

Project Morpheus: The Riddles of Anoikis

Anoikis, the mysterious source of recent advances in technology. But what do we really know about it? Who were the Sleepers and where did they come from? Who are the enigmatic Talocan, and what are they doing near the Sleepers? Project Morpheus, named after the ancient god of dreams, was established to try and answer these questions. In this set of documents, I will attempt to explain what we know of the Sleepers, as well as the little we have found about the Talocan.

First, I will focus on the Sleepers, as there is far more information available on them. For instance, we know from artifacts found in New Eden that they were heavily focused on the areas of virtual reality, neural interfacing and cryotechnology. Next, examination of the Sleeper empire in Anoikis reveals a few interesting facts: the constant extreme rate of data transfer between structures, the absence of human life, the drones, and the preservation conduits with their myriad of chambers. Couple this with the known areas of research and you can begin to unravel where the Sleepers went: they plugged themselves into a virtual world of their own creation, a universe made to order: the Dream. Their bodies held in suspended animation in the preservation conduits in those myriad of chambers, waiting for their minds to return. But will their minds ever return? Does the Dream have a concept of death? Can new minds be created inside the Dream? We do not know, and it may be a very very long time until we do, if ever.

But how did the Sleepers end up inside Anoikis? And, once there, why did they end up in the Dream? Can a virtual world be so much better than the real one, or were there other factors present? Our first hint as to the story takes us to the Ani constellation of New Eden, where the relics of the New Eden Sleepers are found. Here there is a story, recounted by Akraun Maertigor, called *'The Lullaby'*:

"Some weeks ago I was in a sleazy space bar over in Hek when I overheard a conversation between couple of Thukkers. One of them had this really incredibly story to tell about a human civilization that once lived here in Ani long before us Minmatars arrived. One day, they invented this virtual world that people could hook into and be completely immersed. They created this beautiful virtual world, where everyone was rich and happy. Before long, they were all hooked in, their bodies suspended in stasis chambers. And thus, they faded away, into this virtual world of theirs."

On further discussion with this agent, it is apparent that the civilization he is referring to is that of the Sleepers. This is the first recorded story that mentions that Sleepers to date, and although it doesn't provide an exact date it does reinforce what we had surmised about the state of Anoikis: that the Sleepers are in a virtual world of their own making. However, as with

a lot stories about a more advanced race, the exact specifications of what happened are slightly different. We know that the Sleepers didn't fade away into their virtual world at the point of this story. They were very much a thriving, real civilization in Anoikis. What is more likely is that the fading away of the story refers to the abandonment of New Eden by the Sleepers.

In addition, this also provides us with a relative timeline of events. The Sleeper technology in New Eden is generally of 'Tech 2' quality, though in cases more advanced, the construction techniques do not include any mention of fullerites. Also, we do not find significant use of fullerite technology, nor the advanced rift-based systems of travel, the data centers etc that abound Anoikis, anywhere in New Eden. In contrast, the technology of Anoikis is undoubtedly 'Tech 3', making extensive use of fullerites. Based on this data, we can surmise that the transition was from New Eden to Anoikis. Should their empires have existed for a significant length in parallel, or indeed should they have arrived in New Eden from Anoikis, fullerite technology would be present in a significant amount, given that it enables far more advanced systems than Tech 2 or 'mineral' technology, and would undoubtedly have been used.

For an empire to rise, another must fall. No-one is entirely sure why the previous empires collapsed (other than the Jove with their reckless genetic manipulation), but there must have been some form of upheaval to cause them to fall down. With the opening of Anoikis, we have a clue as to why the Sleepers moved, and why Anoikis was sealed: infection. Two sites in Anoikis refer directly to attempts to quarantine areas or individuals, the Class-5 Quarantine Area, and the Class-6 Mirror's Medical Facility.

Upon mentioning the Mirror and biological infection, it is impossible to not address the idea that the Sleepers are, will be, and always have been a digital race. As I have stated previously, the sketchy records that exist in New Eden specify that the Sleepers *became* digital, they were not always. The next piece of evidence to this is the Class-6 site, the Mirror. This complex is a vast repository of information on many topics researched by the Sleepers. Of particular interest here are the Medical and Oruze complexes. The Medical facility lists the departments as:

- 1.0 Emergency
- 2.0-2.8 Triage
- 2.9 Stasis
- 3.0 Quarantine Sector A
- 4.0 Quarantine Sector B
- 4.0-9.2 Quarantine Sector C
- 9.3 Quarantine Sector X

The very name 'Medical' refers to biological entities, to diagnose and a repair a human, you go to a medical facility. To diagnosing and repairing a machine, you go to an engineering facility.

