

Author’s note:

I wrote “Social Occasion” many years ago, when the Green Lantern Corps comic was in its first heyday. Bob Greenberger, then editing, bought it from me. It was a time when the young Green Lantern known as Arisia of Eddore was fairly newly introduced. She was painfully adolescent, and was crushing with considerable (and completely unrequited) ferocity on Hal Jordan; Hal, however, seemed more interested in fellow-GL Katma Tui at that point, and never noticed.

I had felt kind of sorry for Arisia for some time when I sat down to consider what I’d write for Bob. But another theme which had been niggling at me for a while was a great desire to see the collected Green Lanterns doing something that did *not* involve going forth in huge numbers to deal with Sinestro or whoever. I wanted to see them on their time off. And the two themes then got tangled up together.

Hence...

“Social Occasion”
(Diane Duane)

PAGE 1:

PANEL 1: Oa, from a distance.

CAPTION 1: They aren’t *always* out saving the universe, you know.

PANEL 2: Closer on Oa — the curve of the planet’s dark side, and just inside the edge of the terminator, the night-glitter of the Guardians’ distant citadel.

CAPTION 1: After all, even when the thirty-six hundred of you wield power unimaginable to most mortals...even when you spend most of your time revelling in the protection of whole planets... sometimes you want to do something *else*.

PANEL 3: Close on the Guardians’ citadel: night.

CAPTION 1: This is Oa, the planet at the heart of the Universe. The Guardians of the Universe live here, and keep an eye on things. And even the Guardians, every now and then, like to be reminded of just what they’re guarding.

PANEL 4: Very close on the Citadel. A narrowish panel, emphasizing the symbol emblazoned on the main building.

CAPTION 1: People.

PAGE 2, PAGE 3:

Double-page splash, title and credits at bottom. A high wide angle of the Great Hall in the Guardians’ citadel. The place is absolutely jammed full of Green Lanterns. Apparently nearly all 3600 are here, standing around holding drinks or food, and talking. The scale of the crowd scene is so large that only the very closest or biggest of the GLs (like the big crystal-hill guy) can easily be made out separately. The speakers are both familiar GLs and unfamiliar ones.

GL 1: I love your new skin color! Where did you get it?

GL 2: — so I follow the distress call,, and what do I find but this planet entirely inhabited by little balls of fur —

GL 3: Personally, he’s not my type. I mean, he only *has* two legs...

GL 4: So then you put in most of the vegetables, and you sizzle them very fast. You have to be careful not to let it burn, because—

GL 5 (1): And then the !hew says to the \$%@^e\$!, “I thought that *was* my dinner!”

GL 5 (2): Oh well. I guess you had to be there.

GL 6: For me? Oh, thank you! I always wanted a hankelfarb, but I never would have gotten one for myself!

GL 7: —starved, where's the food?

GL 8: — Listen, is T'he'peh still living with Rai? She's not? Uh oh, then I just said something really stupid...

GL 9: Oh, iron filings? Don't mind if I do. Here, have a rock, they've really got the lanthanide crust just right this time.

GL 10: Tark! How're the husbands?

GL 11: My, how you've shrunk since I saw you last!

GL 12: Oh, Chia, I heard you were dead!! — You *are* dead? Well, you're certainly *looking* great...

GL 13: No, that can't be my drink, because I don't drink mercury.

GL 14 (1) (the glass-hill guy): Well, if you ask me...life is a fountain.

GL 14 (2): Life *isn't* a fountain?...

PAGE FOUR:

Panel 1: ARISIA among other Green Lanterns. She is off to one side, talking (apparently) to empty air which has a small green glow riding in it. The green glow is just about all we get to see of a Green Lantern called CARIO, who we will meet more formally in a minute. Arisia has a drink in one hand and is talking very animatedly. Her lines and Cario's appear "last" in the panel.

KATMA TUI (in b.g., to another GL standing beside her): So did you ever find that planet you lost?

GL 15: Well, that's kind of a long story...

ARISIA: ...I don't know...the responsibility gets to me, sometimes. All those lives. All those people — and especially the number of people. I just can't grasp them all...

CARIO: (thought balloon lettered in lower case only) <perhaps insufficient effort made at perception?>

PANEL 2: Arisia and Cario, close.

ARISIA: No. I put a whole lot of effort into it, once. There was this big festival in the main park of the city where I live — and I went out and looked at all those people there. I tried so hard to feel that they all had emotions just like mine...hopes and fears, and worries about money, and their kids and their jobs — all that. And I just couldn't. There were too many of them. My brains gave out.

