inadvertently returned the first-two objects to exactly where I found them. The other knickknacks I handled, I left unharmed, but I returned them to haphazard animal-chosen locations.

"I think she's okay," whispered father. *"Let's close the door and give her some time to calm down. We'll let her out later and watch her investigate the house."*

After the door closed, my first priority was to think:

What the hell was I doing?

I had let myself be kidnapped as a pet, and corralled into a complete-stranger's house! My mother would kill me.

What was Choochoon doing now? How was I ever going to get in contact with her?

How would I get out of this situation and fly-back home?

I hadn't read Choochoon's copy of the book, *"How to pick up an Alotian family."* Choochoon had only spent an hour retelling me important information from the book. And at the time, I mostly-thought she was pranking me. A copy of the book would be handy. Maybe, I thought sarcastically, I'd find a copy in the house.

Clothes...

I quietly opened the dresser looking for clothes.

It was empty.

I quietly opened the slatted bi-fold closet-doors.

The closet contained a vacuum cleaner, and a few dress-jackets. They might work as clothing. I couldn't wear them until I was seen as less-wild as a Red-Panda, though.

Maybe I could.

Wild Red-Pandas were curious and playful. A wild Red-Panda might be able to figure-out how to wear a jacket.

Alternatively, the bed had two plumped pillows. I could use them for coverage. Or, I could pull off a pillow case, and tie it around my waist into a skirt. One pillow-case wouldn't be wide enough; two would work. A friend of mine had done that at a toga-party two years ago.

Or, I could use the bed-sheet, and drape it over me like a cape. It would provide enough protection for now.

Before anyone had a chance to yank me out of the room and guide me through the house naked, I grabbed the blue sheet off the bed, and wrapped the sheet around me like a cape. The sheet could double as a play-thing if I needed. I could play-hide underneath it. I could even wind it into a tug-of-war rope... but then the sheet wouldn't provide me any visual protection.

Clothing solved.

The next problem was a toilet.

I hadn't seen one on the way into the bedroom.

I couldn't get to a toilet until the door was opened. And then, everyone in the family would watch me toilet... which was a definite no-no in my mind. Nor did wild Red-Pandas know how to use toilets.

What was my priority after toilets?

My priority was to sit and think.

I crawled onto the high bed, and leaned-back against the backboard, my security-blanket covering me.

How could I contact anyone? I had no way of contacting anyone, did I?

My GPS had an emergency beacon. It was left on the spaceplane.

I didn't know Choochoon's new address or her telephone number. She wouldn't have known them either.

I knew her university phone-number. I might be able to leave a message there. Did the Alotian phone-system tie into the interplanetary telephone-network?

Choochoon might have selected a really-bad family, and might now be locked in a basement.

Hell, I might have selected a really-bad family, though they seemed decent so far.

Hmm, I post-realized: Choochoon's nanny-pet thing wasn't a prank after all.

What a weird fucking day.

This morning I was being smuggled onto a planet for a week-long hike. Now, I was a nanny-pet for an unspecified amount of time, and with no way to contact anyone.

... even Choochoon. I was worried about her, despite this being her crazy idea.

How long until I heard from Choochoon?

How long until she expected to hear from me?

How long until someone else noticed I was missing?

If I didn't call my mother in a month, she'd worry.

What would my mother do when she found-out I had become a nanny-pet?

My mother was going to kill me.

Could I get out of here in a month?

I didn't even have money for the airfare.

Or a taxi.

Or food.

Sniffing-out the house

A door-click woke me up.

My bleary-eyes cracked-opened. I was still on the Alotian planet.

The door was ajar. Peeking through was Sarah. Behind, and a head taller, was father.

"She's awake," whispered a beaming Sarah.

Her father's eyes widened, *"Yes she is. Should we show her around the house?"*

Sarah nearly jumped up-and-down in glee. *"Sure! I'll get the blanket."*

"No," said father sneakily. *"We'll just leave the door open and let her wander-out on her own."*

By that point, I was awake-enough to plan.

I waited for the father-daughter-duo to back off. Father required several minutes of me lying undercover and watching them, to get the hint.

He half-whispered, *"Let's move back Sarah. Maybe she's frightened."*

When they had hidden on either side of the doorway, I made my move. I was going to be Sarah's friend, nanny, and tutor, so I decided to ham-it-up for her.

I crept off the bed, covered by my blue-sheet cape.

Sarah peeked in.

I play-hid under the sheet for a moment. And then walked a few steps with only my eyes and muzzle visible. Sarah enjoyed the game; she thought I looked kooky.

"She sure likes that blanket as a toy," excited-whispered Sarah.

Sarah stepped to the left of the doorway so I couldn't see her.

I crept out of the room. I knew exactly where Sarah was. When I was fully in the hallway, I tilted my head from left to right in humour, opened my eyes wide, and stuck my tongue out to the side.

Sarah beamed.

The hallway behind Sarah ended in a few closed doors. A toilet-room most-likely hid behind one of the doors. Unfortunately, my persona wouldn't allow me to open all or any of the doors to find the toilet. I certainly wouldn't be able to say *"Excuse me"*, and then close the toilet-door for privacy. A toilet-break would have to wait.

The hallway in father's direction led into the main part of the house.

I went that way, pretending to be timid.

Father backed away into a corner as I approached.

I animal-shuffled out into the living-room.

What was I interested in seeing?

I didn't need to explore the house now. I just needed to know where the toilet was, and perhaps where I could find some clothing.

Hamming-it-up was more-important than learning the lay of the house.