Whilst the exact meaning of the Oruze construct is a topic for later discussion, what is evident is that this facility contains the living quarters for personel here. Again there is a lot that can be discussed on the Mirror alone, for example the idea of two separate residential areas, but the topic currently is biological vs digital.

Add to this the lack of mention of any digital constructs in EVE from around the time of the ancient empires and, though there is not a firm piece of evidence that says outright 'the Sleepers were biological' the evidence to the contrary is even more speculative and even less conclusive. Therefore, until new evidence comes to light, I shall regard the Sleepers as having biological origins from the EVE gate.

On a return to the quarantine, there has been one agent raised as a potential candidate for this devastation: the Kyonoke Pit prion. A relic from times gone by, the creator of this highly deadly agent is unknown. However, something can be learned from what we know. The infectious rate is very high, contamination is virtually guaranteed from presence. The death rate is absolute and within 24 hrs of contraction, often shorter. How it survives is unknown, but thankfully it is confined to the surface so requires transportation to infect.

A slight deviation into biology is required now to examine the origins of the Kyonoke Pit prion. For any parasitic organism to survive (most bacteria, viruses and prions can all be considered parasitic, as they rely on a host to reproduce) it must be capable of transmission and infection. This means that killing the host quickly is a bad idea because then the parasite also dies without many chances to infect. This can be compensated for by a large, dense population, but the parasite would still have a chance to die out, due to the high mortality rate. The Kyonoke prion may have found a way to induce a stasis-like state where it can survive until it can be transmitted back to host, but what does this all mean? It means that it is unlikely for the Kyonoke Pit prion to exist in current form, the transmission rate is excellent, but the mortality rate is too high to support it unless on a very crowded area. The potential for stasis can compensate, but is unproven. This suggests that the prion could have been manufactured as a weapon. However, with the site under lockdown by the Caldari military, it is unlikely that civilian access will be granted any time soon, although a leaked report suggests that what has been speculated here is correct, and that the prion is capable of two forms of hibernation, a short term and a long term, which can be maintained for years without damage. Additionally, prions have a very short life cycle, and as such the evolutionary rate is more like that of a virus, and given the potential for mutations once released onto a crowded planet, a mutation of a more successful, longer incubation version is not outside the realms of possibility. With no treatment known or on the horizon, the only method of containing this infection would be wholesale quarantine at the first suspicion of infection.

This idea of an infectious outbreak also bears out inside Anoikis. There are the quarantined zones, but also the more subtle signs. Mechanical objects remain largely intact, with only one or two sites on the 'perimeter' of W-class systems showing signs of attack. In contrast, biological life of any complexity has been eradicated. Even the structures of the Talocan, considered to be a nomadic group, remain in place (the reasons for assuming nomadic will be explored later). This is of importance as one of the main features of a nomadic facility is that it can be assembled and disassembled with relative ease, yet something prevented the people from doing so and escaping. Without any signs of a military struggle, where you would expect to see damage to the structures, wreckage etc, other possibilities must be entertained. The idea of an infectious agent present provides an excellent answer, especially if the Kyonoke Pit prion is considered as an agent. As a theoretical scenario, once infection begun, the dormancy would engage, turning the stations into giant stores of prions. Any attempt to re-board them

would be doomed to failure as the prion reactivated and infected the teams. Destroying the structure would send shards of prion-covered material flying all over space, increasing contamination risks, so the facilities were left intact and either abandoned or their inhabitants killed. Talocan vessels escaping from an infected facility may well have been destroyed by the Sleepers as part of their quarantine process, but since the Sleepers would have been infected too, their response would likely not have been 100% efficient, at least not whilst they relied on biological entities to make decisions. When they transitioned to digital sentience it all changed. How it changed hinges on the question of 'Can the Sleepers interact with the real world, or are they locked into the Dream?' If they cannot act, then everything is automated according to certain directives. Consider the directive '*Preserve the integrity of the structures, maintain the quarantine, maintain the Dream. Destroy everything that threatens any directive*'. This set of AI directives would result in a very odd situation where Sleeper drones would maintain and defend Talocan structures, something which has been observed in Anoikis and proven very difficult to explain, as there is next to no information on the relationship between Talocan and Sleeper civilisations, as indeed barely anything of the Talocan is left except structures.

Even if the Sleepers can interact, the AI directive controlling their drones is likely to be the same, though with the capacity to act additionally to this. For example, the (somewhat sketchy) reports of an Awakened Infomorph being seen in New Eden, or the Sleepers observing a control tower in Anoikis would point to the capacity for external action. Indeed, we have already been scouted by a Sleeper drone that exhibits intelligence beyond that expected of a non self-aware AI construct. Let us hope that the stars do not turn red with blood again.

This is the end of the first report of Project Morpheus.