CARIO: <if mind = infinity then size of mind = all those people. But size of mind ≠ infinity...>

PANEL 3: Favoring Arisia. She looks delighted.

ARISIA: That's it. That's exactly it. Wow. I thought I was the only one who ever had this problem—

CAPTION 1: Her name is Arisia of Eddore, and she is one of 3600 Green Lanterns. She is not the youngest of them, but far from the oldest.

CAPTION 2: She is honest, and without fear. She is young and sharp and wide-eyed and relatively new to this job. And she loves it more than anything...which is just as it should be.

PANEL 4: On Cario...what there is of him. Even this close, all we see of him is a small, round, bright green glow.

CARIO: <but effort to understand = far more important in the long run than understanding...>

CAPTION 1: His name is nontangentio-convolvo/ carionto-lymeric/ plagioenanticosine, but his friends call him "Cario". He is one of 3600 Green Lanterns.

PANEL 5: Still closer on Cario. He looks like a small fuzzy globe of green light, except that at the "heart" of it the green fire shades to a dazzling white patch, Lantern-shaped.

CARIO: < — + just as well, since total understanding = impossible [chuckle]>

CAPTION 2: Cario is a living mathematical concept — a member of a race of tensor equations so complex that they passed the critical threshold number of variables and became sentient. His Power Ring is an infinite repeating decimal fraction. His uniform is a number equal to the number of vibrations per second in emerald-green light.

CAPTION 3: He is honest, and without fear. And he loves his job more than anything...which is just as it should be.

PAGE FIVE:

PANEL 1: Cario and Arisia, a different angle: a little more private. Fewer other GLs in b.g.

ARISIA 1: I don't know, though. I keep thinking I could do it, if I just tried harder. Will power 'n' all that...

CARIO: <but there's no time! Infinite being / finite self:
universe endless-unlimited / but self finite-limited! /
Hopeless case / but happy...>

ARISIA 2: Yeah, there is something neat about it. It's like a game:
you know you'll never win...but you don't care:
trying's still fun...

HAL JORDAN (out of panel:) Well, well...how's my little sister?

PANEL 2: Bigger, wider angle, including Hal, Katma Tui (in b.g.), TOMAR-RE (in b.g.). Hal strides toward our POV. Arisia moves toward him: Cario's glow remains in foreground.

ARISIA: Hal! You're here too!

HAL: So when did I ever miss a party? Especially one full of my favorite people!

HAL 2: And here's my old buddy Cario! How's it going, random number?

CARIO: <still random, jordanhal / yourself?>

PANEL 3: The group, favoring Hal. He has a friendly arm around Arisia's shoulders, and she's looking rather wistfully up at him. Hal isn't particularly noticing the look as he talks.

ARISIA: We haven't seen much of you out our way lately...

HAL: I've been busy. You know how it gets on Earth, Arisia.

KATMA TUI (out of panel:) Indeed we do.

PANEL 4: Slightly different angle on the same group, favoring Katma Tui, who is looking at Hal with a slight smile. Hal sees her and looks less tired all of a sudden. Arisia, still looking up at Hal, is still smiling, but her eyes are now sad.

HAL: Katma Tui! How are you?

KATMA TUI: Doing a little better, I think.

HAL: Listen, Katma...

PANEL 5: Another angle, mostly Hal's back as he heads off toward Katma Tui [, presumably to mend some fences]. There stands Arisia, with Cario still hanging nearby, watching Hal go. Arisia's smile is gone. Other GLs' conversation continues in b.g.

HAL: 'Scuse me, little sister, I'll be right back.

HAL 2: Katma, look, if you've got a few minutes...

GL 17: Doesn't Rasvenya look great?

GL 18: Never would have thought he'd drop that much weight. Especially around the tentacles.

PANEL 6: Arisia and Cario. Arisia has turned away from Cario to look after Hal: still wearing that forlorn look.

ARISIA 1: No, he won't...

CARIO 1: <won't what?>

ARISIA 2: Be right back.

CARIO 2: <....>

ARISIA 3: Never mind.

PAGE SIX:

PANEL 1: Closer on Cario and Arisia.

CARIO 1: <? the matter?>

ARISIA: No, really, I'm OK.

CARIO 2: <#\$\$%^&*\$\$%#@#!!>

PANEL 2: Favoring Arisia as she looks over at Cario.