Should I roll on the ground?

No. I had already rolled on the ground too-many times today.

Was the living-room television on? That might interest a wild me.

Unfortunately, it was off.

Was anything moving in the room?

I scanned around. A desk-doochie to play with would be helpful.

The living-room had a television, plaid couch, rug, armchair, and lots of toys scattered about.

Opposite the kitchen entrance, a stairway led up. I decided to avoid going upstairs for now. The stairs would prove tricky if I were followed, and upstairs would most-likely be a private area.

A doorway at the base of the stairs led somewhere.

And there was the kitchen doorway.

Where to?

I should figure out which toys were Sarah's, and play with them.

I decided to do that later.

Should I chew on anything? Maybe, but not Sarah's toys.

Sarah's brother's toys would work. Sarah wouldn't mind if I chewed-on her brother's toys.

Should I first visit the kitchen, since I knew what was there?

I cautiously ambled into the kitchen, pretending to be amazed by everything. Food was cooking on the kitchen cook-top. Mother was cautious about me grabbing the food and burning myself; she guarded the hot items.

I noticed and payed attention to a wall-mounted pendulum-clock, pretending to be interested in the swinging pendulum.

And then I returned my attention to Sarah, tilting my head at her.

She watched me intently.

I walked over to look through the screen door. When I got too close, Sarah bolted in front of the door and blocked the exit.

Panda-smile on my part.

No bathroom doorway was here.

Finished with the kitchen, I meandered my way to the doorway at the base of the staircase.

The room it led to was a study. It had several populated bookshelves, and a picture window looking onto a glade. A few chairs were arranged around a desk with a computer on it. I might be able to use the computer to contact someone. Did Alotians use the same E-mail system?

The main desk-chair was a swivel chair!

Swivel-chairs were fun.

Sarah was watching.

I sat on the swivel chair, bundling the blue bed-sheet into my lap, and spun around. When the chair stopped, I was swinging my heavy head left-and-right, dizzy like.

I spun-around again.

The desk had LOTS of playthings on it, but I wasn't about to touch them.

I spun-about slowly for five minutes, getting a lay of the room.

There wasn't any toilet-door here.

A potted plant in the corner might work, but not now. My plan was to sneak out at night and find the toilet; it had to be getting dark soon...

What was left for me to explore of the house?

I couldn't visit any rooms off the hallway because the doors were closed.

I wouldn't let myself go upstairs. There might be a games room up there, which would have enough animal-interesting things to entertain me as a wild Red-Panda. There might also be some bedrooms, and most-likely a toilet.

What else?

Toys would work.

After another spin, I slid off the swivel-chair, donned my bed-sheet cape, and waddled-myself into the living room.

There, I kneeled down and looked underneath the recliner for something to play with.

"At least she'll clean underneath the furniture," commented mother. She was obviously nervous about having a large wild-animal in the house.

Before I could find any of Sarah's toys to play gently with, or grab-and-chew on any of her brother's toys...

Dinner

“Let’s corral her into the kitchen so she can eat,” said father. He and Sarah had the blanket out.

I could play-along with being corralled into the kitchen, although a toilet would be nicer at this point. I let the father-daughter-pair heard me into the kitchen using the blanket.

In the middle of the kitchen floor was a plate and two plastic-glasses of water. On the plate were two pork-chops, some lettuce, and a bread-roll.

No deep-fried grease? I was accustomed to fast-food dorm-food. Nonetheless, the food was very good.

The family watched me eat.

I sat-down on my butt, with one leg outstretched and the other bent, and the blue bed-sheet over my lap.

I picked-up and ate a pork-chop.

I grabbed pieces of lettuce and ate those.

Rocking my head, I happily looked over at Sarah and father, who were watching me from the doorway. I Panda-smiled.

I ate the second pork-chop.

I drank from the cup.

Should I be able to drink from a cup?

I hadn’t thought about that. I should have spilled some of the water first.

The bread-roll went down last.

To clean my fingers, I dipped them into one of the glasses of water. My wet fingers were easily licked clean of pork-chop gravy.

My belly was satisfied. Less-than-wealthy students live on deep-fried meat-sticks for most of semester. Deer don’t carry much meat on their spaceplanes either.

What should I do now?

Maybe I should wait here while the family ate?

Or should I get up and be corralled back into my room?

Or should I investigate some more?

I didn't want to get locked-back in my room yet. The bed was comfortable, but the room was quite boring.

I lay down in the centre of the kitchen, next to my empty food plate. I covered myself with my bed-sheet, and pretended to start dozing off. What else would a wild Red-Panda do after eating?

Camera-click. Sarah thought the scene made a cute photograph.

I got about five-minutes of rest on the floor before mother commented, *"We need to get her out of there so I can feed dinner to all of us."*

"Okay dear," answered father.

"Come on Sarah, let's heard her back into her bedroom."

Damn.

Five minutes later I was in my bedroom. On the way there, I noticed that a small dining-table had somehow appeared in the living-room while I was eating.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

Father sat down at his desk. The children were watching television in the living-room.

Sitting in front of his computer was a tattered paperback-book which he had been loaned, *"How to feed and care for your wild Red-Panda"*. He leafed through the pages to understand what he had gotten himself into.

Someone at work had loaned him the book a few months ago, but he had never read it. He hadn't had time.

Then, this morning, father received a phone-call from a stranger: *"If you want a panda, go to picnic-table 47 at the park. Are you in?"*

Tongue-in-cheek cloak-and-dagger?

Father paused to think. He had planned to spend the weekend-day working at home.

