

(Guard 2 picks up a canister with a cord attached. He speaks into it.)

GUARD 2

Crochem, you have visitors. ***(No response.)*** Crochem. Crochem. Crochem, can you hear me? ***(He moves Crochem's left hand, which holds a similar canister, to Crochem's ear.)*** Crochem, guests are here seeking your wisdom.

CROCHEM

Wisdom? What sort of wisdom do you seek from Crochem?

ALAGOMAR

It's the youth, the children of Mars. The future generations.

CROCHEM

I see. And what is it? Rebellion? Not cleaning their sleep pods? Inappropriate language? ***(To Guard 2, referring to the canister)*** Clear. ***(He moves canister away from his ear, and eats potato chips out of it.)***

ZADORABLE

Much more significant than that, I fear.

CELESTEROL

The children are experiencing an emotion heretofore only practiced on primitive planets like Earth.

CROCHEM

Silence! You have reached your expository limit! You will now address Crochem with questions specific to your concern.

DROPO

How do you know all this stuff? How'd you get so smart?

CROCHEM

That is two questions, neither of which would seem to pertain to your dilemma. However, rules are rules, and you have used up two of your questions. And, in fairness, I shall answer. I receive messages and wisdom from the gods! And to answer your second inquiry, I receive wisdom and messages from the gods! ***(He has put away the canister and is now holding something else, which is obscured by the fabric.)*** Next question.

(As the questions proceed, the guards become increasingly distracted by Zadorable. They gradually let the fabric slip, slowly revealing more of Crochem's lair and what he's doing.)

ALAGOMAR

Zadorable's research shows that the children's...moods have grown increasingly downcast in recent months, even worse in recent weeks. What could be the cause of this?

CROCHEM

Seasons bring a new set of feelings. Don't fight it, embrace it.

(After answering each question, Crochem eats something crunchy.)

ZADORABLE

Are the children being influenced by forces from beyond?

CROCHEM

Do not be scared of unseen forces. Invite them, embrace them.

CELESTEROL

Is there a figure, not unlike yourself, who is equivalent among the unseen forces?

CROCHEM

A large boldly-dressed stranger will pay a visit from which you will benefit. Celebrate this visit.

ALAGOMAR

When? When will this happen?

CROCHEM

Be aware, but not intrusive about new beings in your midst.

ZADORABLE

This new being, how do we reach this new being?

CROCHEM

Seize opportunity, make it your own, take it on a journey.

(At this point the guards have let the fabric drop so much that we can see Crochem is opening fortune cookies, reading the fortunes and then eating the cookies.)

ZADORABLE

Does it have a name?

CROCHEM

That was your last question. Time is up. Best of luck. See you next time, please tip the guards.