ARISIA1 : Yeah...I guess you're right.

CARIO: <? talk about it?>

ARISIA 2: ...I could use some fresh air.

PANEL 3: The "back yard" of the Great Hall. A cloistered garden of the sort as old a race as the Guardians might make: raked sand, stones, with here and there a graceful and very controlled alien tree, and the occasional piece of abstract sculpture. Arisia and the bright glow of Cario are heading out into the evening darkness toward our POV, silhouetted by the light streaming from the doors leading back to the Great Hall. Arisia walks with her head down and hands clasped behind her. Her face is often invisible to us because of the frequent dim lighting throughout the following sequence.

ARISIA 1: ...Cario, it's impossible. I...oh, *dammit*...

CARIO 1: <....>

ARISIA 2: ...I still love him. And I can't stop. And he's older

than I am, and besides he loves someone else more than me. So it's all hopeless and impossible and *stupid!* And I —

CARIO 2: <impossibility...nothing but universe's oldest test... of courage against pain. ...?Oath/speak>

PANEL 4: Another angle: closer on the two of them as Arisia turns and looks at Cario, uncomprehending and annoyed. The light falls across her face so that we can see her pained expression.

ARISIA: What the — what the *whatever* does my *Oath* have to do with this?

CARIO: <!Oath/say it>

PANEL 5: Favoring Arisia. She flails her arms around in a helpless gesture.

ARISIA: Why?! Is there supposed to be some secret message in it that'll do me good? And who from? The Guardians? *They* don't care about— about *this* kind of thing—they gave it up when they gave up mortality! What does it—

CARIO: <Oath>

PAGE SEVEN:

PANEL 1: Another angle. Arisia stands by a bench set out in the garden, turns her head away from Cario again. She is all in shadow except for the light from her Power Ring and the light that Cario casts on her from behind.

ARISIA 1: Well...if you insist.

ARISIA 2: In brightest day, in darkest —

CARIO: <no./Oathself>

ARISIA 3: Uhh...

PANEL 2: Close on Arisia. Half turned toward Cario now.

CARIO 1: <?>

ARISIA 1: Cario...it embarrasses me.

CARIO 2: <Howso?>

ARISIA 2: ...I made it up.

PANEL 3: Arisia is sitting on the bench, looking a little shamefaced. Cario's green light hangs in the air beside her.

CARIO 1: <All GLs make it up, sooner or later. / Adopted Oaths change. New Oaths get old. But all Oaths *matter*. / Quality of composition insignificant / meaning supremely significant>

ARISIA 1: Yeah. But—

CARIO 2: <words, equations allsame/AboveBeyond *knows* / inner meaning transcends>

ARISIA 2: Well...

CARIO 3: <keepsecret/promise/ownOath>

PANEL 4: Closer on Arisia (over her shoulder, as it were) as, with her back to us, she holds out her half-closed hand as if to a Power Battery that isn't there. Her Ring flares in response to the Oath and its blinding light silhouettes her. In the radiance, Cario is a darker flare of green.

ARISIA: I charge my Ring in Truth's green fire —
let evil-doers 'ware my ire!
Hope's born anew: the Dawn's been seen:
Day rises, and the light is green!

PANEL 5: Arisia and Cario. All the brilliance faded away now, everything back to normal: a young girl sitting with hunched shoulders, a small bright light hanging by her.

ARISIA 1: That's all.

CARIO 1: <like a *lot*>

ARISIA 2: You're just saying that to make me feel good.

PAGE EIGHT:

PANEL 1: Close on Cario — Arisia in the background. Cario's light comes up very bright in annoyance, lighting Arisia's startled face very brilliantly indeed.

CARIO 1: <?saying a Green Lantern would *lie*?!>

ARISIA 1: Oh, no! I just —

CARIO 2: <!verse deep meaning / love of Lanternship / evident!!
?Not believe?/unaccepted compliment?/gratuitous
violence! / !repeated as necessary!!>

PANEL 2: Wider, the two of them. Arisia is looking at Cario with a bit of a smile now.

ARISIA 1: You'd hit me with a *what*?

CARIO 1: <multibillion-digit prime number>

ARISIA 2: I'd better believe you, then.

CARIO 2: <damnstraight>

PANEL 3: another angle on the two of them. Arisia gestures helplessly again.

ARISIA: But you still didn't tell me what my Oath has to do with...what I feel about Hal.