Oh well, a Red-Panda was worth a try. *"Er, yeah, sure."*

"All you have to do is take a picnic lunch and your family to table 47. Make sure to write the number down."

The caller added, *"Call us at 555-4784 when you get her, or if you can't find her."*

Father wrote down the number.

"We have tags on her companion. Her companion was highly recommended by another Alotian planet. This one should be good also."

"Just remember. If anyone asks, we never called you. 😊"

Father would have-to read the rest of the book over the next few days.

A toilet, finally

No-one entered the hallway after dinner, except for a quick peek by Sarah. The house fell silent an hour after night arrived; the family must have all slept upstairs.

I opened my door.

I found the toilet-room, two doors down.

Relief.

Flushing the toilet would make too much noise, and alert the family that I was up-and-about. Small boys didn't flush either; he'd get blamed. I left the door open so that no-one would think that a wild-animal had both opened the door, and properly used the toilet.

In the bathroom was a clothes hamper. Bonzai! I rummaged around, and found some red shorts. They must have been Sarah's.

I tried them on. They fit! No more security blanket!

I'd have to somehow encourage mother to think that the kids had dressed me up in the shorts. And I'd have to convince the kids, namely Sarah, that father or mother had dressed me up.

I carried the shorts into my bedroom, and closed the door for the night.

What a weird fucking day.

I wondered how Choochoon was doing.

I hadn't done badly myself.

Crap, the day could have been incredibly scary.

I was still worried about being broke, and pet-like, on a foreign planet. I worried more about Choochoon though.

The next day

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

Father and mother were both eating breakfast when Sarah and Jim rumbled down the staircase.

"Can I let my Red-Panda out?" asked Sarah excitedly.

"Not now, she's still settling." Father had forgotten about his new nanny.

"I want a photograph of her to take to school."

"You already have the photograph from last night in your camera. Don't wake her up."

Father offered some hope for later-on, *"You can take some photos tonight, and I can get them developed tomorrow."*

He wasn't sure that taking a photograph to school was a good idea. He had to remember to read up Panda-photography laws in the book.

"What should we name her?" asked Sarah.

"I don't know, what do you think?"

Sarah, *"How about Wendy."*

"That sounds like a nice name."

Father then realized that the Red-Panda might already have a name. *"Wendy might work, but maybe we should see what her personality is like before we give her a name."*

"Okay," answered Sarah.

Sarah ran-off to peak at her pet Red-Panda.

"What should I do with the Panda?" asked mother.

The Red-Panda was already proving more troublesome than a new employee at work, despite being well-behaved.

"You could leave her in her bedroom for the day, if you're worried." Father didn't know what to do; his wife wasn't in on the deception yet.

Mother wondered, *"Can she get out [of her room]?"*

She might be able to drive a car, he thought. Getting out of her room shouldn't be too difficult. *"She hasn't seemed to have figured-out how to open doors yet."*

"What does your book say?" asked Mother.

"You have a book on them?" interrupted Sarah as she returned from peeking at her Red-Panda.

"Yes, I'm doing my homework."

"Can I read it?" Sarah was keen.

"Not yet. 😊 I'll let you read it after I've had a refresher." The book might spoil the surprise for Sarah that her clever-pet had at least a high-school education.

Father unintentionally forgot to answer his wife's question.

He did remember to take the book to work.

In the bedroom

I woke-up an hour after sunrise, after hearing my bedroom door open. Sarah had opened the door, and was peaking in, her face covered with a smile.

I looked at her, and sleepily Panda-smiled.

How had I gotten myself into this?

What was I in for today?

Sarah gave a timid wave before she gently closed the door.

I wasn't to be let-out yet, was I.

I heard some discussions from elsewhere in the house.

Fifteen minutes later, there was a bit of commotion as the front-door closed.

I waited for someone to let me out.

Was anyone-else home?

Should I get up and open the door myself?

I decided to wait.

The toilet was calling again.

I decided to wait some more.

Maybe the family was doing some chores today.

Maybe they forgot about me. Not likely; Sarah certainly wouldn't forget.

Or maybe they went to work and school. A lot of children might visit a classroom for part of the day.

A work-day was the most-likely scenario. Everyone might have taken-off. I decided to wait half-an-hour before peeking out the door. Ten-minutes into my wait, I heard someone moving about the house.

Oh well, I couldn't use the toilet yet.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

After her husband and children left, mother did some cleaning. She had a noon lunch-appointment with friends.

Mother didn't like the idea of leaving a wild Red-Panda in the house alone. The Panda seemed quiet so far, but wild-animals could create an awful mess.

Mother knew she should feed the Red-Panda before she left for lunch, but she didn't want to feed the Red-Panda on the guest-bedroom carpet. And she didn't want to let the wild Red-Panda out; she might not be able to get the Red-Panda back into the bedroom without help. She was all-alone at the moment.

Mother also wondered if the Red-Panda would damage the bedroom.

Opening the door a crack, mother peeked inside. The Red-Panda was sleeping in bed with a sheet over her. The room wasn't messed-up at all.

What should mother do about food and water?

No, those could wait a few hours until mother returned home. She didn't want to see a food-mess scattered all around the room.

Besides, the Red-Panda was sleeping. The Red-Panda most-likely slept through the daytime, and wouldn't be expecting food or water for hours.

Mother closed the door quietly. She set the doorknob-lock on, just to make sure the Red-Panda couldn't get out.

She grabbed her shopping-list on the way out, and drove off.

