GREEN LANTERNS ANNUAL

"The Inferiority Complex"

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38 pages

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Lettering Draft
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1) BIG! Green Lanterns JESSICA CRUZ and SIMON BAZ zoom towards us through space, their emerald contrails ZIG-ZAGGING through an ASTEROID FIELD. The background is a beautiful NEBULA - the remnant of an ancient supernova.

TITLE
VAIKEA SYSTEM
SECTOR 4

RING - SIMON BAZ
Exiting superluminal space. Brace for deceleration.

SIMON BAZ
Whoa! Hard to believe this used to be the heart of an alien empire...
(link)
Nothing left but a mess of dead rock and dust!

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Hitting the brakes, J-Bird! Hang onto your lunch!

JESSICA CRUZ
The Vaikeans were one of the very first races to be inducted into the Corps, way back in the day...
(link)
Thankfully not all of them were planetside when their sun went kabooey!
1) Two shot. Simon turns to Jessica as they fly.

    SIMON BAZ
    Isn't that exactly the kinda of thing us Lanterns are supposed to prevent?

    JESSICA CRUZ
    It was so long ago, nobody really knows for sure what happened. The archives were
    destroyed eons ago...
    (link)
    Now the legend of the Lost Lantern is just that - less history than myth.

2) On Simon, frowning.

    SIMON BAZ
    Wait, are you telling me we just travelled halfway across the galaxy to
    commemorate someone who maybe never even existed?

3) On Jessica, with a sad smile.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Hey, myths have power too. The power to
    inspire.
    (link)
    And isn't that what the Corps is all about?

4) Wide. They're zooming away from us towards a barren, lifeless PLANET,

    JESSICA CRUZ
    One Lantern stood alone against the
    forces of chaos.
    (link)
    When all hope seemed lost, he gave his
    life to hold the line...
1) BIG! They SWOOP town towards the surface of the dead world. No atmosphere, so the sky is just stars and nebula. Dominating the barren landscape is a high-tech, city-sized COMPLEX shaped like a Green Lantern symbol. The inner ring is a vast amphitheater. A place of memorial for Vaikea's mythical Lost Lantern --

    JESSICA CRUZ
    The planet was laid waste, but his people survived. And every thousand years, the Vaikean diaspora commemorate his sacrifice...
    (link)
    Here at the Tomb of the Lost Lantern!

    COMPUTER VOICE
    Security scan detected. Responding.
    (link)
    Lanterns Simon Baz and Jessica Cruz, Sector 2814.
    (link)
    Authenticated. Entry authorized.

2) POV from inside a large airlock, the heavy doors open to the surface. Jessica and Simon swoop down toward us.

    SIMON BAZ
    Sounds like someone's been doing her homework!

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Are you kidding? I've been freaking out about this for like a month!

3) Standing inside the airlock now, Jessica turns to us with a slightly stressed grin, making light of her anxiety.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    What, you think I'm going to stand there and give a speech in front of thousands of the Corps' most well-respected Lanterns without preparing?
    (link)
    And stress eating?
    (link)
    And not sleeping?
    (link)
    Like, at all?
1) Two-shot. Simon's back to us, our POV facing Jessica, so our focus is on her look of sudden dismay. If there's room in the panel, we might see the airlock doors closing behind them.

   SIMON BAZ
   Wait, you have to give a speech?

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Simon... We both do!
   (link)
   Didn't you read Hal's message?!

2) On Simon, now looking slightly worried.

   SIMON BAZ
   It didn't seem urgent so I guess I... skimmed it?

3) Wide. The inner doors begin to open, revealing Simon (brushing it off) and Jessica (now even more stressed). SOMEONE is waiting for them, back to us in the foreground, yet to be properly revealed...

   SIMON BAZ
   Aah, it's fine. I'll wing it.
   (link)
   Ring, I'm gonna need a concise summary of Vaikean history, culture, social etiquette... and the legend of the Lost Lantern.

   RING - SIMON BAZ
   Compiling. Ready.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Wing it? You can't just--

   YLI'LAATUA
   (panel right)
   Green Lanterns of Sector 2814.

4) BIG. The inner doors have opened to reveal YLI'LAATUA, the Vaikean Master of Ceremonies. He's a roughly bipedal insectoid wearing a formal Green Lantern uniform. Like all Vaikeans, "he" is asexual, unemotional, cold and formal. He scowls at us disapprovingly. Like the rest of the Vaikean memorial complex, the corridor behind him is high-tech, clean and sterile.

LETTERING NOTE: Maybe a distinctive ragged balloon style for Vaikean speech.

   YLI'LAATUA
   I am Master of Ceremonies Yli'Laatua.
   (link)
   The timing of your arrival is appropriate.
   (link)
   Your attire is inappropriate.
   (link)
   Nevertheless, acceptable.
1) Slightly nonplussed, the humans step out to greet Yli'Laatua.

   SIMON BAZ
   Thanks, we--
   (link)
   ... Wait, what?

   YLI'LAATUA
   Non-traditional uniforms.
   (link)
   Personal customization nevertheless
   within permissible bounds of Green
   Lantern Corps dress code.
   (link)
   Tsk.

2) On Simon, frowning, wondering what this guy's problem is.

   SIMON BAZ
   Uh... Thanks, I guess?

3) Jessica tries to seize the initiative. Smiling, she reaches out a hand to
   shake; but the alien gently recoils as if she's unclean.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Yli'Laatua, it's a pleasure to meet you.
   And an honor to be invited to speak at
   the--

   YLI'LAATUA
   Physical contact is inappropriate.
   (link)
   Gratitude is inappropriate.
   (link)
   Protocol dictates speakers be designated
   according to numerical order by Sector.
   (link)
   Tsk.

