

[Previously on Beyond TPT: The obsessed Dr Frankenstein has built a monster from spare body parts. Having trouble installing the memory, he calls tech support. They tell him to hold the line until the weather is more beneficial. Now read on...]

Beyond The Porcelain Throne

Chapter 11

Peace on Earth, Goodwill to all Species.

The party is kind of like a cross between a rock festival and a sci fi convention, and there are plenty of things to get distracted by. [As I said, just let me know if you'd like to be distracted by them]. The hotel gardens themselves are full of interesting little passageways and statues, fountains and mazes, lovely smelly flowers, sparkly crystal lights, totally cool ruins, extras out of Lord of the Rings, weird moths, and little tiny baby frogs about the size of your fingernail, sitting

on lily pads in one of the pools. There is a heated swimming pool in the grounds, but it's currently full of Cakdons, at least those that are not still dancing or at it in the bushes.

The Ambassadors have retired to a relatively quiet spot beside a decorative pool beneath willows. It's a beautiful warm clear night; [the Kirkwood Gap is famous for its mild climate]. Anyway, it's good to sit down, because there's been lots of dancing and bands on and fireworks and swimming and people running about giggling playing hide and seek on acid and stuff... It's hard work, shore leave, isn't it?

A captain's work is never done, and currently the ambassadors want to talk to you. I think you'll find them rather interesting, even though they all have requests to make, because these dudes are your chiefs of staff, so they can give you all the information you need about the various parts of your ship. This is quite an opportunity; it's not very often the brain is allowed to give you a piece of your mind.

The Gnome ambassador [Gaz] is first in the queue. I can translate for you, so there's no need to find a Darragdomian.

Gaz is very pleased to meet you. I quote: "May I just say what a pleasure it is to know that there is a Captain at the helm? It's a real honor to meet you and have an opportunity to air my views!" He sits beside you in a confiding manner. [Don't worry; Gnomes never steal from active starship Captains. They know you put your resources to good use.]*[see footnote]

"You see Sir, [insert 'Ma'am' if you prefer] it's a big complicated thing to take care of, a starship –not that we aren't the best, of course! But a good team is always a better team when it is adequately provided for and not swamped with overwork. I'm sure you want to get the best out of us all, so I have some suggestions that will maintain efficiency. First, my people need regular, quality sleep. We like a good day's exploring as much as anyone –except perhaps the Cakdons and a few of their friends- but we do need that kip to stay on form. And decent food, if that could be maintained as well...oh, and a small amount of entertainment, Sir. My people –and the Cakdons, actually- would like a bit more dancing or swimming or maybe some martial art or even yoga would help. They're movers you see, and that sort of activity keeps them on form. And that's not just physical entertainment, see; we need fun, or we get depressed and tired and can't keep up. If that could be arranged, I can promise you higher immunity, faster healing and a marked increase in the productivity of your thinking, Sir. And a longer runtime –that means you'll live longer. I'm not complaining mind you because we're happy to work for you under any

circumstances, of course! But I'm saying that we could get a lot more out of the ship if the crew were even better, and for my lot that's all we need in order to improve."

[You can get a transcript of all the Ambassadors' speeches right here anytime, so don't worry about remembering all the details, because the Cakdons are waiting and they're hoping to be finished by the time the bar re-opens in ten minutes.]

Glenda is covered in cheesecake. "Food fight with the Gnomes," she explains, sitting down and handing you a champagne bottle full of mayonnaise, which you thoughtfully put down. "Now, here's where it's at, right? –The Gnomes work in Section one, we work in Section two, so we have to work together, yeh? Trying to run security without sufficient repair teams is a joke, and remember without us lot, you can't move. You don't want to end up like a boring old fart with no sex appeal and your ship in the scrapyard, right? Yuck! No way! –So you keep us fit to work, we'll keep you fit to think