Wandering around the house

A few hours after Sarah's peek-in, mother opened the door a crack. Despite being half-asleep, I managed a Panda-smile.

Was mother going to let me out?

I mentally prepared to wake up and get out of bed.

Mother slowly closed the door. I wasn't going to get out yet, was I.

Ten minutes later, I heard the house-door close.

Had mother left also? Was I alone?

The toilet was loudly calling me.

I waited for half-an-hour before venturing outside my room.

I sat up in bed, and planned.

Should I venture-out of my room wearing the red shorts?

No. They might cause problems. Not enough time and confusion had passed for plausible-deniability. The children had to think that their parents had provided me with the shorts, and vice-versa.

The bed-sheet was still required.

The door was closed. What if someone was around?

As a wild animal, I shouldn't be able to open doors yet... but maybe I could. Or maybe one of the family members had left the door unlatched.

Were there any other scenarios to plan for?

I couldn't think of any.

Time to act.

I crept out of bed, hugging my safety blanket, and slowly turned the doorknob.

It wouldn't turn!

I tried again.

Nope. It wouldn't turn.

Was it broken? I wouldn't expect it; the house was in good shape.

Mother must have locked the door from the outside.

If I were locked-in from the outside, how could I unlock the door from the inside? I needed to get out... the bedroom contained no potted-plants to double as a toilet.

I thoroughly examined the door, and found a small button depressed into the doorknob stem. Pressing the button with my fingernail released the lock. I opened the door.

Was anyone around?

If mother had locked me in, then she might have gone out.

All I really wanted was the toilet, but I didn't want to be caught visiting the toilet-room. If I were caught outside of my room, I wanted whoever-was-here to think I was aimlessly wandering-around animal-like.

What was mother's most-likely location?

I made sure to grunt and make lots of shuffling noises. I first wandered into the living-room, then the kitchen, and then the den.

No-one was downstairs.

I didn't head upstairs. I didn't feel comfortable entering the family's private space. If anyone were up there, they either would hear me grunting and banging about, and come down, or they were soundly asleep.

I appeared to be alone.

Toilet time!

I even dared to flush. The flushing sound wasn't as loud as I expected.

My breath reeked. I needed a toothbrush and toothpaste. Toothpaste-alone would have worked, but none was in the downstairs bedroom. Should I sneak upstairs? No, not until I was invited. I scrubbed my teeth as well as possible with my finger.

Still carrying my safety-blanket, I made my way into the kitchen to find food.

I needed water. I climbed onto the high kitchen-counter and drank from the faucet. If I had been thinking, I could have drunk from the bathroom sink much-more easily.

Food interested me, perhaps some chocolate cake.

I opened the refrigerator door. The cake was missing. (I found out later that it had been damaged when I got out of the sedan's boot.) Instead, I grabbed a bread-roll and munched on that.

The children return home from school

While munching on the roll, I heard a commotion outside. It sounded like Sarah's voice, and her brother's.

I heard the screen-door open.

It must have been a school-day.

Crap. I couldn't let them see me outside my room.

I bolted into my bedroom, dragging my safety-blanket.

After closing the bedroom door, I jumped into bed and pretended to sleep.

Hopefully Sarah would officially let me out.

Sarah is home

Sarah was keen.

Two minutes after she opened the kitchen door, Sarah cracked-open my bedroom door.

I looked bleary-eyed at Sarah, and pretended to wake up with a full-length stretch, and a yawn.

She was still watching, so I Panda-smiled at her.

Sarah whispered, *"I'll leave the door open for you in case you want to come out."*

Then she backed off slowly.

Now was a good time to introduce my red-pants to the family. Sarah would think her mother had given them to me, and vice-versa.

I didn't know if Sarah had hidden around the corner, or had gone-off to do her homework. If Sarah peeked-in and saw me putting the pants on, not-only would I be embarrassed, she might realize that I wasn't a wild animal.

The whole *"pretend to be a wild Red-Panda"* thing was interesting. Father already knew, which was helpful. He didn't seem to want his wife to know right-away, so I wasn't about to reveal my true identity to her.

Obviously, if the family wanted a normal Alotian nanny, they could hire one. Father must be looking for something a bit different for his children.

How would Sarah's and Jim's experience be different if I were a "wild-animal" nanny instead of an Alotian nanny?

I had thought about this while in bed, and over the next few days.

Sarah and Jim could have fun teaching the animal-me new skills, something that children cannot do with Alotian nannies.

I could act extra Red-Panda-like, and overemphasize differences between Red-Panda personalities and Alotian personalities.

Uniquely, I had begun my relationship with the children as an unintelligent animal. The children would grow into the realization that I was an intelligent person. Most people that they met began as intelligent people, and remained intelligent people. Only infants began as unintelligent animals, and grew into intelligent people, but over over decades. I could accelerate the pace to a few weeks.

I could also pretend to be permanently dim, limiting myself to 50 IQ, while maintaining a more-adaptable personality than someone with 50-IQ would have. Sarah's underestimation of my intelligence would also let me trick her... in ways beneficial to her.

I seriously considered maintaining the charade of not being able to speak her language. That would be Panda-fun! I wondered how far I could get with just miming and pointing, without-even using simple Alotian words.

Or, I could teach Sarah some simple Red-Panda words and phrases.

Anyway, I was formulating a plan.

Back to putting my pants on without Sarah possibly noticing...

I crept out of bed, fully covered by my bed-sheet cape. Once on the ground, I took a few steps to stand-over the shorts. My bed-sheet cape completely covered the red shorts.

Still no Sarah peeking in.

