

Pascal the Wanderer

Pascal is one of the crew of the Dewfall. His Commonthroat name is rLPqsggrp /chuff, long rising strengthening grunt, huff, yip, short low weak growl, chuff, short high strong grunt/ which means "ring light", referring to sunlight reflected off of Yih's ring on summer nights. He's the odd man out among the yinrih who find Earth, as he's not a Wayfarer, or at least not a committed one. Humans might call him a doubting Thomas.

He's an average size for a yinrih, with mostly white fur with a few large black patches, including one around his left eye.

Historians studying the events of First Contact frequently compare Pascal with Firefly. They have shockingly similar life stories. Like the perpetual Partisan potentate, Pascal was hatched in the Outer Belt within the borders of Moonlitter. His sires and dams were very active in the missionaries, and Pascal was noted to be a very dutiful pup when it came to matters religious. Unlike Firefly, however, Pascal was quiet, bookish, and lacking in social intelligence. On the rare occasions he did speak, he could be rude, blunt, or even offensive, although almost never on purpose. He was just bad at reading the room, and he would apologize profusely when the inappropriateness of his comments were pointed out to him. He could also show surprising flashes of empathy. Once, upon hearing that a neighbor's pet had run off, Pascal spent hours searching for the critter in the pouring rain.

Also like Firefly, he took a mandatory customer service job as an adolescent (at a restaurant in this case). He noticed that his fellow Wayfarers could be just as rude, if not more so, than the average diner, which caused him to question whether the Bright Way was any good after all.

But it was an internal controversy within the Bright Way that cemented his doubts. The high hearthkeeper was once again entertaining the idea of halting interstellar mission work, rejecting the Great Commandment. This provoked a nagging question in Pascal's mind: "If the clergy doesn't care, why should I?"

Despite Pascal's ebbing faith, he didn't feel like he fit in with his secular peers, either. Most of his friends were still committed Wayfarers. Two of his friends, a pair of litter mates who attended the same lighthouse he did as a pup, even pursued religious vocations, with Iris becoming a hearthkeeper and Lodestar joining the Knights of the Sun. The three of them remained close even after the Partisan invasion of their planet and subsequent relocation of the population to a colony in the Inner Belt.

Pascal had suffered from depression in his youth, and without his faith acting as a bulwark against the darkness, he found himself drifting aimlessly through life as a young adult. Some time after he and his friends settled down at Wayfarers' Haven, the community decided to sponsor a mission to a newly discovered habitable planet, and Iris and Lodestar volunteered, and suggested that Pascal do the same.

Pascal protested, saying that it made no sense for a non Wayfarer to go on a mission, and at the end of the day, even if they did find other sophonts it wouldn't prove that the Bright Way was right. Iris countered by saying that his entire circle of friends was going on this mission, so he'd be alone once they left. He had shown no interest in joining a childermoot and hatching pups, and he wasn't exactly in a hurry to start a career. "Besides," she said, "The Light believes in you, even if you don't believe in the Light. Let's say you're right and the Bright Way is nonsense. You will have lost nothing by obeying the Great Commandment. But if I'm right, you will have gained everything." This persuaded him to join the mission.

Iris had an uphill battle getting the local overseer to approve Pascal's presence on the mission, as it was unheard of for a non Wayfarer to be a missionary. Iris managed to convince her superior by quoting the old missionary maxim "what healer does not abide among the sick?" So, along with Tod, Stormlight, and Sunshine, Pascal and his friends embarked on the mission that would, after a hundred millennia of yinrih history, finally make First Contact.

Upon landing on Earth, Pascal ends up lodging with one Fr. Shaheen, pastor of the local Maronite church and brother of one of the hams that first encounter the Dewfall. The priest originally offers to host Iris, as he wants to compare notes with the alien cleric, but Iris insists Pascal lodge with him instead, not because she's not equally interested in what sort of faith these hairless bipeds have, but because she hopes the priest will rekindle some sort of faith in the wandering yinrih.

Upon relating his reasons for coming on the mission to his host, Fr. Shaheen gives the yinrih his human name, "Pascal" as a reference to the French philosopher.

Here's a random factoid: Blaise Pascal was born in 1623, and given the average age of the missionaries of about 150 plus the 250 years of suspension, that means Pascal was hatched 3 years after his namesake was born.

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