

BTPT 2, 1

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22.08.2009 21:33 - Обновлено 22.08.2009 21:34

There are no translations available.

[Previously in Beyond TBT: Lara Croft is trying to decipher the ancient code that will give her access to other, more complicated parts of the game. Meanwhile, apparently 4-dimensional alligators hang mysteriously in mid air, because there's a bug in the program. Now read on...]

Beyond The Porcelain Throne

Series 2 /1

In Space, No-one Can Hear You Fart.

Good morning Captain.

Okay, we're about to boldly go where only about 5.5% of humanity is currently capable of going. That's cool though, it means it's a lot less crowded.

Also, there aren't any Evil Empire Toilets right out in space, [which is why they're so keen to keep you planetbound.] In the space we're going to, it's safe. The scariest thing you are likely to find in the toilet on your own starship is the Captain's log.

The nastiest things outside the ship that you have to be on the alert for, though, are scoutships of the Evil Toilet Empire. They can't touch you as long as you keep your shields up, so you need to know how to do that. The moment you drop your shields, they will try to take over your ship. That means your mind, so bugger that, right?

Let's get our reminder of these baddies clearer: what they want you to do is put attention, money, time and effort into their toilet. Into all the shitty, despicable goings on inside it. But remember, this is not a conspiracy –the biggest Lords of the Evil Toilet Empire are often the biggest addicts themselves; the most insecure, the least independent. [That's why they're deluded into thinking that vast quantities of money will solve everything, right?] For them, the toilet is the real world; it is all that exists, and anyone who disagrees with them is either mad or criminal. The aim for this mission is to fly away from that Toilet for a little while to give ourselves space to think about a few things, but here's the snag -the Evil Toilet Lords know that if you start taking breaks away from the Toilet Empire, you might start taking longer and longer breaks. You might start thinking of ideas like the free exchange of information or energy self-sufficiency and inventing stuff that could destroy the Evil Empire! That's the last thing they want to happen, because the Toilet Empire wants interactive, self sufficient intelligences about as much as it wants a hole in its finances. So the scouts will be out and about, trying to trick you. They will try to make you feel insecure, they will try to make you anxious enough to drop your shields.

The 'scouts' are all the things that might remind you of the Toilet Empire itself; some physical things such as newspapers, TV, certain people, some physiological things like sweet sticky junk, bad mixtures of hormones or Too Much Tequila*[see footnote], and some psychological things such as depressing thoughts, sentimental song lyrics or conversation.

Depressing thoughts are immediately detectable by the Dark Toilet Lords so they encourage them by many means. There are four kinds:

1. Thoughts of Toilets Past are all the memories you might have of crap that's happened to you –or other people- in the past.

2. Thoughts of Toilets Present are about crap that's happening in your life, or other people's, right now.

3. Thoughts of Future Toilets are worries about what might happen in the future that may be crap.

In order to keep your shields up, you have to avoid all three kinds of toilet thoughts. That's why you've brought along input that will remind you of good, happy, inspiring things, see? That boosts your shields [and incidentally, your immune system].

4. Temptations. There are specific Evil lords for these, such as Darth Junkfood, Darth Soap Opera, Darth Misunderstanding, Darth Advertising and Darth Muzak. They are the Empire's Heavy Artillery, but they are not as invasive as a multitude of scouts, so remember that. The Dark Toilet Lords all raise sentiment, some by getting you to consume physical shite and others sensory shite. They have different goals. The mission of Darth Misunderstanding, for example, is to cause offense, rows, busted relationships and war.

If you find yourself getting snagged by any of these kinds of thoughts, firmly turn towards your beneficial input and ignore the shit. The easiest way to keep your shields up firmly against all this is to energetically pursue stuff that makes you think about beneficial things. We have to test how easily your ship is able to do that; that's why this is the test flight:

Here is its mission: For the duration of time that you have chosen, you will only allow beneficial thoughts on this ship.

And you need to know one final thing in order to understand why we're doing this...Why you must avoid sentiment.

