



ALIEN SPECIES PITCH: THE SHARUDI

By Rory Kranz

BRIEF: Outline a non-human species that serves as a source of cultural conflict and can be a jumping off point for the exploration of human prejudice within the narrative.

CONTENTS

NARRATIVE ROLE
ANATOMY
GENDER NORMS
CULTURAL TENSIONS
LANGUAGE

NARRATIVE ROLE

The Sharudi are a species with incredibly specific environmental needs in order to survive. After the sun-death of their home solar system, they expanded beyond and managed to find a planet that would support life—but only barely. Their past attempts at terraforming have failed due to limited resources and the hostile environment, and now they risk extinction. They hope to collaborate with humans on future attempts of terraformation, as their planet-needs align closely to that of humanity. In the meantime, humanity has allowed Sharudi refugees to live in colonies on several human planets.

The Sharudi are excellent artists and craftsmen, and their presence on human planets has added many beautiful features to the architecture and design of cities. However, many humans resent the Sharudi presence. Prejudice against their three gender system, language, or simply their “waste of resources” is rampant. Sharudi supporters advocate allowing the Sharudi to join human settlements, education, and workplaces. The anti-Sharudi movement works to deny the Sharudi any resources or contact with humans, and advocates for the government to cast out the Sharudi and let them fend for themselves.

ANATOMY

The Sharudi are a bi-pedal lifeform with a base of metal and oxygen rather than carbon. They have three distinct sexes, each with their own characteristics and cultural implications. One provides the egg, another the sperm, and the final one is the incubator. They have the ability to pass on memories from family lines through genetic code and each newborn contains the history of an entire bloodline. Which parent’s bloodline is one that manifests is up to chance, as each of the three parents contributes DNA. The Sharudi do not have vocal cords and communicate through a complex sign language. Their hands convey words, with their “hair” (actually a series of micro-limbs, think Medusa) moving in such a way to convey underlying tone and nuance. Each Sharudi has a weak magnetic field, similar to an “aura” if we were to use human terms.

GENDER NORMS

Each of the three sexes has its own associated stereotypes, phenotype, and role within society. Young Sharudi feel pressured to conform to the standards of their sex, and deviation is frowned upon. It is important to note that these sexes are not “male,” “female,” and “neutral,” they are distinct sexes in their own right and not comparable to human ones. The sexes and their associated characteristics are as follows:

Tari: The sperm-carrying sex. Tari are outgoing and charismatic, often ending up in leadership positions within society. Negative stereotypes include being deceptive and manipulative. Some Sharudi claim Tari are superficial, caring only about social standing and being well-liked. Many Tari have bright colored hair or patterns on their skin.

Nari: The egg-carrying sex. Nari are deep thinkers, and have been proven to have more neural pathways on average than the other two sexes. They are seen as introspective, preferring isolation to the company of others. Nari tend to have long, thick “hair” that is said to be more expressive and nuanced than the other sexes.

Zidani: The incubating sex. Zidani are revered above the other two sexes. They are seen as the source of life and balance within Sharudi society. They are peacemakers and mediators, spiritualists. To be Zidani is to be the cornerstone of Sharudi society. Zidani have an extra organ that the other two sexes lack. This organ gives them an extra sense/perception ability—that of magnetic fields.

CULTURAL TENSIONS

The Sharudi culture and government puts a huge emphasis on bloodlines. A member of each Sharudi bloodline is required to be represented in the government. However, what bloodline you are from affects your social standing and power. Some Sharudi come from bloodlines with mythic heroes and great leaders, while others carry the burdens of criminals or petty thieves. Most are a mix of both, but each bloodline is often associated with a specific person from their past, making it hard for those of certain bloodlines to escape prejudice and discrimination. It becomes more complicated because there is nothing to stop a bloodline from lying about its history—just as long as no current member spills the beans.

Sharudi as a species are friendly to humans but very insular. It is hard for a human to gain access to Sharudi society, as they are very cautious about outsiders. However, their sign language is easy enough for humans to understand and replicate, so communication and collaboration is possible. The younger generation of Sharudi are more open and curious about humans, resulting in a certain conflict between the older and younger of their species.

LANGUAGE

Sharudi have descriptive “name signs” similar to many people in the human deaf community, where it is often based on a certain unique trait or characteristic of the individual. These names translated into spoken language often end up similar to actual words but not quite. For example:

Whivper (name sign similar to “whisper” but sharper)

Shh'veer (name sign similar to “shiver” but softer and rounder)

Tiltin (name sign similar to “tilting” but cuter and bouncier)