

OUNUAMUA



In a galaxy overcrowded with alien cultures (some of them so different that communication between them is forever impossible), three things are required for these cultures to productively interact.

A faster-than-light propulsion drive--it's surprising how many of these there are.

An all-purpose translation device--which was achieved nearly a century ago with the development of the Beal Vocoder Unit (popularly known as a xeno-coder). This device not only modulates sound waves, but includes a full range of sensory functions (light, olfactory, subsonic vibrations, magnetic and gravatic pulses, and some new models even feature quantum motion sensors).

The ability to comprehend totally alien thought processes--being the most crucial thing of all. Communication is easy; understanding is hard. (How can a human really comprehend the urge to spin that is experienced in the third season by the Nirrur slime-molds that grow on the fusionballs of Frolix 8?) The ability to think like another species is a rare and galactically valuable gift. Those who are capable of it are called **xenotechs**.

Keif Llama (pronounced keef yamma) is a young woman xenotech who works for Confed, the galactic government.



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MATT HOWARTH
&
BRENDA BARROWS

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