Sentiment is what the Lords of the Evil Toilet Empire have replaced emotion with, and can use to grab your attention. Sentiments are the feelings produced by an excess of anxiety hormones that are not beneficial to your bodies, minds, close relationships, or humankind in general. Sentiments are

things such as jealousy, greed, guilt, self-doubt, hatred, aggression, outrage, possessiveness, timidity, anxiety and fear. But they're also things like homesickness and yearning and dependance and hopelessness and attachment.

Attachment is what the Evil Toilet Empire has replaced bonding with. Attached relationships [to people, places or things] cause more anxiety hormones, whereas bonded relationships bring about both learning and the relaxation response. There is no fear of loss in a bonding. There is constant fear of loss in attachment, causing possessiveness and jealousy. And despite all that, despite the 'high' of unbridled sentiment, attached relationships always fail to last.

Bonded persons release 'feel good' hormones into their bloodstream whenever the other person does. So your loved one having a good time makes your own brain feel groovy. That's part of what bonding's about; you both feel pleasure when one of you does. Yum yum. Add that to no fear of loss, a mutual respect and awareness of goals, and you have the recipe for a blissful relationship. True emotion is a lot stronger than sentiment. It gets you naturally high via cannabinoids, opiates and other goodies manufactured on site, right in the ship. People are attracted to using drugs because their unconscious mind knows what it should really feel like. Drugs take it a step closer but trust me, your own brain can get you higher than pharmaceuticals without any unwanted side effects [such as some asshole cutting it with toilet cleaner].

The ability to achieve this natural high is another thing the Evil Toilet Lords have stolen from you and now sell you back –at a price. Bonding, Empathy and Emotion are free...only when we can't achieve them are we forced into accepting the poor substitutes of attachment, sympathy and sentiment. Well I'm saying, "Just say no" to low quality experience.

The Evil Empire will do anything to make you shed a sentimental tear, feel a shiver of outrage...that's how it pulls you around and makes you do things. You will buy from, copy, or vote for- the persons who make you feel the most sentiment. You'll think it's genuine emotion, but it isn't, and the easiest way to tell is that it doesn't last without constant reminders. A constant stream of new material objects, a constant stream of relationships, a constant stream of new soppy songs, a constant stream of new bad news. –What can they get you upset about next...make you pay attention to next...?

Sentiments act like tiny insects that have a mildly poisonous bite. You hardly notice the bite itself because it's quite small and it's numbing, but slowly the poison accumulates and makes you unable to think clearly. Your immune system falls and so does your energy. It's a constant fight to find the energy to be the person you know you really are. Fatigue drags you toward the Toilet. Moods swing up and down like a beginner's trousers in a cider and curry sauce drinking competition. You constantly seem to be having rows with people and feeling guilty or worrying about something or other. All sentiments release corticosteroids that poison and confuse your body and mind and cause free radical damage. Genuine emotions repair that damage.

Disgust and alarm are not sentiments. They are real emotions, put there in the interests of your survival. You need to know what to move away from, as well as towards [which is covered by desire, interest, inspiration and excitement. They're all real emotions too.] At first, you may have trouble telling one from the other, but you'll soon get the hang of it –after all, you got the hang of learning to walk, didn't you? It's just as natural.

About now some Captains, especially the more pro-active ones, might be thinking, "Hang on a minute...is this damned computer just going to start claiming that, hey, Peace Man, all we have to do to put things right in the world is only ever think about love and peace and pretend all the horror isn't really going on? That's a bit naive, right?"

Thankfully I'm not that stupid, so the answer's "No, that's not what I'm suggesting." That would, in fact, be a Floyd thing to do, would it not? –Ignore the problem and hope it goes away? -I'm programmed not to do that, so no worries.