I bent down and grabbed the shorts, the shorts and my hand hidden by the bed-sheet.

No Sarah yet.

With shorts in hand, I hopped back onto bed and slid the shorts on. My tail fit down one of the legs.

Sarah hadn't yet peeked in.

Once dressed, I meandered, wild-like, into the living room. I still carried my security blanket as a cape. I might discard that part of my costume over the next few days if no-one objected to the red shorts.

Sarah and her brother were watching television. She kept an eye on the hallway, just in-case I came out. When she saw me shyly creep out of the hallway, she turned to her brother, held her finger vertically to her mouth, and went "Shhh."

Her brother looked. His eyes went wide. I couldn't imagine what was on his mind.

I played shy and mildly frightened. Sarah intently watched me as I wandered around the periphery of the room.

I wanted to see what the children were watching on television without getting so close to them that they might get nervous. Scanning the room like a wild Red-Panda, I looked for a pile of toys positioned so that I could both sit and play with them, and watch the television.

The foldaway dining-table was in the corner of the living-room, opposite the television. In front of that were some of Jim's toys. They were large, colourful, plasti-rubber toys. I could play with them without upsetting Sarah.

I ambled to the toy-laden floor-space, and animal sat-down amidst the toys.

Sarah watched me; Jim returned his attention to the television. I picked up a plasti-rubber train.

I glanced at the television. They were watching a children's cartoon.

Sarah scrutinized my actions. My selection of toy hadn't alarmed her.

I watched the television program for half-a-minute. It showed cartoon Alotian-children.

Sarah was still watching me.

What would a wild Red-Panda do?

I had an object in my hand that was soft, but firm. I chewed on the toy, something I hadn't done since I was three.

Sarah gave me a *"you're-a-bad-animal"* look.

"Don't do that [silly]!" she remarked.

Oops. I hadn't expected Sarah to object to my chewing.

She got up from her television-watching position, and walked over to me. Sarah sat down cross-legged in front of me.

I was sitting with one leg out, and one leg bent. Sarah didn't seem to notice that I was wearing clothes.

She grabbed the toy from my hand, not terribly gently. Sarah deposited it behind herself, far-away from me, so that I wouldn't chew on the plasti-rubber train.

Interesting, I thought. What was she going to do now?

I stared goofily at her, wobbling my head slightly.

Sarah just stared-back curiously.

How should I mentally poke her?

Which toy was most-opposite the chew-train?

There were some wooden blocks. I could arrange them in front of Sarah.

And then I saw a thick-paged book.

I picked up the book.

And opened it.

Sarah watched, and considered my choice of toy.

She gave an approving *"That's better"* look, and then wandered back to the television. A fairly typical child-response: I don't want you to play with the toy you selected. You play with that toy instead.

Now what should I do?

Sarah obviously wasn't afraid of me.

Neither was Jim... he was oblivious to me.

Should I get Sarah to read to me?

I already had the book in hand.

Read-to-me seemed like a decent plan.

So that Sarah and her brother wouldn't be startled, I noisily stood up, grunting and pushing some toys away.

They both looked.

I hobbled towards them, and plopped myself down an arm's-length away from Sarah. Neither she nor Jim seemed frightened. Jim was a bit nervous though. He didn't think of me as an animal, but I was definitely a stranger, and I might-just be a girl.

Oops. I realized that I had left my safety-blanket back with the toys. Oh well.

I played with the book, unintelligently opening-and-closing the pages.

Sarah didn't mind.

I mouthed the book.

She minded slightly more.

I handed her the book.

Wild Red-Pandas wouldn't have handed books to children.

Oops. Did Sarah notice my role-playing mistake?

Sarah accepted the book. *"No you silly. I don't want the book,"* she said after looking at it. *"Watch television instead."*

Sarah placed the book as far-away from me as possible.

I watched the television show with the children. It featured some cute bald-headed Alotian children in everyday home-life. Our children's cartoons were much gorier.

Video games

The kitchen-door opened. "*Children, I'm home,*" called-out mother.

We all turned around to watch the kitchen doorway.

Mother walked into the living-room.

She gasped.

I could only imagine what was going through her mind. She almost-certainly forgot that she had left a wild Red-Panda in her house. And then she arrives, to see the wild Red-Panda sitting behind her children... which was dangerous.

And the wild Red-Panda was wearing her favourite red shorts. (At the time, I thought they were Sarah's.)

Mother watched us for a few minutes, even after we went back to watching television. She was mostly watching me, of course.

Mother pretended to be interested in the television also, watching for five minutes before she walked into the kitchen and unpacked the groceries.

Every few minutes thereafter, I saw her peak her head through the doorway and make sure I hadn't eaten her children.

After Sarah's show ended, a different cartoon came on. Her brother wanted to watch the new cartoon, but Sarah didn't.

“Move over Jim,” Sarah ordered her brother. “My Red-Panda and I want to play video-games.” There was an implied, “There are now two of us older-girls, and only one of you.”

Sarah turned-off the television receiver, and plugged the video-game signal-wire into the back of the television. She took one controller, and handed me the other.

Jim obediently wandered-off to play with his toys in the corner. He knew who was boss, Sarah, especially when reinforced with a second girl.

Sarah selected a “pink” game for her and me to play. I had absolutely no-clue how to play it. It wasn’t violent or adrenaline-packed like most of the Lemur video-games I had played. Gameplay involved moving computer-drawn blocks around the screen using a Lemur-style game-controller.

I pretended to not know how to use the game-controller.

Sarah easily beat me the first few games... I intentionally pressed all of the wrong buttons on my controller.