4) Jessica is slightly peeved now, but hides it behind a forced smile. Hands
   on hips. A little too forcefully --

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Gookay. Well, y'know what?
   (link)
   Thanks anyway!

5) Yli'Laatua walks away from us down the corridor. In the foreground, Jess
   and Simon turn to each other and shrug. Like, what is this guy's problem?

   YLI'LAATUA
   You shall follow at an appropriate
distance.

   SIMON BAZ
   (small text)
   When in Rome...
1) Yli'Laatua pauses and turns to us at the open door to a luxury suite.

   YLI'LAATUA
   Quarters have been prepared appropriate
   for gender-dimorphic species.
   (link)
   Are you a breeding pair?

2) Simon looks flustered. Jessica grins, taking it in her stride.

   SIMON BAZ
   Are we a--?
   (link)
   No! No way...
   (link)
   We don't-- I mean, not that I wouldn't--
   I mean Jessica's totally--

   JESSICA CRUZ
   I think what Simon is trying to say is
   that we're just good friends. Colleagues?
   (link)
   Partners!
   (link; small text)
   ... But not like that.

3) Big. They enter the luxury suite's central lounge area. In the middle of
the room is a sunken circular sofa with a coffee table in the middle. A wide
bay window looks out of the barren moonscape.

   YLI'LAATUA
   You shall be summoned at the appropriate
time.
   (link)
   In the interim you may consume nutrients
and perform ablutions as appropriate to
your custom.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Sounds like a party!

4) On Jessica, reining it in.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Uh, I mean, that sounds... appropriate.
1) LATER. Exterior shot of the suite's wide bay window.

    SIMON BAZ
    (from within)
    Is it just me, or was I getting a totally weird vibe off that guy?
    (link)
    We do something to offend him, or...?

2) Jessica sits cross-legged on the sofa, poring over a green ring-construct book that lies open in her lap, like she's cramming for an exam. Stacks more construct-books piled up beside her, generated by her ring. She is now wearing a baggy cotton hoodie, sweat pants and socks. Comfort clothes. We might see steam coming from a bathroom in the background.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Don't take it personally, Simon.
    (link)
    Vaikean society's a hierarchical gerontocracy ordered around courtesy, compliance and conformity...

3) Simon steps out of the steaming bathroom, pulling on a T-shirt. (He still wears his GL ring).

    SIMON BAZ
    So you're saying they're, like, super judgmental.

4) Two-shot. Across from Jess, Simon slumps on the sofa.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Yep. No pressure.
    (link)
    Yli'Laatua actually lodged a formal objection to such a "new race" being included in the ceremony...

    SIMON BAZ
    New race? Hal's been in the Corps for years!

5) Jess looks up from her book with a worried grimace.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    No, I mean like he considers humanity to be a new race...
    (link)
    Because we've been sentient for a couple million years.
1) On Simon, dubious.

SIMON BAZ

... Huh.
(\link)
And there was me thinking we’d come a long way in a couple centuries.

2) Anxious and frustrated, Jess waves her hand and the books vanish.

JESSICA CRUZ
And now it’s like we have to... prove ourselves to them!

3) Simon leans forward, elbows resting on his knees, and gives us a reassuring, sympathetic smile.

SIMON BAZ
Your anxiety playing up?
(\link)
C’mon, Jess, you’ve faced tougher challenges than this and you aced every one.

4) Jess paces, anxious, getting worked up.

JESSICA CRUZ
Gimme a falling moon or a homicidal space tyrant and I’m good to go. I know what to do.
(\link)
But this? Public speaking? Ugh...

5) Simon conjures a construct of a V-8 ENGINE.

SIMON BAZ
Hey. It's just another problem. And solving problems is what we do.
(\link)
Just think of it as like... stripping an engine. Sure, it can seem complicated at first.
(\link)
Overwhelming, even...
1) Closer. The construct gently DISASSEMBLES and EXPANDS into a hovering cloud of individual components (sorry, I know this is going to be hell to draw!). Simon is reaching for one of them...

    SIMON BAZ
    But you just break it down, and deal with
    what's in front of you...

2) Small, close. Simon is holding out a single construct SPARK PLUG. He smiles.

    SIMON BAZ
    One piece at a time.

3) Jess has moved out to the window. She gazes out across the bleak, barren moonscape. Cold stars.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    What if I screw up? What if I freeze?
    (link)
    In front of Hal and John and-- and the entire Corps... 

4) Simon comes over to join her at the window.

    SIMON BAZ
    You'll be fine. Just remember, they're not here to judge you.
    (link)
    They're here to support you.

5) Pull up high and wide so we're looking down on the GL-ring shaped complex, and the empty amphitheater at its center...

    SIMON BAZ
    (from complex)
    And hey, if that doesn't work, just do
    what I do...
1) Full-width shot. Close angle on a CROWD of GREEN LANTERNS - each one of them from a different alien species. Among them, HAL JORDAN and JOHN STEWART. None are smiling.

   CAPTION
   "... Picture them naked!"

2) Jessica is gazing at a construct-screen showing the alien crowd. She looks worried. She's now wearing her GL uniform, standing in a "green room" waiting area beneath the amphitheater.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Okay, the whole naked thing is really not helping.

3) BIG! Simon (uniformed) stands on a dais in the middle of the amphitheater, addressing the crowd (who might be hidden in shadow, so you don't have to draw them all!). Think of it as a TED Talk for Green Lanterns. Simon looks relaxed, strong and confident.