CARIO: <pain/unlovedness = pain/cruelty, = pain/injustice: all the same! / !same answer to all: fight! / fight evil, fight pain, fight sorrow! / others', own, no difference>

PANEL 4: Closer, the two of them. Arisia struggles to understand.

ARISIA: Yes, but Cario — this is love, love is *good* —

CARIO: When returned...and not a pain to the other. Hal/love ≠ Arisia/love...therefore=pain. Pain=evil. Two answers to evil. Ignore...and keep on wallowing in pain. Or fight...and end it.

PANEL 5:

Favoring Arisia.

ARISIA 1: Well, when you put it that way...

ARISIA 2: So I have to fight my own pain the same way I'd fight some bad guy? What should I do, go hit myself with something?

ARISIA 3: Better hand me that prime number.

CARIO: <[chuckle] No need / will power sufficient>

PAGE NINE

PANEL 1: Different angle on the two of them.

ARISIA 1: To stop loving him? Forget it. I tried that. It made it worse.

CARIO 1: <not to stop loving. To stop hurting. / Turn will toward doing things that make the pain hurt/matter less. Work/share/make self matter to others, turn outward. Time does the rest...>

ARISIA 2: You know...it's true that this whole mess bothers me less when I'm out on my rounds being useful to my space sector. I guess I'd better plan on spending a whole more time out there...

CARIO 2: <gentle amazement>

ARISIA 3: Huh?

PANEL 2: wider, the two of them sharing the bench.

CARIO 1: <old line: Green Lanterns without fear. *Flopwash!* Have *too* fear. But refuse to give in to it. Like you / would hit self if it would help>

ARISIA 1: If you'd ever been in love, and had it hurt like this, I bet you'd hit yourself too if you thought it would stop it. It's worse than anything.

CARIO 2: <....>

PANEL 3: Close on them both.

ARISIA 1: But work does help. And when the people come and touch you afterwards, and thank you for saving them or whatever... it's the best.

CARIO 1: <good to be touched>

ARISIA 1: Always.

CARIO 2: <...lucky to be *able* to be touched>

PANEL 4:

The two of them: Arisia sitting hunched over still, folded hands hanging between her knees. She looks over at Cario with some concern.

ARISIA 1: Are you okay? You don't sound so great.

CARIO 1: <okay>

ARISIA 2: Oh, yeah? I'd say what you said to me before, except some Guardian would probably come along and wash my mouth out.

PANEL 5: Long angle — the bench, Arisia, Cario. Dimly lit: her Ring, his glow, nothing else.

CARIO 1: <whereas *mykind* / no mouth / no body / no anything>

ARISIA 1: `Not 'no anything'. You're *here*.

CARIO 2: <barely. Universe / overwhelmingly physical — everything seen/touched/felt/heard...everything but us...>

PANEL 6: Closer - Arisia and Cario. She leans close to him, her elbows on her knees, her chin resting on her folded hands. The green light of her Ring highlights her face.

ARISIA 1: It hurts, huh?

CARIO 1: < >

ARISIA 2: Cari...

CARIO 2: (very small "voice") <more than anything>

ARISIA 3: Cari...I'm sorry.

PAGE TEN:

PANEL 1: Mostly favoring Cario: a very small, dimmed light in the darkness.

CARIO 1: <not your fault / and nothing to be done anyway>

ARISIA 1: Flopwash.

CARIO 2: <??!>

PANEL 2: Wider, the two of them.

ARISIA 1: Cario, it's got to be the same thing. What you told me. You fight.

CARIO 1: <fight what? / the way things are? Self unphysical, unchangeable, untouchable — !>

ARISIA 2: No.

PANEL 3: Closer on Arisia. She reaches out her Ringed hand slowly to Cario.

ARISIA: Not untouchable.

PANEL 4: On Cario, hanging there and trembling slightly. Arisia's hand is sliding into panel. Her Ring is afire.

CARIO: <impossible>

PANEL 5: Closer on Cario as Arisia's hand slips under him, fingers beginning to close, as if she's catching a firefly. Her Power Ring blazes.

CARIO: <impossible!/many others have —>

PANEL 6: close on Arisia's fist as it closes, with Cario inside it. His light spills blindingly through her fingers, dimming even her Ring by comparison.

CARIO: (smothered) < — tried...>

PAGE ELEVEN:

PANEL 1: Favoring Arisia. She has drawn the hand close to her, and is holding Cario cupped in both hands, eye-high.