Second thing –Cakdons are dodgy when we get bored. When the Gnomes get bored, they go Floyd, they just sit around and get too wrecked and do sweet fuck all, let the ship fall apart around them, but us Cakdons, we tend to do a Margaret if we get bored. We lose our sense of humor and start taking over other sections of ship –and so do some of the other species. We don't want that going on, or you'll turn into a Margaret yourself eventually. Cakdons are damned handy if you ever get attacked, but keep us in our place when things are cool and always remind us of our honor. Watch cartoons for the Gnomes. Watch movies portraying amazing feats of courage and beneficial deeds, for us. When we forget our honor and self-respect, Cakdons get a bit stupid, and we're a very suggestible people. If you show us stuff to get outraged about, and get us drunk, we are likely to get aggressive. So lay off on the anxiety hormones laced with alcohol or you'll have a possible mutiny on your hands and your crew will make you behave like an asshole. Some crews can handle alcohol better than others, but be aware that some sections can have problems with it.

"Any section of your crew can mutiny if they lose respect for you and start working for the Toilet Lords. Since it takes a lot of extra work to get your ship back once it's been mutinied, that's not going to happen, okay? You're the Captain, and it's up to you to keep the respect of the crew and to command them. You can achieve that best by being there, getting to know your crew, being fair about what we need and what you expect, and by giving everybody enough consistent practice at doing their jobs. "Know Thyself" –you've heard that?

"We look after your body as well as your brain, us and the Gnomes. We keep the engines burning that keep you alive and well, able to think, speak and move. We need freedom from guilt, worry and other similar destructive chemicals in order for those engines to work properly. Every time you get angry or depressed, you're poisoning us with radiation and filthy exhaust fumes, so of course we're going to cause a stir, give you ulcers and headaches to let you know how dangerous that is, right? We need relaxation, meditation and pleasure and we also need excitement, desire and motivation. If you treat us right, if you work with us, know that we will defend you against all and any harm, and help you to explore the unknown with great talent and expediency. Oh, and just one other thing...don't fill the fuel tanks with gluten and sugar, it twats the engines."

[Now there's a girl who knows what she wants in life. The bar has reopened however so you have no chance to reply.]

The Darragdomian ambassador is much more laid back. "They all get a bit hyper on shore leave, don't they?" he smiles, sitting down beside you. "They've all been waiting a long time to talk to you, you see, it will all calm down again when we're back on board. But I think what might help for my part is if I tell you a few things about the ship –and not just our section...

"The 'Sections' the crew work in are your brain networks. Every human brain has the same sections, but in most people's ships, some sections may have been used much more than others. So there may be very few Vulcans in their crew and too many Cakdons, or any combination. This is important, first of all, so that you know how to get your crew balanced, but secondly when you communicate with other people. It is always the case in ships that have no captain on the bridge, and that have been mutinied by one or more sections. You can only get the Captain back in command if you can get to speak to him or her and explain what to do, and on many such ships the Captain has been long imprisoned, and some section chief is deluded into thinking they're in charge, and so on, so the Captain never gets to hear you.

Only the ships with the Captain in charge are able to give you good, wholesome interaction. Mutinied ships are always going to have a point of view restricted to the species still on board. For example, a ship with mainly Cakdons in charge will only ever be interested in sex, sport, popular music and beer.

So how do you know, when you talk to anyone else, that you're speaking to a genuine Captain? The giveaway is, no section chief can control a whole ship, so if you can spot that one or more

sections aren't functional, you'll know you're talking to a mutinied ship. If someone can't handle emotion, fantasy or poetry, you'll know that section three is down. If someone can't be creative, section four is down, and if they have very low intellect, section 5 is down. You can also tell by studying the attitude...ships that have been taken over by deranged Cakdons start fights, those controlled by depressed Gnomes encourage apathy and so on. Ships under the control of Vulcans can only use intellect. They can't use empathy or emotion at all; they have no sense of humor that we are aware of, they go a bit pompous and Margaret and might not take you seriously unless you've got two doctorates and a PhD. They have high self-confidence but it isn't always justified, so they can be quite arrogant. They think the Gnomes and Cakdons are stupid and they tend to ignore or suppress them, which exacerbates the problem.