   SIMON BAZ
   When I was a kid, my family used to make me laugh with stories of the mullah Nasruddin.
   (link)
   He was like this funny old wise man - who wasn't half as wise as he thought he was...
1) Widen on Simon as he summons a cartoon-like construct of the medieval Islamic mullah NASRUDIIN (turban, pointy beard). Nasruddin is kneeling, searching the ground in the little patch of light beneath an oil lamp on a pole.

SIMON BAZ
So one night, a passing neighbor sees
Nasruddin down on his hands and knees
under a street lamp, searching for
something.
(link)
"I lost my key," says Nasruddin.

2) Big, for dialogue. Angle on the construct, which now shows Nasruddin pointing off as he talks to a poor medieval Arab by the lamp pole. Nasruddin points. Simon looks up at them from below.

SIMON BAZ
"Where did you lose it?" asks the
neighbor. Nasruddin points off and says,
"Over there, by my house."
(link)
"Then why are you looking here, under the
street lamp?" asks the neighbor. And
Nasruddin replies --
(link)
"It's too dark over there!"

3) Big, for dialogue. On Simon, strong and confident.

SIMON BAZ
It's an old joke. But I never really
grasped the truth of it until I became a
Lantern.
(link)
Sure, it's our job to shine a light in
the darkness. That's how we help people.
But in order to do that, we need to shine
a light into our own darkness.
(link)
Illuminate ourselves. Conquer not only
our own fear, but our own folly...
(link)
And become our better selves.
1) Close on Jessica intently watching the screen.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Simons's totally nailing this...

2) Same angle. Jessica YELPS in fright as Yli'Laautua looms close behind her.

    YLI'LAATUA
    Terran cultural references are inappropriate.
    JESSICA CRUZ
    AAH--!

3) Jess and Yli'Laautu.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    It-- I think the idea is that it's a metaphor for a deeper, more universal --
    YLI'LAATUA
    Metaphor is inappropriate.

4) Jessica grimaces; puts a hand over her eyes, or pinches the bridge of her nose; a gesture of frustration, bordering on despair.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Of course it is...
    (link)
    (link; small text)
    There goes my painstakingly researched, lovingly prepared speech...

5) SIMON BAŽ descends into the green room - his dais lowering down through a circular door in the ceiling.

    SIMON BAŽ
    Well, I think that went pretty well!
    (link)
    Jess, you're up next. All set?
    JESSICA CRUZ
    Ginger peachy...

6) Close on Jess. RABBIT IN THE HEADLIGHTS.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Everything's gonna be fine.
1) BIG. Now Jess is standing on the dais on stage. Unlike Simon before, she looks stiff, awkward, terrified.

JESSICA CRUZ
So I had this whole thing prepared, but it was--
(link)
Never mind.
(link)
Fear. It's all about overcoming fear...
(link)
I've had to overcome a lot of fear myself. In fact I'm doing it right now!
Hah hah!
(link; small)
... No, don't talk about yourself.

2) Closer on Jess.

JESSICA CRUZ
Wait, let me back up.
(link)
Okay, so, will. Will overcomes fear. And--
The Vaikean word for will is kamrutaz--

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Kah'amrutaazh.

JESSICA CRUZ
Kamra taz.

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Kah'amrutaazh.

JESSICA CRUZ
That. Which the Lost Lantern must have had, like, in spades.

3) Closer on Jess.

JESSICA CRUZ
Now we translate... that word... as willpower - but in old Vaikean it could also mean willful, which can mean disobedient. Unruly. Which is bad.
(link)
I mean not bad bad, but it has... negative connotations. I don't mean the Lost Lantern was a--
(link)
Wait, this is coming out wrong. What I'm trying to say is, in Vaikean culture, maybe that would be--

4) Jessica's POV. Yli'Laatua stands up in front of Jessica and holds up a stern hand, ordering her to STOP. Like a traffic cop.

YLI'LAATUA
Inappropriate.
1) Full width. A drinks reception in the green room, now filled with alien Green Lanterns. Constructs hands out drinks and canapés. HAL JORDAN, JOHN STEWART and SIMON BAZ stand together, awkward. It's more like a funeral than a celebration.

   HAL JORDAN
   Well, that... could have been worse?

   JOHN STEWART
   How, exactly?

   SIMON BAZ
   Man, I haven't seen a crash-and-burn like that since the speedway tryouts.

   2) On Hal, concerned.

   HAL JORDAN
   Where is Jessica? Is she not joining us for the reception?

   3) On Simon.

   SIMON BAZ
   Probably gone back to the suite to freshen up. Just give her some space.
   (link)
   If I know Jess...

   4) BIG! Jessica FLIES toward us at supersonic speed across the surface of the barren moon, her ringed fist thrust toward us. Tears slipstreaming from her eyes, teeth gritted in anger - at herself. We might see from her emerald green contrail that she has flown from over the far horizon. She's halfway round the planet.

   CAPTION
   "... She probably just needs some alone time."

   JESSICA CRUZ
   Okay.
   (link)
   Okay.
   (link)
   That was bad.

   RING - JESSICA CRUZ
   Your adrenaline's spiking through the roof and your heart's going like a jackhammer.
   (link)
   You doing okay, kiddo?
1) Jessica SKIDS to a halt on the rugged plain, throwing up a plume of dust behind her. Nearby is a rocky outcrop sticking up out of the ground, about the size of a small house.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Fight or flight. Just feeling a little...
    (link)
    I'll go back the reception. Smile, mingle. Play nice. But first I just need a minute.

