

The Town Drunk
Presents

Assemble an Alien

Antha Ann Adkins

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From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 11 Jan 2112 3:15 PM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien Request

Little Brother,

The Admirals have approved your request. However, they do have a condition: you must get the aliens' permission to make toys in their likenesses. We don't want to end up in a war with the first aliens we find by pissing someone off. Therefore, they're giving you space on their next faster-than-light probe to the aliens' solar system to make your proposal. Don't blow it. If you do, I'll probably never get promoted again.

The Admirals also ordered me to tell you the latest scuttlebutt on the aliens. Enclosed you'll find a picture of the plaque our probe imaged from the aliens' communication satellite. It appears to be a diagram of the aliens' solar system with drawings of two alien species connected to two different planets. The diagram seems to show the third alien species coming from outside this solar system. We're calling the four-fold symmetric aliens from the inner planet "Fors", the octopus-looking ones from the outer gas giant planet "Saks," and the stick figure ones from outside the solar system "Spikes."

We've intercepted their communication signals and are working on decoding them. We should have communication squared away by the time you are ready. But you should keep your message as simple as possible to avoid translation issues.

Your brother,
Charlie



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 9 March 2112 8:15 PM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien Request

Dear Captain Charlie,

Great news! Our prototypes are finished, and I think they turned out beautifully. We tried to stay faithful to the pictures of the aliens, except none of the aliens had obvious mouths, and the Saks didn't have obvious eyes either. So we added them. I think you'll agree that the alien smiles turned out looking really cute when you see the enclosed pictures of your nieces playing with the alien toys.

I've also enclosed my message to the aliens. Please forward it and the pictures to the translation team.

I'm ready to start makin' money!

Your brother,
Philip

People of Fors, People of Saks, People of Spikes,

Assemble an Alien wants to build friendships between humans and aliens. Our company builds these friendships with toys. Human children play with toy versions of the other species on our planet. Through this play, the children develop a friendship for the species the toys represent. The children retain this friendship after they become adults.

Assemble an Alien wants to make toy versions of your species for human children to play with.

Assemble an Alien believes this will build friendship between our species. We hope you agree. We have enclosed pictures of two human children playing with toy humans and with the proposed toy versions of each of your species. We request your comments on the toys themselves. And, because we respect your species and do not want to make toy versions of your species if it offends you, we request your permission to make toy versions of your species.

Sincerely,

Philip Wilcome
Alien Contacts
Assemble An Alien, Inc.



From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 22 May 2112 3:15 PM
Subject: FWD: Translations for Assemble an Alien

Little Brother,

By and large, you've been quite successful. You appear to have bagged two of them. Enclosed are your responses.

Good luck.

Charlie

From: Alien Translators <aliens@translate.spacefleet.int>
To: Charles Wilcome <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 22 May 2112 11:07 AM
Subject: Translations for Assemble an Alien

Thank you so much for the opportunity to translate text about everyday items such as toys, children, and body parts. These were definitely not what the other translations were about! So they were very helpful in broadening our vocabulary and understanding of these fascinating new languages.

We recommend you read our current caveats about these translations at

<https://caveats.alien.translators.spacefleet.int>

This site and your translations will be updated as more information is available and better translations can be made.

Here is our first cut at a translation of the response from the Fors.

Philip * Wilcome * Alien * Contacts

Good * Idea * Good * Idea
Build * Friendship * Toy * Fors
But * However * But * However
Fors * Not-Have * Body * Semicircle
If * Condition * If * Condition
Human * Remove * Body * Semicircle
Then * Result * Then * Result
Fors * Give * Toy * Permission

Good * Idea * Good * Idea
Build * Friendship * Toy * Human
Soon * Future * Next * Probe
Fors * Send * Toy * Human
If * Condition * If * Condition
Human * Like * Toy * Human
Human * Give * Toy * Permission

Caution * Warning * Danger * Beware
If * Condition * If * Condition
Human * Hold * Spike * Hands
Then * Result * Then * Result
Spike * Will * Kill * Human

Together * Together * Together * Together
Alone (1)
Speaker * Human * Human * Speaker

(1) Translator's note: The Fors language appears to be constructed of sets of four words. "Alone" appears to be an exception, perhaps to emphasize its meaning. Or else part of the message was lost.

Here is our first cut at a translation of the response from the Saks.

Contacts Alien,

<Angry> Saks human pictures seeing. Children Saks torturing. (1) Saks leaking through holes. Saks leaking through gash. Saks dying.

<Determined> Humans toy Saks not assembling. Humans toy Saks not assembling.

<Amused> Contacts Alien ignorant. Spikes humans visiting. Humans dying Spikes holding. (2)

Speaker

(1) Translator's note: If this statement matches the structure of the others, it means "The children are torturing the Saks." However, "The Saks will torture the children" is also a possible, worrisome translation.

