

The Thorgon Empire

Not a manual for Human-Thorgon first encounters (or any others if it comes to that)

Credits:

@mlv started the whole thing off a long time ago on a network lost in the mists of time

@schmidt_fu (inadvertently?) provided the inspiration to start anew

More:

[https://github.com/bazbt3/
the_thorgon_empire](https://github.com/bazbt3/the_thorgon_empire)

CHAPTER ONE

Theatre

"What is our gestation period?" she asked, primarily to break the awkward silence as they trudged northwards. Though countless couples must have endured the same over the millennia it meant nothing to these two.

"300 days, plus or minus."

Puzzled: "Plus or...?"

"It is not an exact science."

"You have become sloppy, you have been subjugating those, those humans for too long!"

"Humans."

Incredulous: "Correcting my pronunciation at a time like this is..."

"So why the question?"

"We must visit Glarf Forest. It is The Time. Now. Afterwards."

"Oh!"

"It is our duty to do this other thing first, the Tourism Section Under-Deputy-Vice-Sub-Snarglist commanded it."

"Yes, of course."

"Show me the directions again."

"Yes, of course."

She read it out loud, primarily to deflect her thoughts from the increasing discomfort and thoughts of the upcoming pain:

1. Head to the Glarf Forest Gate, but do not pass through unless you absolutely must,

2. Turn left to the Argle Theatre. If the waiting line is excessively long use your passes to gain entrance at the rear,

3. Pass through the galley and up to the viewing gallery. Observe the disgusting mass of Humans spread before you.

The path wound on and up, the silence lengthened until: "Well, there's the water, and I can smell... ugh!"

Sniffing: "We are not paid enough for this."

Turning the document over: "Oh, a map."



"Sophisticated for our Cartographic cadre, that."

"Remember our purpose here!"

"As if I could forget, I mean, look at you!"

Grimacing: "What?!"

"Radiant, my dearest."

Wearily: "Enough husband, let us see your beloved hamans."

"Hu..."

"DON'T!"

"We're here."

And so they were. The sweeping expanse of the theatre's curves, with an illuminated cupola on the towers at each end, met them out of the mists. The sight, at least according to the guidebooks, was always worth the trek.

The line was, of course, long. It was always long, the Guardians of the Experience ensured it. Time to relax, time to prepare, time to ready for The Time.

"No. We follow the directions."

And so they did, all the while trying to project a confidence they didn't feel, a 'we're-meant-to-be-here.' Walking around the northernmost tower to the rear of the theatre, passes shown to the security scanners, and through the door.

Oh the noise, the hubbub, the heat, the indescribable smell! An intermingling of

Thorgon foods and something utterly repulsive. An inadvertent glance over at the 'Human' board indicated something unfamiliar to the pair. Obviously unfamiliar:

'Thorgon Green (don't forget the stronger additives)'

Shuddering, they passed through the galley and through the door.

"Stairs?! What kind of idiot expects me to climb stairs so close to..." Yet they climbed. Another door and then a welcoming cool breeze after the torment of the galley.

And there they were, the other side of a mesh containment screen. Humans. Fewer than the couple had imagined from the publicity materials, but more than the male had previously seen in one place.

Uncomfortably: "By the Snarglist, why were we chosen for..."

"I don't know, I really don't."

"You must have done something bad in a previous life."

"You must not speak so, it is forbidden."

She winced: "It is time, we must go, we must go now."

"Why were we asked to deviate from The Plan?"

"Now!"

“But what about our visit here just before the b...”

“NOW!”

The assembled viewers looked around, but all were there for one reason; the smells from below were an accelerant of sorts. The Humans, though an inconvenience, had a use after all.

The walk to the exit, this time leaving via the front of the building, and then to the forest passed uneventfully. No-one asked for passes, the purpose of the couple’s visit obvious to even an untrained eye.

Far-enough in to avoid the daylight, close-enough that the mother-to-be inflicted little lasting damage to the arm of the father-to-be, they stopped. Settling into a pool, as custom dictated, seemed natural; this was after all a lifetime in preparation.

No, dear reader, now is not the time to detail the manner of birth of a Thorgon child. Suffice it to say the bandages on a male’s arm are testament to the pain shared by both male and female of the species during an entirely painkiller-free delivery. The Thorgons use pain suppressants at other times, but by necessity childbirth isn't one. The Creed is quite explicit there.

The baby looked up at his new parents, an oddly inquiring expression on his shiny face.

"What shall we call him?"

"I like 'Snarf' or 'Snarg', but we've had this conversation tens of times before, enough that I'm uncertain if my input is appreciated."

"You can't have those two, father has never forgiven you for the..."