2) Jessica TURNS IN ANGER as a CONSTRUCT of Yli'Laatua suddenly APPEARS behind her! It's connected to a long thin construct-tentacle that reaches back over the far horizon. He's intruding into her private moment from half a world away.

    YLI'LAATUA
    Your absence has been noted.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    For the love of--!

3) On Jess, TENSE but holding it together - barely.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    It's fine. I'm fine.
    (link)
    But if you don't mind, I just flew half way around the planet to get a moment to myself.

4) Close two-shot, Yli'Laatua construct on panel left. Jess finally loses her cool and BARKS ANGRILY in his face.

    YLI'LAATUA
    Solitude is inapp--

    JESSICA CRUZ
    I KNOW!
    (link)
    Just give me a minute will you!

5) On the Yli'Laatua construct as it begins to FIZZLE OUT, disappearing --

    YLI'LAATUA
    Truly the age of heroes is long past.
    (link)
    We shall never see their like again.
    (link)
    Tsk.
1) Wide. Alone now, Jess SCREAMS up at the sky in pure, primal rage! Her ring GLOWS with power --

    JESSICA CRUZ
    (jagged)
    GAAAAAAAAH-!

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Attagirl. Let it out.

2) BIG! Jessica PUNCHES the big rock with all her might - it EXPLODES!

    FX
    WHAMM

3) Jess GRINS, hands on hips. Happy and relaxed now.

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Better?
    JESSICA CRUZ
    Hell yeah.

4) Over the shoulder shot. Jess looks down into the smoking crater - all that remains of the now-destroyed rocky outcrop. The impact has exposed something hidden beneath the rock and dust of the planet’s surface. The floor of the crater is smooth, flat, and EMERALD GREEN. (The exposed surface of a planet-sized ring-construct, which was coated with a layer of rock and dust).

    LETTERING NOTE: Let's give the Lost Lantern's ring captions a unique style, so readers don't mistake them for Jessica's. Thanks!

    RING - LOST LANTERN
    Disorderly conduct detected.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    What the hell? Under the surface - something green... (link)
    It almost looks like...
1) BIG! Huge SEGMENTED CONSTRUCT TENTACLES rise out of the crater, advancing menacingly around Jess. She rises off the ground, ring glowing, ready to fight back if she has to - but she isn't going to throw the first punch...

RING - LOST LANTERN
Deploying appropriate countermeasures.

JESSICA CRUZ
Whoa, take it easy! Just a misunderstanding. I wasn't attacking anyone - just blowing off a little steam.
(link)
We're all Lanterns here, right? At least I assume you're a Lantern...

2) They tentacles GRAB Jessica!

RING - LOST LANTERN
Analysis: Negative correlation with inducted Corps species.
(link)
Conclusion: Impostor.

JESSICA CRUZ
Wait, let's talk about this!
(link)
Get off me-

3) Snarling, Jess thrusts out her ringed fist - which suddenly manifests a construct FORCE-BUBBLE around herself! The sphere throws off the tentacles, which recoil, readying to strike again --

JESSICA CRUZ
I said hands off!

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Will power at 100%.

4) The tentacles wrap themselves around the sphere, trapping Jess inside --

RING - LOST LANTERN
Resistance is inappropriate.
(link)
Enhancing countermeasures.

JESSICA CRUZ
(from bubble)
Hey-

5) INSIDE the bubble, Jess strains with all her might, ring glowing bright. Teeth gritted with exertion, focusing her willpower. But the tentacles are too strong --

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Willpower at 96%

RING - LOST LANTERN
Willpower at 255%.
JESSICA CRUZ
That's-- not even-- math--!
1) BIG! Beneath Jess, the ground OPENS UP into a huge square shaft the size of a football field! Dizzying perspective. The vertical shaft descends all the way down to the planet’s core - and is entirely a green-walled Lantern-construct. The tentacles have emerged from this shaft, and now completely enclose Jess's protective bubble. Rock and dust spill off the edge into the widening maw --

RING - LOST LANTERN

Suppress.
(link)
Restrain.
(link)
Detain.

2) Jess inside her force bubble, which is now SQUEEZING in close around her, crushed inwards. Ring GLOWING --

JESSICA CRUZ
Simon, do you read me?
(link)
Simon? Hal? John-?

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
No good, J-Bird! Whatever's generating this construct, it's blocking our comms!
1) Closer on her. Instead of resting, she suddenly relaxes, holding her hands up at head-level – not so much a gesture of surrender as a gesture of peace. Her forces bubble has DISAPPEARED, leaving her at the mercy of the tentacles.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    This is getting me nowhere...

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    You’ve dropped your armor! Don’t quit on me now, kiddo --
    (link)
    You can fight this thing!

2) The tentacles wrap around Jessica. But she looks calm, no longer resisting. This is her choice.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    What's the point? The more we fight, the stronger it gets...

3) BIG! Now completely encased in tentacles, Jess is pulled down into the bottomless shaft, sinking away from us...

    JESSICA CRUZ
    (within tentacles)
    ... So maybe we should stop fighting and
    listen.
1) Back at the reception, which is now very crowded. Simon Baz is reaching for a tray of weird-looking alien canapés, held by an alien waiter construct. Hal Jordan and John Stewart are nearby chatting with weird aliens - not part of Simon's conversation, but close enough to overhear and turn to him in the following panels.

SIMON BAZ
These things smell amazing. Are they halal?...

WAITER CONSTRUCT
The dish consists of spiced vegetable matter containing no intoxicants or euphorics.