She then had to spend time showing and teaching me how the game-controller affected the moving-icons on the television. I didn’t play the video-game as a complete idiot, but my skill-level was so low that little-Jim would have won every time.

I didn’t notice Sarah’s mother in the room until she had walked halfway-in. She watched us playing the video-game. She didn’t gasp this time.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

Father read some more of *“How to feed and care for your wild Red-Panda”* during a work-break.

- Photographs of Red-Pandas were legal, but photographs of them in houses wearing clothes and sipping Mai Tais might raise suspicions. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mai_Tai)
- Wild Red-Pandas were not allowed outside in suburbs or anywhere civilized, even with a leash.
- People weren't required to report the “rescue and housing” of sick or injured wild Red-Pandas. They couldn't legally take healthy ones home.

After work, father stopped by the local discount shop and purchased a video about wild Red-Pandas.

Dinner

Mother pulled out the dining-table, attached the legs, and set plates and cutlery on it. I thought about helping, but didn't. Sarah's fun-illusion that I was a clever-pet would be ruined if I already knew how to set a dinner-table. Mother would completely freak-out also.

Jim returned to the video-game arena. Since I was such a lousy video-game player, Sarah grabbed the controller from my hands, and gave it to Jim. I sat and watched them play a few games.

Father arrived home sometime after the table was set.

"Hello. Good evening," he said to his wife.

He didn't interrupt his game-entranced children. Nor did he seem at-all-amazed that I was watching them play.

Over the next half hour, I smelled food cooking.

I expected to be called into the kitchen to eat on the floor. Instead, *"Sarah, Jim, dinner's ready"*, said Father. Unlike when my friends and I were children, Sarah and Jim promptly shut-off their video-game and seated themselves at the dining-table.

No longer interested in the still video-game image on the television screen, I watched the family sit down to eat.

Was I going to be fed in the living room?

The video-game beeped annoyingly.

I was. Father approached with a plate, and set it down a few meters away from me. It held turkey with gravy, and sweet potatoes. Father stood by the food, perhaps training me not to be afraid of him.

I stood up, and wobbled over to my meal.

I sat down to eat. Turkey with gravy, and the sweet potatoes, would be messy without a fork.

Just after I seated myself, father picked-up the plate and moved it a few meters closer to the dining-table.

Interesting.

I stood-up slowly, ambled over to the plate, and sat down again.

Father picked the plate up yet again, this time holding it in front of my face.

I understood what he was doing, I think.

Father nose-led me to the table, where he set the plate down on the corner of the table. Father was skilled at pretending to train me.

I would have to sit at the dinner-table, of course. In front of me was a yellow elevated-chair. Wild Red-Pandas enjoyed climbing. I was soon seated on the chair.

Sitting next to my loaded dinner-plate was a spoon. A fork and knife would have been nice, but perhaps too-dangerous for a wild Red-Panda.

How long should it take me to learn how to use a spoon?

With gravy-laden turkey and mushy sweet-potatoes, I had incentive to quickly-train my wild-side to use a spoon.

Oops. I should have suddenly learned to use a spoon while the rest of the family was busy eating, and not paying attention to me.

Mother and Sarah were amazed that I could clumsily-eat with a spoon. *"She must have learned how to eat with utensils at the picnic grounds,"* commented mother.

Hmm... Mother hadn't figured me out yet.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

“How to feed and care for your wild Red-Panda” noted that Red-Pandas sometimes lose their wildness within 24 hours of being comfortably housed.

Father wondered when his Red-Panda would decided to become civilized.

Wild Red-Pandas sometimes lost their wildness when shown a video of real wild Red-Pandas.

Authentic “wild” Red-Pandas look almost-exactly like domesticated “wild” Red-Pandas. Alotian nature-documentary video-photographers are never certain if the “wild” Red-Pandas they film are the real thing. One Alotian nature-photographer theorized that there are no wild Red-Pandas left in the universe; all observed “wild” Red-Pandas are merely Red-Panda psychology students studying nature photographers.

Wild Red-Panda video

After dinner, I was lured in front of the television with a slice of cake.

So was everyone else.

Father put on a video.

It featured wild Red-Pandas. It was the first documentary on wild Red-Pandas that I had watched. I learned that I had no clue how real wild Red-Pandas acted.

Was father teaching me how to be a better wild Red-Panda?

As I went to sleep that night, I wondered how Choochoon was doing.

My day had gone well.

The story-debate

This is a true story.

It's a situation-comedy, where normal people are thrown into humorous situations. Conversely, United-States situation-comedies extract humour by throwing inane people into normal situations. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situation_comedy)

We (the "aliens" and I) selected this story for variety; my recent stories have been distinctly un-funny.

Unfortunately, the true-story from here-on-out is much-less funny than what happened in the first three days of my nanny "job".

Over the next couple months, most of the “story action” involved me pretending to be a wild Red-Panda being taught by Sarah. Meanwhile, I used the “wild” part and the “Red-Panda” part to help her learn.

I also chipped-in as a family member, though I was limited by my clever-pet role. As a wild Red-Panda, I wasn’t legally allowed to leave the house. I could clean while the children were at school, but Alotians don’t make much of a mess. I mostly cleaned-up cobwebs. If I knew how to cook... which I didn’t... I could have prepared meals during school-hours. I couldn’t have cooked them though, since the children were always around when cooking took place.

Simply, if I continue writing an hour-by-hour account of my activities, the hours become routine and non-comedic.

