

[Previously on Beyond TPT: Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are hot on the trail of Moriarty, who has stolen the evidence that was their only proof of whodunnit. Holmes is running out of cocaine and has sent Dr Watson down to the docks to try and score. Will Watson be in time to stop Holmes crashing out before the mystery is solved? Now read on...]

Beyond The Porcelain Throne

Series 2 /4

Superhero's Hotel

Welcome to Superhero's. You have been transported here at the speed of Imagination so there is no need for a tedious voyage in-between. This is the Starbase Computer acting as your guide, and it is here that you will meet your crew, find out more about the ship, and learn about some of your superpowers.

You can imagine the bit about us all getting out of some Interstellar Transport thingy or ship at the hotel if you want to; I'll wait till you're done...

...The hotel is a pretty funky Fibonacci-based design that looks fractal, and has some cool electric blues here and there, and silvery bits, and solar panels, and this color: R9:G20:B121, you know what I mean? Okay, so it certainly looks worthy of its clientele.

About the clientele: the guests are your crew's chiefs of staff. They are all superheroes, or student superheroes, but they are not all human superheroes. They are here as diplomats for their crew members though, so at least you can expect them to be polite, right? They're all students of peaceful communication and interaction. My job is to inform you about these various different species, and why it's good that we're allies. Your job is to act as a diplomat for humanity. We don't want any Presidents, we don't want any Religious leaders, we don't want any Celebrities, we want you, okay? If anybody is ever going to speak for humanity it's best if it were the kind of people whose brains work, yes? Right then.

There are six main intelligent species [not including me] in this quadrant and humans are one. You'll need to know a bit about the other five, so this chapter is your introduction.

If you ever watched Star Trek you'll have already met the crew from section 5 on the port side; the Vulcans. They control the ships' knowledge database, so it's very important to be allies with them, right? If you want to know the facts, or figure out the most logical thing to do, ask a Vulcan. One advantage is that it's quite hard to offend one, and if you do have a logical scientific explanation for this like agent Scully, you'll win any argument without getting flamed. They have the highest IQs in the system and they're very honest. Being very strict about the truth is a beneficial trait when you're entrusted with archives of knowledge, so appreciate the Vulcans for what they're good at –computation and calculation and remembering an awful lot of things.

People think Vulcans have no sense of humor, but they do appreciate puns and other word play, and if they seem to be taking life too seriously or get bored you can always entertain them with crosswords and stuff.

Vulcans, as you can imagine, work very well when employed as crew in sections of a ship requiring their particular skills...they make great science officers, for example, but you wouldn't want too many of them on the bridge. A good bridge [section 6] crew should include representatives of all species, but below decks, each to their speciality.

Your crew members on the starboard side of the ship in section 4 are the Orlians, who you may not have heard of because they keep themselves to themselves on the whole, and get on with creating stuff. They produce euphoric symphonies, fantastic architecture, fine ales and spirits and just about the best technology you ever saw. More importantly, they come up with all the most beneficial ideas. If someone can produce an engine, the Orlians can make it smaller, less-polluting, cheaper and faster. They're just like that. It's awesome. They have a broad sense of humor, but otherwise can be a bit lacking in social graces and can seem aloof or weird, or rather eccentric. Orlians love doing jigsaws and playing with optical illusions and stuff.

All the other aliens speak Orlian as well as their native tongue. You don't have to learn it though, there are very good translators. They're the Darragdomians.

The Darragdomians are your crew members in section 3, below the bridge and to the rear, and they're responsible for translating everything so that everybody can understand it. They are also expert decoders and interpreters of information, and a skilled Darragdomian can tell what sort of thing you're thinking about by your facial expression. Obviously they are great diplomats, not the least because they have the quadrant's record for resolving conflicts peacefully. They're pretty good at making maps, too, but their greatest skill is at being parents. Darragdomian kids never understood the 'teenage rebellion' thing because the older generation really was too cool to rebel against. Darragdomians love telling jokes, and are particularly fond of Monty Python, which they consider one of humanity's finest achievements. They love music and movies too, and they read a lot.