(2) Translator's note: This could mean "Humans are holding dying Spikes." However, another, more frightening translation is, "Humans are dying holding the Spikes."

Here is our first cut at a translation of the response from the Spikes.

Philip,

For discovery-spirit-abstract, Spikes-concrete many hands-concrete two holding friendship offer.
(1)

On journey-abstract discovery sacred, Spikes-concrete many galaxy-concrete one explore.
Blessings-abstract fall on the Spikes-abstract because Spikes-concrete many life-concrete eight find. (2)

On path-abstract discovery sacred, Spikes-concrete many Fors-concrete many and Saks-concrete

many visited. Friendship-abstract grew, and Spikes-concrete many and Fors-concrete many and Saks-concrete many hands-concrete many held.

Visits-abstract not forever last, and Spikes-concrete many onward travel. Joy-abstract Spikes-abstract anticipate as Spikes-concrete many Earth-concrete one visit. For friendship-abstract Spike-abstract and Human-abstract, AssembleAnAlien-concrete one toy-concrete many Spikes make.

Hands-abstract holding friendship, Visitor-concrete one offers.

(1) Translator's note: The most literal translation is "In the spirit of discovery, the Spikes offer the two holding hands of friendship." However, since the function of hands is to hold, a more likely translation is, "The Spikes hold out their hands to offer friendship."

(2) Translator's note: The most literal translation is "Blessings fall on the Spikes because the Spikes have found eight types of life." However, "blessings falling" is likely a figure of speech and a more likely translation is, "The Spikes are blessed to have found eight types of life."



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 29 May 2112 8:15 PM
Subject: Assemble an Alien apology

Captain Charlie,

Thanks for the help! As requested, we are not making any Saks. Further, I would like to apologize to the Saks and have enclosed a letter the Admirals may send to them if they wish. We are busy cranking out Fors and Spikes toys and preparing for our grand opening next month. Enclosed is your invitation (don't mix it up with the response to the Saks!). Your nieces hope you will come.

I can tell this is going to be really profitable!

Your brother,
Philip

Speaker,

I personally apologize for making the toy Saks that offended you. What you saw as injuries—holes and gashes—we saw as a face—two eyes and a smile. To us, they made the Saks toy look friendly. In fact, humans make many things look friendly by adding faces to them—even machines!

Please accept my apologies for making the toy Saks that offended you. We will not make any more.

Sincerely,

Philip Wilcome
Alien Contacts
Assemble An Alien, Inc.



From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 12 July 2112 3:15 PM
Subject: FWD: Translations for Assemble an Alien

Little Brother,

The Saks responded to your apology. It made matters worse. I'd leave future communication to the experts. But the Admirals request that you respond to the enclosed. The Fors have come up with toy humans. I think they look like cacti with their hands held up next to their heads like that. The Admirals say they are acceptable if the Fors remove the eyes and mouths from the hands. But they want you to reply for us. Please send your reply back through me.

Your brother,
Charlie

From: Alien Translators <aliens@translate.spacefleet.int>
To: Charles Wilcome <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 12 July 2112 8:21 AM
Subject: Translations for Assemble an Alien

Thank you again for the opportunity to translate text on some very different subjects.

Here is your response from the Fors:

Philip * Wilcome * Alien * Contacts

Good * Idea * Good * Idea
Build * Friendship * Toy * Human
Fors * Send * Toy * Picture
If * Condition * If * Condition
Human * Like * Toy * Human
Then * Result * Then * Result
Human * Send * Toy * Permission

Good * Idea * Good * Idea
Build * Friendship * Saks * Human
Fors * Send * Toy * Picture

Sorry * Apologize * Failure * Sorry
Saks * Laugh * Toy * Human

Together * Together * Together * Together
Alone
Speaker * Human * Human * Speaker

Here is your response from the Saks:

Contacts Alien,

<Angry> Human Saks lying. Human probe not smiling. Human Saks friendship not desire. (1)
Saks Human explanation not accepting.

<Amused> Saks Fors Human toy seeing. Saks laughing. Human leaking through holes. Human
leaking through gashes. Human dying.

<Happy> Spikes Saks leaving. Spikes humans visiting. Humans Spikes hands holding. Humans
dying. Saks laughing.

Speaker

(1) Translator's note: If this follows their standard syntax, this means, "Humans do not desire the
Saks' friendship." However, it could also mean, "Saks do not desire the human's friendship."



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 14 July 2112 10:19 PM
Subject: Assemble an Alien replies

Captain Charlie,

Enclosed is the response to the Fors the Admirals requested. Enclosed also is a response to the
Saks. I tried to write in their language style. Please tell the Admirals to have their probe vendor
paint a smiley face on it this time.

