

# The Rite of Alightment

The Rite of Alightment is a ritual performed upon landing a womb ship. Ideally it's done in the presence of one or more alien sophonts, and is meant to communicate what sort of creatures the yinrih are, why they're here, and to serve as a gesture of good will and trust to their new hosts.

The rite begins after the missionaries disembark. First, the healer performs a quick wellness check on herself and the other missionaries. While this is a genuine post suspension health exam, it is also ritualized to some degree. The healer announces what she's doing aloud and performs otherwise normal physical health exam tasks like checking pulse, breathing, limb rotation range, gross and fine motor skills, etc, in a slightly exaggerated manner in order to communicate to their hosts that the yinrih are capable of compassion and hope to be treated in kind. The healer's utterances also serve to demonstrate that the yinrih possess the faculty of language, which is one of the two criteria the Bright Way uses to determine if a creature is sapient.

After the health check, the hearthkeeper produces a quantity of blessed milk, fresh. She self-induces lactation by licking her palms and holding them out to the audience as she sweats out the milk. If there is a male among the missionaries, he imitates the same gestures and holds his own palms out to the audience as well. This is to demonstrate the difference between male and female yinrih, as well as to underscore the ritual nature of the following actions. The hearthkeeper then soaks up the milk on her palms with a sponge and wrings it out into an aspergillum, saying a blessing to sanctify the milk.

She then sprinkles the womb ship's hull and chants a prayer of thanksgiving for a safe journey. This rite of sprinkling is meant to demonstrate that the yinrih are capable of ritual (deliberate behaviors that have no survival benefit) which is the second criterion the Bright Way uses to define sapience.

After sprinkling the womb ship, the hearthkeeper opens a hatch exposing the (currently not running) main reactor. She then produces a ceremonial wrench and dramatically shatters the glass of the reaction chamber. While womb ships are incapable of launching after they land on a planet's surface, breaking the main reactor is meant to demonstrate that the missionaries intend to live among these new sophonts and trust them to be good hosts. The main reactor only powers the ship's propulsion, and there are secondary reactors for things like life support, fabricators, comms, etc.

The missionaries then sing the litany of creation, which serves to underscore the religious nature of the mission, demonstrate more language use, and, at least after the fact once the language barrier is dealt with, give a little natural history lesson.

The Rite of Alightment culminates with a second sprinkling, of both the missionaries, and--should they be so inclined--their alien hosts. This is to symbolize the union of the yinrih's noosphere with that of their new friends. Finally, the hearthkeeper and other missionaries demonstrate the customary introductory greeting, which is to rear up on the hind feet and pat the exposed

underbelly twice with the left forepaw, another gesture of trust, the rite ends by inviting the aliens to greet the missionaries in their own fashion.

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