In sections 1 and 2 are the two other species whose representatives we'll meet here. They are called the Gnomes and the Cakdons.

The Gnomes are a curious species. Their biology derives pleasure from fixing things, for a start. They are very skilled at carrying out with great care all the fiddly little tasks, like cleaning the hull or recycling or fixing holes, and they take their work very seriously. To sustain balance within this lifestyle, their society has half of every week off having parties and mucking about in the interests of health and happiness. They love practical jokes, slapstick humor and cartoons; if

you slipped on a banana skin you would have the Gnomes in stitches laughing. Their greatest oddity is that they steal things [and stealing is legal in their society –which is why gnome insurance is ridiculously expensive and why you should not leave things lying around unused for too long]. They do have ethics, see, and will never steal anything that is already being put to good use unless there are shortages, in which case they make priorities. They run a planetwide 'LETS' system and don't use currency, which confuses the hell out of other species and their own tax office. Their homeworld is called Gong, and they run an Interstellar Radio station called 'Radio Gnome Invisible'"* [see footnote].

The Cakdons also have many parties, but Cakdons have Parties for Reasons. The Reason may be that your Uncle has just won the 300metre sprint, your younger sister just lost her virginity, or it's your birthday, whatever it is the Cakdons will celebrate it with gusto. They love 'funny-because-its-outrageous' humor, so flashing your tits at the president or sticking a firework up your bum and lighting it would seriously amuse 99% of Cakdons [and quite a lot of Gnomes].

Cakdons are brave, strong and athletic. They are honorable warriors with a defense-only manifesto. They will explore inner space via magic mushrooms just as happily as outer space with starships. A very sensual people, socially they can seem immature, valuing loud music, dancing, sports, sexuality and joy, yet they approach their spirituality also with passion because they are compulsive explorers of the unknown. They provide almost all of the transportation power in this quadrant, and their social structure is an occupation-based Clan system. All clans are equal, and all clans do certain things better than others. Still, if you ever need to move anything through space at speed ergonomically, get an Orlan pilot and ship, put a Darragdomian on mapping & translation, Cakdons on safety & security detail, have Gnomes working in engineering and get a Vulcan to calculate the jump to light speed.

...You can now perhaps see the advantage of having experts in every field doing what they do best for the benefit of all. Imagine running a ship where all these peoples are constantly on call for your every need... You find yourself lost or unable to understand something? –Ask the Darragdomians! Problems calculating stuff in an exam? Call the Vulcans in. Want to write a story that rocks, or build a machine that detects earthquakes? Get the Orlans. Attacked by a lunatic? The Cakdons will get you out of there in no time, and if the worst comes to the worst, they'll defend you with their lives. The Gnomes will work away tirelessly in the background, proud to fix even the slightest damage, stealing resources from anywhere they're not used, the ultimate recyclers.

Well, the great thing is that this is exactly what you can do. Because your 'crew' comes in all these different 'types'; able to do all these different jobs, and your crew members are of course

your brain cells. The art of getting a good crew is to make sure you have a good mix of these types in the right places at the right times. So you have to be able to communicate with all of them and keep them in line, fit, and having a good time. They all have different needs, and that's important.

There's an old Orlian saying that goes, "If the crew doesn't get what it needs, the ship won't do what you want." [The 'brain/mind' version of this became one of the 'Golden Rules' of Orlian neurohacking during the late twentieth century, but I won't bore you with history].

Bearing all this in mind, do come through and meet the ambassadors. I'll give you helpful hints and any advice you might need in brackets as we're going along...

This meeting takes place in the bar, which you can imagine however you want to. Each ambassador will introduce her or himself, among free drinks and plentiful munchies.

The first ambassador is large but not fat, female, and dressed largely in leather and silk, with an ample display of breast and buttock as well as muscle. [Cakdons are very proud of their physical sexuality and fitness and flaunt both as a sign of good health.]

"Greetings, noble persons," She says [translated by a Darragdomian], "My name is Glenda Dickbender." [Cakdons use surnames implying great sexual or hunting prowess as a family tradition, so please don't laugh].