SIMON BAZ
Then I'm good! Hit me up.

2) Closer on Simon, about to eat a canapé when he gets an alert message from his ring.

RING - SIMON BAZ
Alert. Lantern Cruz no longer registers in this sector.

SIMON BAZ
What? Jess left the planet?

RING - SIMON BAZ
Negative. Zero telemetry of Lantern Cruz departing this system.

3) Hal and John have stepped over to join to Simon, who is now frowning, mildly concerned...

HAL JORDAN
She left... without leaving?

JOHN STEWART
That doesn't make sense.

SIMON BAZ
Ring, gimme Jessica's last known coordinates...

4) Wide. Simon, Hal and John fly AWAY from us. Our POV is looking out at them through a wide force-field window. YLI-LAATUA stands with his back to us on panel left, watching them go. The idea is to suggest that he might have something to do with Jessica's disappearance, though he hasn't...

SIMON BAZ
She could be in trouble!

5) Wide. Simon, Hal and John arrive at the site of Jessica's disappearance. The shaft is now covered by a huge square of opaque green construct, the size of a football field (the dirt covering the construct-planet fell into the shaft, which then closed up again).
HAL JORDAN
A Lantern construct! Is it hers...?

SIMON BAZ
Jess! Hey Jessica! You in there?
1) Wide. Simon stands on the construct surface, puzzled. Mid foreground, Hal
crouches in the foreground, gently touching his ringed fist to the green
surface. John Stewart frowns, all business, taking charge.

SIMON BAZ
Nothing. Maybe it’s some kind of Vaikean artifact?

HAL JORDAN
My ring can’t seem to interface with it.
Strange...

JOHN STEWART
Yli'Laatua, we have a situation here.
Could use a little local know-how.
(link)
Yli'Laatua, do you copy...?

2) WIDE. The familiar construct TENTACLES rise menacingly from the green
surface. Hal and Simon step back in surprise --

SIMON BAZ
Whoa-!

HAL JORDAN
Easy now...

RING - LOST LANTERN
Identify.

3) John Stewart, defiant, taking charge --

JOHN STEWART
John Stewart, Corps Commander. Identify
yourself, Lantern!
(link)
Why are you jamming us? Where is Jessica
Cruz?

4) Wide. The tentacles encircle the Lanterns – not attacking yet, but closing in...

RING - LOST LANTERN
Impostors detected.

HAL JORDAN
Impostors? We were formally invited to
Vaikea!

5) John holds out his ringed fist, defiant --

JOHN STEWART
Stand down – or we take you down!
1) Close on the tentacle tip, poised like a snake about to strike --

RING - LOST LANTERN
There is no Vaikea.
(link)
Duplicity detected.
(link)
Resistance constitutes infraction.

2) The tentacles attack! The Lanterns defend themselves with ring constructs --

RING - LOST LANTERN
Suppress.
(link)
Restrain.
(link)
Detain.

3) BIG! The three Lanterns stand back-to-back, fists out, teeth gritted with effort. Their constructs are being CRUSHED by the tentacles! They're putting EVERYTHING they've got into it, refusing to back down. In response the tentacles have grown bigger, more powerful. Channel some Jack Kirby here! Titanic forces!

SIMON BAZ
Fight back!

HAL JORDAN
No surrender!

JOHN STEWART
Give 'em all you got!

RING - LOST LANTERN
Enhancing countermeasures.
(link)
Willpower at 1,487%.
1) Small, very close on Jessica. Her eyes groggily fluttering awake. She's lying with her cheek against on a flat green floor, green light all around...

JESSICA CRUZ
(ragged)
Hnnghh...
(link)
Where...?

2) Jessica crouches, unsteadily getting to her feet. We widen a little to see she's in a hexagonal cell made of PURE CONSTRUCT ENERGY. The room is maybe 10 feet across. There's a construct bed-slab, toilet, sink. Everything is made of clean, hard lines, devoid of warmth or comfort. Spartan and dehumanizing. Ahead of her here, one wall of the cell is made of flat, straight bars.

JESSICA CRUZ
Oh. (link)
Yeah.

3) BIG! Pull waaaay back to reveal that Jessica's cell is just a tiny speck - the bars just a suggestion of lines - in a HUGE cell-block that stretches away for miles. The cell block hangs like a skyscraper-sized stalactite from the ceiling of a vast chamber, part of the "planet's" interior. And we can see other such stalactite blocks stretching away into the distance in orderly rows. EVERYTHING is made of green construct. The entire planet.

JESSICA CRUZ
(from stalactite cell)
Now I remember.
1) She turns back into her cell, thoughtful now, pacing...

JESSICA CRUZ
The entire planet is a Lantern construct!
But for some reason it doesn’t recognize us...
(link)
So what happened to the real Vaikea?
RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Like you said - the records were lost eons ago.
JESSICA CRUZ
History replaced by myth...
(link)
The legend of the Lost Lantern - sacrificing himself against the forces of chaos...
(link)
"Disorderly elements"...

2) Jess scowls, but play it for comedy.

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Where you going with this, J-Bird?
JESSICA CRUZ
Just a hunch. But you know the old saying
- when trapped in the heart of an ancient
green prison planet, try anything!
RING - JESSICA CRUZ
That’s a saying?
JESSICA CRUZ
Shut up. It is now.

3) Jess has a sudden idea.

JESSICA CRUZ
Hey! You remember when I updated the
operating system and it bricked my phone?
RING - JESSICA CRUZ
And this is relevant... how?