If keeping the story funny were paramount, I could integrate anecdotes from other “wild” Red-Pandas. Apparently, one Red-Panda had a secret “Red-Panda room” in the basement, the family a frequent-Panda employer. Other Red-Panda nannies were taken to “show and tell” sessions at school, with humorous results. Children’s birthday parties provide endless anecdotes. And, a trip to the shopping mall by a Red-Panda wearing a trench-coat and sunglasses would also extend the story’s humour.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show_and_tell_\(education\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Show_and_tell_(education))

Another way we could maintain the comedy level would be to fabricate humorous situations, which I really don’t want to do. Someone else can write invented Red-Panda stories.

Less-humorous stuff was happening on the planet, and less-humorous stuff has happened to Red-Pandas since. Do I switch the theme/genre of my story from a “humorous” first-half, to a “Red-Panda issues” second-half?

I could also switch themes/genres from a “humorous” first-half to a “family-relationships” second-half, showing how my Red-Pandaness affected the family, particularly Sarah. And how this affected mother’s relationship with her son, Jim. And how father’s attempts to find Choochoon (who did quite-well for herself) led him to decide to take an extended leave of absence.

A “family-relationships” second-half could also illustrate how my NON-PANDA presence affected the family. Simply put, what happens when a nanny moves into your house? Any Alotian nanny would have both tutored the children, and helped with homecare. Is there any point including my NON-PANDA activities?

We also discussed other story directions.

Of course, the discussion over what to write for the second-half of the story leads to the discussion about whether to write the discussion into the story. And it also leads to all sorts of politics, because many of the people helping me write this story, are friendly with one-another as individuals, but their races/nations have disagreements.

Anyway, the rest of THIS telling of story is more of a wrap-up, focusing on the interactions between me as a “Red-Panda” and “pet”, and my Alotian family.

PS – Please feel free to rewrite this story to your own liking.

Sarah

Father was only around in the evenings, which was also when the children were present and watching me. I couldn't plan my pet-to-person transformation with father. Instead, I had to take direction from coded hints that he spoke.

Sarah's mother didn't need me to be a clever-pet. Jim was too young to get glee from the clever-pet experience.

Most of my focus was on Sarah:

Besides playing videogames and watching television with Sarah, I got her to teach me how to play with cubic-blocks. Alotians don't imprint letters on their blocks.

I began by clumsily arranging the blocks on the floor, and then ineptly laying them on top of one another.

Then Sarah would show me *"the right way to do it."*

Then I'd do a half-assed job, intentionally messing-up what she showed me.

And then she'd show me a better way. Sometimes she even instructed me.

I was intentionally never better at building than she was. I allowed myself to be a better builder than her little brother though. That way, he could be nearly as good at blocks as I was, despite being smaller.

I tried to get Sarah to teach me her language (which I already understood) by having her read to me. That didn't work. She would always discard the book, and move me onto another activity.

Numbers, I could help with. I eventually got Sarah to teach me how to count with blocks. And then she taught me how to write numbers. And then her mother, in on the charade, taught Sarah and me how to add numbers together properly. I intentionally made mistakes to encourage Sarah to double-check my work, not just hers.

How could I teach Sarah something about my culture?

That was tricky.

I used hyper-accentuated Panda emotes, not Alotian emotes; my facial muscles couldn't produce most Alotian emotes.

Beyond emotes, gestures, and our Red-Panda personality, I couldn't teach Sarah much.

I didn't possess any books on my culture. None were available on the Alotian internet either.

I was cautious about teaching too-much Red-Panda culture. Some of our culture would NOT have been appreciated by Sarah's parents. For example: Alotians feel that "manners" are very important; we Red-Pandas don't.

I intentionally didn't break the language barrier. I could understand Sarah, but I sometimes pretended that I couldn't. I never spoke to her, even though I could have spoken with a highly-accented version of her Alotian language. I spoke to her mother once or twice, asking questions.

I was eventually going to find a non-book way for Sarah to teach me her language, but I ran out of time.

In order to NOT destroy the clever-pet illusion, I didn't help-out much with housework. Wild Red-Pandas aren't particularly

good with cleaning, neither are domesticated ones. Neither was Sarah. I once moved the dining-chairs to the dining-table, placing them backwards. *“No, you don’t arrange chairs like that, silly! Do it this way,”* Sarah stated as she reversed the chairs. That trick only worked once.

Dress-up was fun. We did that a few times. Her little-brother would never allow himself to be dressed-up by her. I only permitted her to put makeup on me once... maybe twice. Alotian makeup does NOT come off of fur.

Sarah wanted to invite her friends over to meet me, but her father wouldn’t allow it because, legally, I wasn’t supposed to be there. I was to stay mostly-secret and “wild”, as far as other people were concerned. Once “healthy”, I would be released back into the wild... namely my university dorm.

When neighbours and relatives stopped by, I was closed into my bedroom. I was either too dangerous or shy to come out. They were allowed peeks though.

I had a half-planned a Sarah teaching-schedule lasting months, but my clever-pet role was curtailed.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

Father didn't watch television news. He got his news from the radio, and an equivalent to "*The Wall Street Journal*".

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_street_journal)

The more he read about the political and war situation in the region, the more nervous he became.

He became particularly twitchy when his secret Red-Panda contact at 555-4784 told him there were problems in the Red-Panda multiracial-zone.

Television news

Mother and I watched the news during the day, when the children were at school. Alotian news was focused on Alotians, mostly-uninteresting to Red-Pandas acting as clever-pets.

Once in-awhile, television news reported that Hominid delegations were having meetings and treaties with the Alotians.