"I am here representing the Cakdon people and hope I will have an opportunity to give you all one." [This is a compliment; implying you are all respected as equals].

"I will see you at the party later, in the honor of the new guests from Earth we have Cakdon's finest heavy metal band, 'Motorbum', performing tonight, and free intoxicants of your choice". [Seems like a nice girl].

The second ambassador is small, slim, male and dressed in a kind of Jedi robe. He bows, smiling, and says, "Greetings. I am the representative of Gong, my name is Gazket Cakeliner –Please call me Gaz. I would like you all to know that your valuables are my greatest concern." [This is a compliment, affirming his respect.]

"I hope to see you at the party later, where I will be artfully serving drinks, and we have for your entertainment in honor of our new guests, the wonderful cartoons of Tom and Jerry!"

The third ambassador is a Vulcan male who obviously looks like Spock. He's called Stock. He waffles on for a while about the fascinating odds against this gathering happening, and how interesting we all are in an overly complicated way but we get the gist. He closes with a statement about interstellar peace and harmony, and an invitation to join the Vulcans for meditation in the gardens throughout the party.

The fourth ambassador is from Orlia, she is tall, slim and wearing the most amazing outfit that almost looks like it's made from light. It is only outshadowed by her face, because she is one of the most beautiful people you have ever seen. You could imagine her being mistaken for an angel or a faerie by anyone tripping. Her voice is equally pleasant and she says, "Greetings. I am Anashar Grianfanacht. We are really excited to meet you" [she giggles]. "We're doing some dancing and a light show at the party so it would be very cool if you could be there. We also have our latest ship here if you'd care to have a look at that, and we'll be running the jamming stage at the party."

The last ambassador is a Darragdomian. He wears plain dark clothes with a badge portraying a white rabbit. He introduces himself as "Conan the Librarian". [Darragdomians are strict pacifists, and their often warlike names are a form of traditional humor. You'll find mild-mannered ballet dancers called Machiavelli Hitler, and surgeons named Ferocity Crippen. They believe that if someone's name makes you laugh, that person will go far in life, because in their society this is true. They do recognise that it is only true for Darragdomians, however.]

Kindly, Conan gives you a map of the hotel, with a guide to the various areas of 'party'. It looks a bit like a festival; there is an "Orlian tent" and a "Vulcan tent" and so on, there are various stages for musicians and places to get drinks and food, and obviously everything is all free.

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Now if you want to go to any of these places or to any of the events we were told about, you know you only have to say so. Get used to saying so as opposed to asking. You're the Captain, and this is an interactive story, so if you have anywhere particular in mind, let me know and I'll throw a chapter in for you. If not, we'll go wherever we drift, if you catch my drift, or you can take time out and let your own imagination do the walking.

Conan asks a lot about you, mainly what sort of things you like and don't like. [Don't be offended by their questions; Darragdomians are very friendly people. They are not being nosey so that they can gossip about you or spy on you; they are genuinely interested in you and in finding mutual interests.]

Mr Stock asks a lot of questions too, but they're more like, 'how many are in your party?' and 'what is the average age?' [The Vulcans amass quantitative events as relevant knowledge, so again please do not take offense.]

Glenda Dickbender isn't asking any questions. She's in the corner massaging her breasts and looks like she's psyching up for a dance. [Being naturally athletic, Cakdons are brilliant dancers.]

Party on, dude! I'll catch up with you in the next chapter, where we're going to find out a bit more about the Ambassadors. If you get lost in the meantime, pick up your Darragdomian map, click on 'lost?' and follow the white rabbit.

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*Footnote: Radio Gnome Invisible is thus called because its broadcasts are invisible to those without multi-parallel frequency receivers. Don't get one. It carries far too much information for a human to keep up with. You don't need to know the Interstellar news, or hear its latest in grunge metal, really you don't. And don't tell SETI, okay? If they find out their counterparts are running the Search for Terrestrial Intelligence they could get really embarrassed.

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