4) FLASHBACK. Civilian Jess stands at the support desk of a Queen Industries store - like an Apple store but with the Q logo. She’s ANGRILY pointing at a dead phone in her hand. The Q-store support desk "helper" guy just shrugs, like hey, not my problem, lady.

CAPTION
"The phone was an old piece of junk,
couldn’t handle the new system. But hell
if I was gonna get punked into buying a
new one.
CAPTION
"Like Queen Industries needs the money, right...?"
1) FLASHBACK. Jess at home, hunched over her laptop in the dark, her phone plugged into it. Poring over a YouTube video with fierce concentration.

    CAPTION
    "So I had to go through this whole thing
to downgrade the OS back to the old
version it would actually run..."

2) Big, for dialogue. Back to the cell. Jess’s body language looks urgent, impatient --

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Reminiscing about everyday life.
    Perfectly understandable stress reaction.
    Carry on.
    (link)
    We can get back to the immediate crisis
    whenever you feel ready--

    JESSICA CRUZ
    You're not listening!
    (link)
    Look, for this construct to be mistaken
    for Vaikea, it must have been here for
    millions of years...
    (link)
    And you're a brand new ring!
    (link)
    Y'know. Relatively speaking.

3) Jess holds her ringed hand up close to her face, speaking directly to her ring. She looks pleased with herself now.

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Wait, you're not seriously suggesting--

    JESSICA CRUZ
    You haven't been able to interface with
    whoever's ring is generating this place
    because you're running a newer operating
    system.
    (link)
    So let's downgrade you!

4) Jess stands looking cocky, pleased with herself, hands on hips.

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    I hate to break this to you, Jessica, but
    I'm an advanced neural interface designed
    by hyper-intelligent inter-dimensional
    beings to generate willpower-based hard-
    light constructs in defense of all
    sentient life...
    (link)
    ...Not a phone!

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Yeah, but can you run Candy Crush?
RING - JESSICA CRUZ
This is the worst plan ever.
A page of identical full-width slot-shaped panels.

1) Hal, John and Simon are TRAPPED within the maximum security area of the prison planet. Each is held immobile in a cruciform pose by MASSIVE, solid-looking constructs. Each of their rings is entombed in a bulky containment box, preventing them from creating their own constructs. They literally cannot move a muscle, only speak.

   HAL JORDAN
   There's nothing more dangerous than a 
   rogue Lantern!
   (link)
   We have to find a way to fight back!

   JOHN STEWART
   I've never backed down from a fight and
   I'm not about to start now.
   (link)
   It's a contest of wills. We have to work
   together. On three...

2) SAME ANGLE. They all SNARL with exertion of sheer will - but it's useless.

   JOHN STEWART
   One. Two...
   (link)
   Three!

3) SAME ANGLE. Identical panel.

4) SAME ANGLE. Hal and John look peeved. Simon looks wry.

   SIMON BAZ
   So, uh...
   (link)
   Anybody wanna play I Spy?
1) Close on Jessica’s ring, as she holds it up close to examine it.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Is the **downgrade** working? Are you feeling, I dunno...
    (link)
    ... **Dumber**?

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    My mind is going... I can feel it...
    (link)
    Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do...

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Very funny.

2) Wide. Jess holds out her ringed fist and her cell bars OPEN!

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Downgrade complete. Let’s see if the system recognizes us now.
    (link)
    Accessing...

    RING - LOST LANTERN
    Security scan detected. Responding.
    (link)
    (link)
    Authentication: Provisional. Query: Synchronize database? Y/N

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Now we’re talking! At least it understands I’m a Lantern now - and that’s enough to get me out of the cell.
    (link)
    Now let’s go find some answers!

3) Jessica FLIES toward us through the vast subterranean complex. Her ring conjures up a 3D MAP of the entire planet, made up of nested spheres. A RED DOT at the map’s core.

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    Accessing schematic.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    My God... Billions of stasis cells... and every one holding a sleeping Vaikan!
    (link)
    They can’t all be bad guys... can they?

    RING - JESSICA CRUZ
    If they are, you might want to think twice about freeing them.
    (link)
    There. The complex is being generated by a ring at the **core**.
4) Jess flies down away from us into the depths of the planet. This vast interior space has no obvious floor; it's designed for beings with flight.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   I'm trying to imagine how much willpower it must take to maintain a place this size for *eons*...

   RING - JESSICA CRUZ
   Willpower... or *willfulness*.

5) Close on Jess, tough and determined.

   JESSICA CRUZ
   *Kah'amrutaazh*. 
1) Jess swoops towards the planet's core. The construct energy radiates out from this point like the heart of a 3D web. There, a YOUNG VAIKEAN GREEN LANTERN is curled up in a tight fetal ball; head tucked down, arms crossed across his chest. His ring GLOWS brightly. But we won't be able to get a proper look at him on this page, as Jess isn't able to get close.  

    JESSICA CRUZ  
    There! That's gotta be him...  
    (link)  
    The Lost Lantern!

2) As Jess tentatively approaches, CONSTRUCT TENTACLES rise up like cobras ready to strike, tips glowing. The Lost Lantern remains comatose. Jess holds her hands out, placatory, de-escalating...  

    CONSTRUCT  
    Identify.  
    JESSICA CRUZ  
    Easy, I'm a fellow Lantern. Can we talk?  
    (link)  
    I figured maybe you could use a little backup. I mean you clearly have a lot on your hands...

3) The tentacles look away from Jess, looking up and around at the complex around them. Jess echoes the gesture, spreading her arms to say "look at all this."