ARISIA: And I bet they blew it because they believed you.
Mind over matter, Green Lantern.

PANEL 2: Different angle: closer, as she releases him a little. Arisia's smiling.

CARIO 1: <but no *matter!*>

ARISIA 1: You're right, it doesn't.

ARISIA 2: It's what you said. 'Will power sufficient.' And, to stop hurting...work to matter to other people.

ARISIA 3: It must work. I feel great right now.

CARIO 2: <...!!>

PANEL 3: Wider, favoring Arisia.

ARISIA 1: Cario, you matter. To me, and all the rest of us! You're a Green Lantern...and we take care of our own. We have to! It's hard work taking care of the Universe...and if we don't take care of each other, who will?

ARISIA 2: Kind of the way you were just taking care of me.

ARISIA 3: Maybe it's sort of a little picture of the way we take care of all those other people...all the billions that we can't imagine. But each other, we *can* imagine.

ARISIA 4: And once people care about each other...GLs or not...I'll bet you just about anything's possible.

ARISIA 5: I'll bet you.

PANEL 4: Favoring Arisia's open hand.

CARIO 1: <will make same bet>

CARIO 2: <what about you and jordanhal?>

PANEL 5: Wider: Arisia and Cario, looking at each other.

ARISIA 1: I'll keep working on it. What about you and the rest of the universe?

CARIO 1: <will keep fighting evil...and keep mind open.
?Maybe impossibility...gets more possible with
work?>

ARISIA 2: I'll bet you.

CARIO 2: <sounds good to me>

CARIO 3: <want sip of refreshment?>

PANEL 6: Closer — Arisia and Cario from behind. The only light is Arisia's Ring and Cario's light.

ARISIA 1: Oh, yeah, I'm dry. Where is it? I don't see it.

CARIO 1: <here>

ARISIA 2: — It's great. What is it? It tickles my nose.

CARIO 2: <irrational number with carbon dioxide and lime>

ARISIA 3: <chuckle>

PAGE TWELVE:

PANEL 1: Another angle, more dimly lit. Arisia has risen from the bench, and Cario's firefly light paces her.

ARISIA: We ought to go back in...they'll miss us.

CARIO: <affirmative...>

PANEL 2: A new angle, dimmer yet...and Arisia pausing to reach out once more to that glimmer of green fire.

CARIO 1: <.....>

CARIO 2: <.....?>

PANEL 3: As Arisia turns away from us, and Cario apparently lights on her fingertips. A delicate moment.

ARISIA: ...well...

PANEL 4: Wide angle, from behind. Arisia is silhouetted and we can see nothing clearly but the overwhelming starlit burning of the Oan skies.

CARIO: < >

PANEL 5: A slightly different angle. Darker, if possible. Nothing visible but Arisia's very dim silhouette, and the faint glows of Cario and her ring. They're in a clinch.

PANEL 6: A different angle from the last, as if a camera has been panning around, and now stops. Arisia's look is glad...in a rather subdued and mysterious way.

ARISIA 1: Oh, *wow*.

CARIO 1: <!!!!!!>

ARISIA 2: Yeah.

CARIO 2: <but gathering...?>

PAGE THIRTEEN:

PANEL 1: Arisia looks back toward the Great Hall, smiling.

ARISIA 1: Yeah, we'd better get back or they'll *really* miss us.

CARIO 1: <affirmative>

ARISIA 2: <Giggle.>

CARIO 2: <[chuckle]>

PANEL 2: On Arisia and Cario as they go back into the Great Hall. Silhouetted against the light of the open doorway and the big room full of Green Lanterns. Arisia has her left hand held casually behind her back in a gesture reminiscent of someone hiding a bouquet. But we can see Cario's little green light in her hand, and know it's not her Ring, which is on the hand that's swinging free.

PANEL 3: Closer, on the doorway. Framed in it, the many GLs inside, and the master Power Battery dominating everything. We catch a snatch of conversation from someone presently invisible:

ARISIA 1 (o.s.): Oh, hi there, Hal.

ARISIA 2 (o.s.): Oh, nothing.

ARISIA 3: (o.s.) <giggle>

CAPTION 1: They are two of 3600 Green Lanterns. They are honest. They are (mostly) without fear. And they love their jobs more than anything.

CAPTION 2: Almost more than anything.

CAPTION 3: Which is just as it should be.

<.> / "end"

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