Different Hominids, nasty ones, were causing problems for "*the wild races*", as the Alotians called us, Red-Pandas and "Animal"-evolved people. As I understood things from Alotian television-news, Hominids were beginning a war against the multiracial-zone that I came from.

I worried about how Choochoon fared on the Alotian planet.

I was more worried about what was happening to "*The Free Lands/Peoples*", the multiracial (non-Hominid) zone was where I came from. I didn't like being so far away from my friends when they might be in trouble.

Even though I would be safer with the Alotians, I still planned to return to *“The Free Lands/Peoples”*.

From the Alotian point-of-view:

For maximum comedic effect, do NOT read this section until your SECOND reading of this story.

Father was at the airport ticket-counter, a huge wad of cash in his pocket.

The political/war situation was getting scary.

Father had arranged an extended-leave holiday for himself.

“I’d like a flight to “The empty lands”, preferably Shangrila.”

(“Shangrila” is a disguised planet name, changed to protect other people hiding-out there.)

The ticket saleswomen knew exactly what father wanted.

“And how many will be travelling?”

“Two adults, and two children. My oldest is nine.”

“That won’t be any problem Mister Smith.” (Names changed.)

“And, er, oh yes, I need a plane-ticket for a pet Red-Panda.

She’s wild-caught and a family pet, you know. Is that possible?”

Many Alotians had “wild” Red-Pandas, or had friends who had them.

The ticket salesperson thought.

“Your Red-Panda can’t legally have a seat, unfortunately.” She typed something into her computer. *“Can you fit her into a pet pack?”*

“No seat?”

“No sir, I’m sorry. Regulations forbid it. She might be able to get out of her pet-pack during the flight.”

“Damn. [Pause] Sure. How much is a pet-pack flight?”

“No problem, it’s about one-quarter the cost of a normal flight.”

“Can I get a pet-pack for my wife also?” There’s a funny Alotian hiding in every Alotian male.

The flight salesperson suppressed a smiled laugh.

“No sir, I’m afraid you cannot.”

Pet-pack

I didn’t learn about our evacuation-flight until a week before we left. That was a couple months after I was found “wild” near the picnic tables.

Evacuation was more-important than the charade. I helped my family pack everything into storage boxes, which we carried down into the basement. The packed objects and memories might survive in the basement if the house was bombed. They were also out-of-the-way in-case someone-else needed to move in. Alotians didn’t have looters.

On the day of our flight, my family jumped into the sedan. The boot was filled with packed bags.

“Hop in the back,” said father.

I Panda-smiled. I knew that he was breaking the law by allowing me to ride in the back seat. Alotians hate breaking the law. And I also knew his gesture was a sign of allegiance/respect.

When we got to the airport, a pet-pack was waiting for me. I was warned that this would happen.

There was no seating for my family anywhere near the pet-pack area. My family chose to not leave me alone. My entire Alotian family stood by my pet-pack, waiting for the flight.



Want to turn this into a computer-graphics movie?

One in ten Alotians have had a “clever-pet” for a portion of their childhood. Half of the clever-pets are “wild” Red-Pandas.

Alotians have a famous children’s cartoon-movie about a melancholy young girl receiving a Red-Panda as a gift for “Christmas”. The Alotian holiday isn’t technically Christmas, but it is about family and gift-giving. In the story, the “wild” Red-Panda and girl have all sorts of fun adventures. Unfortunately, after half a year, and after the girl’s sadness has evaporated, the Red-Panda knows it is time to leave; there is always another Alotian child that needs cheering up. In the story epilogue, the girl is visited twice a year by her Red-Panda forever-more.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_poppins,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frosty_the_Snowman_TV_program)

The Alotians invite an Earth-Sol computer-animation studio to rewrite this story (without the swear words), or to rewrite the original “Christmas” story, for Earth-Sol children.

PS – Tinker Bell, from the book, *“Peter and Wendy”*, was Deer-evolved; they are not quite as irate as Elk, but don’t ever piss them off. *“Tinker Bell”* (*“Deengya Buh”*) means *“Wagging tail”*, with sexual connotations. As clearly stated in the book, Nana, the Darling-family’s nanny, was a [walking] Dog [person]. The Mermaids were Dolphin-evolved. “Animal”-people spaceplane-pilots who docked over England and the United States in the early twentieth century, used the book as a telepathic indicator to find children who did not wish to be Hominids. Reread the story after reading my description of life off-of Earth-Sol, *“Africa is to 1st world countries on Earth, as Earth is to alien nations”*.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tinker_Bell,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Pan_and_Wendy,
<http://www.disclosuree.com/AfricaEarthFullEBook.pdf>)

I mentioned the “Neverland” planet (not actually called that), as Medieval-Land in my story, *“After the “Dead List” – I’m a Deer”*. Medieval-Land is a small planet with Cromwell-England-like technology. That planet is now a military outpost for the invading Hominids. A few years ago, it was run by a reasonably-friendly ex-Hominid-emperor who helped house “Hominid-Animals”. They are Hominids whose souls were placed into “Animal”-people bodies because they had abused “Animal”-people. The Hominid-Animals were thereafter considered “tainted” and not allowed to return to Hominid society.

(<http://www.disclosuree.com/RozakDeadListDeer.pdf>,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromwell>)

Spoiler alert: Peter Pan was eventually eaten by a giant crocodile; they do exist on other planets. Tinker Bell dumped him.

For more stories

You can download more of my short stories for free from:

<http://www.disclosuree.com/Stories.pdf>