    CONSTRUCT  
    Disorderly elements.  
    JESSICA CRUZ  
    Exactly! Forces of chaos, am I right?  
    (link)  
    People just winging it, running with scissors, coloring outside the lines. Crazy!

4) Jess tries to move towards the Lost Lantern, but the tentacles swoop down aggressively, blocking her path, threatening --  

    JESSICA CRUZ  
    Now if I can just--  
    CONSTRUCT  
    Restricted.  
    JESSICA CRUZ  
    It's okay, I just want to talk to--  
    CONSTRUCT  
    Restricted.

5) On Jess, quietly peeved.

    JESSICA CRUZ  
    Okay, okay! No problem. I wouldn't want to be... inappropriate.
1) Close on the Lost Lantern, still comatose, curled up in a tight ball. Our first proper look at him.

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
The Lost Lantern seems to be in some form of self-imposed stasis.
(link)
His consciousness is connected to a loop of holographic memory.

2) Jessica stands her ground, facing the tentacles that block her path in the foreground.

JESSICA CRUZ
Trapped in his own past. Reliving his own sacrifice...
(link)
Hook me in.

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Jess, if you go in there, I may not be able to get you out again.
(link)
Your willpower is no match for his. You could end up trapped in there forever.

JESSICA CRUZ
Maybe this isn't about willpower. Maybe it's about something else.

3) On Jess, fearful but determined. She's about to walk into the fire.

JESSICA CRUZ
There are billions of lives at stake here.
(link)
Weighed against that, what's one more?

4) CLOSE, slot. Jess goes down on one knee and touches her ringed fist to the green surface. Lines of brighter green energy radiate out from her ring, spiderwebbing out across the floor in angular patterns, like a circuit diagram, making a connection...

JESSICA CRUZ
(off panel)
If I don't at least try...
(link)
... What right do I have to call myself a Green Lantern?

5) Close slot on Jessica's wide EYE, lines of light racing out as she accesses the virtual memory...

RING - JESSICA CRUZ
Accessing holographic memory.
1) BIG! Vaikea's ancient past (we are inside the virtual hologram memory now). A MOB of ANGRY VAIKEA PROTESTERS raise fists and placards in the foreground. Above them floats a high-tech Vaikean PALACE.

   LOST LANTERN
   (from palace)
   I-- I am unworthy of this honor...

2) A great hall in the palace. The LOST LANTERN kneels before the AUTARCHS - a council of stern, robed Vaikeans. The planet's ultra-strict rulers.

   AUTARCH
   Yes.
   (link)
   And yet you are the first.
   (link)
   The first of our people to wield such a weapon. The first to be granted such power. And so we ask --
   (link)
   Do you answer to order, or chaos?

   LOST LANTERN
   I obey the law, of course.

3) Close on a stern Autarch.

   AUTARCH
   We Autarchs are the law.
   (link)
   Would this Green Lantern Corps usurp our rightful and hereditary power?

4) The LL raises his head to face them --

   LOST LANTERN
   Of course not. The Corps would never force its values upon a culture--

   AUTARCH
   (off right, or panel below)
   Then you answer to us, as must all faithful Vaikeans.
   (link)
   The horde clamors for democracy and self-expression. These are not our ways.

5) The Autarch sneers.

   AUTARCH
   Such chaotic emotions are inappropriate. They must be subsumed by will.
   (link)
   You will make the rabble submit to the rule of order - or they will be incarcerated.
1) The LL stands before the Autarchs, torn between desire to defy his masters and respect for their authority --

AUTARCH
The faithful have already left Vaikea to spread our truth among the stars. In time they may return. (link)
Only the faithless remain. These disorderly elements must be removed if society is to prosper.

LOST LANTERN
I can't imprison the entire population--!

2) Close on the Autarch.

AUTARCH
Is this will, or willfulness? (link)
You will obey our law - or you will be stripped of your status. Become a non-person. An outcast. (link)
The universe would know our people's shame. For you...
(link)
You would be our shame.

3) LL bows.

LOST LANTERN
I obey.

4) BIG. Outside, the LL swoops over the angry protesters, SCOOPING them up into a construct-bubble!

RING - LOST LANTERN
Suppress. (link)
Restrain.

5) Close on a construct cell-block. Angry Vaikeans frozen in stasis behind a wall of green energy.

PRisoner
Help us--!

RING - LOST LANTERN
Detain.
1) The LL STANDS at the heart of his construct prison planet - he looks strong and determined, ringed fist held aloft. God-like creator of this world. A GREEN CONSTRUCT HOLOGRAM is JESSICA CRUZ is walking towards him - she has projected herself into this virtual memory.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Oh, you poor kid.
    (link)
    You really are lost, aren't you...

    LOST LANTERN
    Are-- Are you here to judge me?

2) On Jess, wry and a little sad for him.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    We don't judge people. We help them.
    That's what being a Lantern is all about.
    (link)
    Supposed to be, anyway...
    (link)
    But all this? Not okay.

3) The LL is looking uncertain and guilty now, lowering his fist. Jessica shrugs.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Look, I get it now. The Autarchs put you in an impossible position. You could be loyal to your rulers or loyal to the values of the Corps - but not both.
    (link)
    So you cut yourself off. Hid away. Locked yourself up in a cage of self-loathing...
    (link)
    And your people along with it.

4) BIG. Flashback. Space. The planet Vaikea is DESTROYED by a SHOCKWAVE of superheated plasma. The debris bounces off the indestructible, moon-sized GREEN CONSTRUCT BUBBLE that was in orbit around it.

    CAPTION
    "So when Vaikea's sun went nova, there was no Lantern here to save it. The planet was destroyed..."