Your brother,
Philip

Together * Together * Together * Together
Alone,

Assemble an Alien believes in building friendships with aliens through play. Our company
supports the concept of your species making toy versions of our species so your children will

develop a friendship towards us. However, we only have two eyes and one mouth, and they are located on our heads. We do not have eyes or mouths on our hands. If you remove the eyes and mouths from the hands, then the toy is acceptable to us and we approve your plan to make toy humans.

Sincerely,

Philip Wilcome
Alien Contacts
Assemble An Alien, Inc.

Speaker,

<Angry> We value the lives of every species. We do not laugh at the deaths of others, and we do not appreciate your laughing at the thought of ours.

<Angry> I did not lie to you. I did not say humans put faces on everything. We put friendly faces on toys, but not on tools. We consider the message probe a tool.

<Hopeful> Humans do want to be friends with the Saks. We have put a friendly smile on the probe with this message to show our desire to be friends.

<Sad> We are concerned about the effect of the Spikes on your world. We hope they did not kill any Saks.

Sincerely,

Philip Wilcome
Alien Contacts
Assemble An Alien, Inc.



From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 20 August 2112 8:47 AM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien replies

Little Brother,

My previous letter has been overcome by events. The Admirals decided to send your message to the Saks, and the Saks responded positively. Finally we have an explanation about the Spikes. The Fors and the Saks both say if you hold a hand on either side of a Spike, it delivers a lethal electric shock. If children get used to playing with their hands, the Spikes' visit here will be a disaster, with dead children everywhere they go. And the grieving parents would sue *you*. Therefore, the Admirals have ordered me to request that you do not sell any Spike toys.

The Admirals have also ordered me to suggest that the toys would be acceptable if they delivered an electric shock to anyone who holds two opposite hands. (However, if someone holds the two hands on the same side, they should not be shocked.) That way you can avoid the dead kids and the lawsuits.

Your brother,
Charlie



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 27 October 2112 1:52 PM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien replies

Captain Charlie,

I have pulled the Spike toys as the Admirals requested. However, I cannot make toys that shock children due to the Child Safety Act regulations.

But now I am left with an enormous loss and warehouses full of Spike inventory, and I was wondering if the Admirals would like me to convert the toy Spikes to shocking Spikes for them to use as training tools? There are no Admiral Safety Act regulations that would prevent their manufacture and sale as military training tools. I'm sure every Admiral would want to have one on their desk.

Your brother,
Philip



From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 14 December 2112 6:57 AM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien replies

Little Brother,

The Admirals have promoted me and ordered me to lead the ships being sent to meet the Spikes. I would like to requisition 300 shocking Spikes to use in training. Enclosed is the official PO.

Charlie



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 15 December 2112 8:32 AM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien replies

Rear Admiral Charlie,

Congratulations on your promotion!

Your shocking Spikes are on their way. But 300 didn't even make a dent in my inventory. Please let the other Admirals know I'd be glad to sell you more.

Be careful going out to meet the Spikes. You know what they say: if you hold a Spike like that, it will kill you.

Your brother,
Philip



From: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
To: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
Date: 3 April 2113 2:00 AM
Subject: Assemble an Alien order

Little Brother,

Thanks for the shipment of shocking Spikes. They worked well as training tools. No one has died yet.

We tried to keep them hidden from the Spikes, but Visitor was exploring my desk drawers and found mine. Before I could warn him or apologize, he picked it up. He went all stiff, and at first I was afraid it had killed him. Then I could almost see him vibrating from the shock, and I expected to be killed myself. He made this funny noise like twigs snapping. Then he asked to keep it. I was taken aback but, of course, agreed. He then proceeded to travel around the ship and shock every other Spike! He'd make the twig noise and then they'd make the twig noise. Then they'd ask me for one of their own, and they'd walk around shocking the other Spikes. It was like having a bunch of kids with those old-fashioned hand buzzers on board. They seemed easier to relate to after that, and they must have felt the same way. Visitor said they liked visiting us because "gift-abstract of play-abstract Spikes-concrete many and Humans-concrete many share."

They've commandeered all our shocking Spikes to take home to their kids. So I'd like to order another 300 for training tools. Enclosed is another PO.

Charlie



From: Philip <alien.contacts@assembleanalien.com>
To: Charlie <captain.charles.wilcome@spacefleet.int>
Date: 10 August 2113 4:54 PM
Subject: RE: Assemble an Alien order

Rear Admiral Charlie,

Feel free to order as many replacement shocking Spikes as you need. We have plenty of inventory.

And feel free to let me know any other statements that Visitor makes about our toys. Frankly, they're worth more than your order. We're currently running a successful ad campaign based on the "share the gift of play" statement. And, after all, that's what Assemble an Alien is all about. Well, that and making money.

Have fun playing with the aliens.

I'll be having fun playing with my profits.

Your brother,
Philip



Anthia Ann Adkins lives in Friendswood, Texas with her husband, two children, five pets, and a small mountain of stuffed animals. "Assemble an Alien" is her first fiction sale.