"And your Great-Uncle Snarg doesn't think I'm..."

The baby defaecated and, as males do, the father sniffed the air: "Oh great Snarglist, what a smell!"

"Oh, wipe it up and get over it, it's not going to be the worst..."

Through tears: "Snurf it is then."

"Yes, I knew you'd come around eventually."

"Welcome to Thorgon, Ag-AckAck Snurf, and may your observance of The Creed set your path through a life of greatness."

Just-in-case anyone was within earshot, this last formal welcome. The trees here had ears you know. Literally. Carved into each trunk, a reminder, if ever one was needed, of the always-present need to follow customs.

The baby looked up again, smiled, and promptly vomited.

"Get another cloth..."

CHAPTER TWO

The Desk Ornament

Snurf hefted the bar. Triangular in section, smoothed-off corners of course, intentionally made difficult to displace, and with a mass and colour suggesting tungsten. A potentially useful weapon.

Etched on one face, that seen by visitors to his office: “Under-Deputy-Vice-Sub-Snarglist”.

The side almost-always aligned away from visitors, his title: “Under-Deputy-Vice-Sub-Snarglist” and, in a shallow, almost imperceptibly-tiny font height below, his full name: “Ag-AckAck Snurf.” Only a few had ever seen this side of the ornament and of the official, and those either owed Snurf their lives or paid

for past transgressions of The Creed with theirs. Personality injected into any aspect of officialdom was energetically proscribed, against The Creed.

On the base though, something entirely different; something no other Under-Deputy-Vice-Sub-Snarglist would ever, had ever dared to consider. Something that, if uncovered by anyone but Snurf himself, would bring instant demotion without a committee stage:

“President Snurf”.

His mind automatically tracked down the list to Item 792 of The Thorgon Creed: “Independent thought is contagious. You must stop immediately.”

Usually, the admonition was enough to stop young Thorgons in their tracks. And whilst so it was in Snurf’s youth, this was in every sense a different age.

He snorted at the memories, then caught himself. No, it would not do to be seen like this; the time was not yet right.

CHAPTER THREE

The Unfortunate Incident With The Toilet

“Aw no, not again.” Not angry, not upset, not seeking someone or something to blame, no. It was the third time of asking, the third time failure stared Timmy in the face. He knew the family's reputation for tenacity would get him through the ordeal, but the too-recent laughter of his peers still rang sharply in his still-recovering ears.

An essential part of the training regime, turning off the gravity to simulate the gravity being turned off, was great fun in training, less-so in the under-the-microscope of examination conditions. Not only an entrance into the adult

world of space exploration, but a coming-of-age ritual too. Necessary to progress out here.

His essentially uncontrolled tumbling oriented him towards the only window on this section of the ship. The inevitable replay of last time's unfortunate events swam unbidden before his mind's eye and he was back again, the same room but a week before. His gaze automatically drifted to the door, closed now, the remains of the biohazard tape still dangling there, mute testament to events best forgotten...

"Master Hadron," came a voice made mechanical-sounding even without a suit: "concentrate."

"Yes dad," snapping out of it quickly: "Yes, Sir."

"What can you do to extricate yourself from this unfortunate situation?"

Timmy thought quickly. Nothing, save succumb to the inevitability of failure.

The door loomed closer.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Wormhole

“Are you sure?”

Commander Vllum smiled. Ultimately confident in her abilities, her record unspotted, the Captain’s question seemed odd but she had, over the years, become accustomed to the Humans’ insecurities and inconsistencies.

Conciliatory: “I’ll check the sensors again sir.” So she did. Some time later: “Of course sir, unless our entire sensor field is faulty there are no signs of any disturbance in the gateway.”

Unspoken, the knowledge that the happened on the other end of the wormhole was at best a guess, a balancing of probabilities for even the most accomplished operator. The last time any

unsignalled ship had appeared here it didn't end well; the loss of life had been appalling, but then the incursion into Human space had been easily repulsed.

The viewscreen shifted focus, shimmered. V! lum's brow furrowed. "Sir..."

Captain Hadron screamed into the comm: "GET THOSE BLOCKERS UP!" But it was too late. The Thorgons had returned in even greater, this-time overwhelming, numbers. Their first shots took out the starlight drive, surely condemning the crew to a life in space. Maybe their grandchildren would see Earth?

The second strike sliced away a significant portion of the command module. Death awaited anyone unsuited.

Captain Hadron screamed again, wordless, hopeless. It was of course pointless in the vacuum of space, his transceiver gone, but he nonetheless screamed. And then, as the training kicked in, weakly: "Parlay?"

The response, instant, as chilling as it was unexpected due to the loss of his radio: "No. Destruction."