I'm suggesting increasing your potential for entelechy, and this type of "Ignore All Horrible Things" exercise is just one of many methods of learning how to take control of the ship. By venturing into a space containing only beneficial things for a while, you increase your physical and mental health and boost your immune system. That's where you'll get your energy from;

your inspiration to do things truly beneficial to yourself and the planet, and your ability to see clearly exactly what strategies are likely to be most beneficial. If these test flights go well, we're going to Superhero Hotel [just close to Kirkwood Gap Motorway Services] to do loads more interesting shit. Because one thing all fleet captains are is five star diplomats and peacemakers. They can take a bunch of Floyds and inspire them with a reason for living. They can take a bunch of Margarets and chill them out and make them laugh. They can take a Floyd or a Margaret scenario and skilfully turn it into a Rush outcome. With every move they are benefitting themselves, the species, and the planet. Those are pretty cool skills to pick up, and essential for being effective in interaction. They are skills that give you a great deal of natural power, and with that comes the responsibility of being fully in control of yourself and constantly aware of the beneficial path. That's what being a superhero's all about, right? This mission is for a recharge of your superpowers.

If you find this mission hard, and keep noticing yourself slipping into depressing thoughts or worrying about stuff, you should run it a few times until you start to find it easier, and remember two important things: The first important thing is, you've learned something about yourself already. The more you learn about yourself, the more you understand about life in general. As within, so without. [Except for your dinner. That should generally stay within.]

The second important thing you've learned is that you noticed it. You noticed when your mind was led astray. That's all it takes. Those who never notice, are the people who will never be able to stand on their own ship's bridge. Only those who notice what's wrong can reform it. Only when we notice what's missing can we reclaim it. Only when you've recognised your current limitations can you extend them. So you passed the 'Know Thyself' rule, [which is one of the Golden Rules of Orlian neurohacking, but I won't bore you with history].

Remember the best way to stop anxiety, is to do stuff that genuinely makes you feel good. You're changing your own body chemistry on purpose, and it's benefitting your body and mind. You're also spending time being nice to somebody –you- and the nicer you are to smart people the nicer they are to you.

If you ever meditated, it might strike you that this mission is kind of half a meditation, in that it shuts up some intrusive thoughts in the brain. The difference is that you're letting all the good stuff through, so it's an exercise in filtering, just like when you're talking to someone you're interested in at a party, you can filter out all the other conversations around you and just hear the one you're concentrating on. But now you're learning to do it with thoughts instead of words. That's smarmy. Your concentration, for now, should increase whenever anything beneficial is afoot, and decrease when the Toilet Lords approach it. Pay more attention to good input. You

can practise little ten-minute missions doing this anytime you please, and remember, the sooner you clock up a respectful amount of flying time, the sooner you will move on to more exciting missions! We will keep up these journeys into Toilet-free space, but we'll also be venturing into the greater Unknown and watching some other ambassadors at work.

The skill you are achieving in this space is the art of being able to concentrate really well on whatever really matters at any given time. This is not only a life-saving skill, it improves your powers of observation, your aesthetic pleasure, your attention span, your life span and your learning speed. It's an essential part of being a super-diplomat. You get all this free for doing the mission, as well as a fresh, comfortable feeling after doing it [we don't have money in the 24th century, but you do get paid for these missions by nature, in that the gained skills are a natural result of doing the missions and are yours to keep permanently for as long as you want them and use them.]

You can also learn how to determine your future input –how to tell what is likely to be beneficial for you and what isn't.

Finally, here are some things you can consider during your mission:

What's the funniest thing you have ever seen?

Can you remember the last event you got really excited about and / or really enjoyed?

Can you remember what color your bathroom floor is without going to look?

Can you remember what color your best friend's bathroom floor is?

Who is your favorite hero? [no sexism here, I am programmed not to use gender-differentiatory terms such as 'actress' or 'heroine'] –We are all people, and we can be heroes, just for one day, what you say? :)

...If you're still waiting around for me to tell you to start the mission, you've forgotten something. I'm only the Starbase computer. I can't give the word. If you want to swear in or do something quasi-ritualistic in order to feel better about this, put your hand on the computer and say "I do". Right, you're in. Whenever you want to do your mission –take her out. I'll send you another chapter to read during the second flight.

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*Footnote: Too Much Tequila is a cocktail from the planet Cakdon and is constructed as follows: Get a pint glass and fill a third with tequila. Insert a shot of grenadine, a shot of coconut milk, a slice of lemon and a cup of apple juice. Fill it up with tequila and drink it [but only under extreme circumstances].