    CAPTION
    "... and the debris coalesced around this inferiority complex you'd constructed for yourself."
1) The LL sinks to his knees, guilt-stricken.

    LOST LANTERN
    I obeyed the law... and betrayed the
    Corps...
    (link)
    No-one... must ever know... my shame...

2) Jess puts a consoling hand on LL's shoulder.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    Too late. But hey, we all screw up
    sometimes, right?
    (link)
    Listen, what you've done here is...
    unbelievable. The willpower it must have
    taken to keep this place in stasis for
    eons...

3) Close on Jess, smiling, kind.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    But it's time to let go of that burden.
    The Autarchs are history.
    (link)
    And trust me, you've got backup. Like you
    wouldn't believe.

4) Jess and the LL, lines of light racing out of them as they EXIT the
    virtual memory.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    C'mon. Let's free these people and go
    home.
1) A GL Sector House in deep space...

YLI'LAATUA
(from station)
You stand accused of betraying the values
of the Green Lantern Corps.
(link)
How do you plead?

2) Lost Lantern stands in the courtroom dock, head bowed, ashamed. He wears huge high-tech manacles. Vaikean civilian garb.

LOST LANTERN
Guilty.

3) Go wide to reveal the scene: a high-tech courtroom deep in the station. YLI- LAATUA, for the prosecution, speaks to SIMON BAZ on a witness stand.

YLI'LAATUA
The prosecution calls Lantern Simon Baz
of Sector 2814.
(link)
The Lost Lantern attacked you. This is correct.

SIMON BAZ
Well, as I understand it, the construct tentacles were semi-autonomous.
(link)
Those old-time rings were crazy powerful, and they thought we attacked them first, so...
1) Yli'Laatua.

   YLI'LAATUA
   They escalated the conflict.

2) Simon shrugs.

   SIMON BAZ
   So did we! Which only made things worse.
   (link)
   We fought. Jess talked.
   (link)
   And guess what? Talking worked out better.

3) Yli'Laatua scowls.

   YLI'LAATUA
   Explain. Are you a witness for the prosecution, or the defense?

4) Simon, mild and calm.

   SIMON BAZ
   I'm not really interested in picking a side. I just call it like I see it.
   (link)
   The Lost Lantern screwed up, for sure. But he thought he was doing the right thing...  
   (link)
   And he's spent more time paying for it than I can even imagine.

5) Yli'Laatua, peeved.

   YLI'LAATUA
   Tsk.
1) Later. ON JOHN STEWART, grim, as he delivers the verdict of the tribunal. He's flanked by Hal Jordan and Yli'Laatu.

   JOHN STEWART
   Lost Lantern. It is the judgment of this tribunal that you should be stripped of your power ring and status as a Green Lantern...
   (link)
   ... and incarcerated in a construct facility for a period not less than one million years.

2) Lost Lantern sags in despair.

   LOST LANTERN
   I-- I humbly accept the judgment of the tribunal.

3) Big, for dialogue. On John Stewart - the hint of a smile just edging into his grim facade.

   JOHN STEWART
   I wasn't finished.
   (link)
   Given the extenuating circumstances...
   (link)
   Namely, that you were obeying a direct order from your rulers, and saved your entire race from the Vaikian supernova...
   (link)
   This sentence will be applied retroactively. As time served.

4) Close, small. Lost lantern looks up at us, stunned --

   LOST LANTERN
   (small text)
   ... What?
1) Hal Jordan smiles.

HAL JORDAN
You locked yourself in a prison of your own making for longer than we can even imagine.
(link)
It's time for you to learn - along with the rest of your people - what it means to be free.

2) The Lost Lantern looks stunned as the manacles OPEN and fall off his wrists.

LOST LANTERN
I-- I don't understand...
(link)
I'm free to go?

FX
K-CHAK

3) Wide on the room. John gestures to Jessica and Simon as they step forward, smiling.

JOHN STEWART
You will serve parole under the watch of Green Lanterns Jessica Cruz and Simon Baz.
(link)
They will observe you - and guide you - as you adjust to a universe that has changed beyond all recognition since your time.

4) Hal puts a brotherly arm around the LL's shoulders and leads him from the dock. LL looks shellshocked, almost in a daze. He can't believe it.

LOST LANTERN
I-- I am unworthy--

HAL JORDAN
We all make mistakes, kid. I've been there. Believe me.
(link)
And we all deserve a second chance.
1) Wide. Simon and Jess walk along a high-tech corridor in the sector house, with Lost Lantern between them. They're friendly and cheerful, he's forlorn.

    LOST LANTERN
    I have brought such shame upon my people...

    JESSICA CRUZ
    You saved your people! They don't remember a thing - and now they finally have the freedom they were fighting for.

    LOST LANTERN
    Forgiveness is inappropriate --

    SIMON BAZ
    Dude, enough of that.

2) On Jessica, smiling as she opens a door...

    JESSICA CRUZ
    You judge yourself too harshly. Been there. Bought the T-shirt.
    (link)
    But we're gonna introduce you to this ancient Earth custom designed to overcome feelings of self-consciousness and inadequacy...

3) BIG! They lead LL into a station NIGHTCLUB! It's full of Vaikian civilians - who turn to us and CHEER! They're happy, exuberant, excited, partying - a wild mish-mash of different clothing styles. The complete opposite of the uptight Autarchs. A group of Vaikian friends LAUGH and sing on stage. Jess and Simon grin; the LL looks stunned.

    JESSICA CRUZ
    It's called karaoke.
    (link)
    You're gonna love it!

END