"The Orlians are pretty similar, but they're control freaks. If they take over a ship, it spends its whole time trying to control nature and prevent anything from changing. Obviously it's a prime target for the Toilet Lords' error-correcting devices. All of its wonderful tool-making abilities are then subverted to building things for the Toilet Lords. What a senseless waste of a good ship!

Also, there are combinations, and these are the most common type of ships you meet. There are ships run by only Orlians and Vulcans, we call these "Front Loaders" [there's only crew at the front] and ships run by only Cakdons and Gnomes, called "Rear Loaders" [there's only crew at the back]. Front loaders are like unemployed accountants with control issues. They often get jobs as schoolteachers or in politics. Rear loaders don't get jobs, they gamble, screw and get pissed, occasionally beating people up if there's a surfeit of Cakdons, or staying in mental institutions if it's Gnomes. Anyway of course that leaves us; the Darragdomians, and funnily enough it's us you need to keep the biggest eye on, because everybody else on the ship relies on us for communication about what's going on. If you and we can work together, we can do wonderful things, but if we go awry we can be a huge problem.

"The Darragdomians are in charge of Sector three. That means, everything you do, every experience you have, it's our job to translate it into languages that each species on board understand, because the weirdest thing about your ship is that each species uses a different language, right? I know that sounds odd, but it serves a purpose –information can't be decoded by the wrong department, even if it is accidentally sent to the wrong department, so that's good, yes? No false orders can go out that way. Unfortunately if we have the wrong decoding algorithms, false orders go out anyway. And this is our; the Darragdomians', major concern. Once we are at full strength Sir, no mutinied ship can ever be as strong, or as fast as yours is, but on the way to that status we are vulnerable.

"We know that many ships are operating under false orders from the Toilet Empire, because

they've been programmed with the wrong software. It's badly affecting a lot of ships' memories and their sensors, so I'd like an opportunity to explain this to you, Sir; and with that in mind may I invite you to the Darragdomian tent after you have seen the other ambassadors?"

[I don't know about you, but I think we should go along.]

First, the Orlian ambassador would like a word.

"It's my duty to report the ship's output status here among other things Sir," she begins, "So I have to report that lately, most of the things my people write, and most of their ideas, are not as uplifting as they might be. If we aren't given good input we tend to get obsessive about problems, and my people are sometimes writing songs or poems about problems. Sir, they should be writing songs about solutions, inspiring the rest of the crew, inventing and creating stuff that benefits all. -Could you adjust your input a little to inspire my people towards more optimism? I can assure you of a more beneficial creative output! Thankyou for your time."

The Vulcan ambassador is just as brief.

"I don't have many problems in my section so I'll just ask you to consider being a little more inquiring and discriminating about what exactly is important to your wellbeing and what is not," he says. "We don't have quite enough information, and I'm not sure we're getting the correct information from Section three, to be honest, so the Darragdomians may be at fault. But we cannot take part with optimal efficiency in your strategy to improve yourself without clear information; -that would be illogical, Captain."

[It would be class humor, by the way, to hand him the mayonnaise-filled champagne bottle as we leave. That would definitely be a beneficial diplomatic move. The Vulcan may be mildly confused, but the rest of the crew will become your immediate friends.] Wield that humor, baby! That's another Rush event to add to your growing list...what, you didn't know you'd been interacting? Well, you listened to all those people and you thought about what they said and you didn't interrupt. They were all satisfied that they had your attention, that you respected their views, so everybody won.

BTPT 2, 5

Written by NHA

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If you look back, they're not really asking for very much...Remember to eat and sleep properly, have a good laugh, find out more, and give them some good input. That's not a great hassle, and the more you pay them heed, the less they'll hassle you. Listening can be interacting too, when you're thinking about what you're hearing or reading. Even if you're not, the Darragdomians will still hear it –which reminds me –we have a date in the next chapter, at their tent.

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*Footnote: Except for odd socks, single cufflinks or earrings, pairs of shorts, biros, flash memory sticks, shirt buttons, small blims, lighters, and packets of rizlas. Gnomes are responsible for the apparent disappearance without a trace of all such items.