

# The B.A.B.Y. Protocol

The **Broad-ABility Yield** Protocol (at this level of security, you're allowed to make puns) is that rarity: a *genuine* international conspiracy. One that every government in the world has either signed up for, or at least sworn to keep quiet about. And that's not an idle oath, either: even the threat of the failure to do at least the latter has resulted in at least six regime changes since 1978.

At the heart of the conspiracy is a alien spaceship discovered by a New Zealand Antarctic exploration team in 1969. In more dramatic universes this would be a mysterious (and quite possibly insanely dangerous) wonder made out of pure enigma and trepidation. Alas, in this world it was fairly clearly a low-end freight hauler of some kind that was operating far past its last scheduled maintenance check. An additional problem is that this was a tramp hauler from a civilization at least two, three quantum levels of scientific understanding past our own: Earth's researchers have spent the last fifty years trying to figure out the safest way to turn everything on. Gingerly. Very, very gingerly.

Anyway, back in 2005 some South Korean researchers figured out how to open one of the shipping crates, which turned out to have, well, kids' toys in them. At least, that's what the gestalt AI living in the packaging says that they are, and who are we semi-evolved monkeys to contradict a sentient marketing tool? ...Yes, the AI is not very polite at times, but it *does* let us open up its packaging and get to the toys inside without too much fuss.

The good news is that said toys permit their users access to all sorts of nifty abilities, like flight or super-speed or laser bolt cascades; the bad news is that the anti-violence safeguards placed on them are *fiendishly* good. If you've got a B.A.B.Y. item that allows you to punch through steel you'll only get to do so if there's nobody around to maybe take collateral damage from it. And about the only time you can really go **full** power is on another B.A.B.Y. item holder. Which is of course pointless, because every person who gets access to a B.A.B.Y. item is rigorously checked out first... unless, of course, they got a B.A.B.Y. item from the *second* shipping crate. That would be the crate whose contents got lost in transit, and whose own packaging gestalt AI is as indifferent to petty strictures of semi-evolved monkey morality as 'our' packaging gestalt AI is.

And now you know why superheroes typically only fight supervillains. And why both sides seem to have such insane luck at avoiding racking up tremendous amounts of casualties and/or property damage. And the baroque methods for using one's special talents to take over the world, and the habit everybody involved has of just eventually punching each other, and, heck, the primary colors on the costumes...

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