

The Anatomy of a Slorg....

"Cadets, please take your seats," Private Leah Dudowicz urged as she entered from the rear of the classroom and proceeded up the center aisle between the students' desks on path to her own at its front. "We have a packed agenda this morning, and if there isn't enough time to get through it, you're unfortunately going to have to stay after until the material is finished."

The sentiment was met with groans but otherwise compliance as the cadets cut out most of the bustle, sat down, and faced forward with slate computers at the ready on top of their desks. Many of them could hardly imagine a time when seating for students happened to be any more uncomfortable than it currently was, but they would be surprised to learn the arrangement transcended education across the span of eons.

A student's seating was not supposed to be comfortable because the lack of comfort kept pupils from falling asleep. As the Private neared the head of the class, she pounded her fist on the top of a desk where one of the cadets was attempting to break the classic discomfort convention with a stream of drool and a sound sleep before today's session had even begun! This had to be some sort of record. The cadet sprung up and tried to play off the embarrassment to the cruel snickers of classmates who had allowed the momentary blip in consciousness to occur in the first place. Sulking down in the chair would hopefully be the end of the growing pain for decades to come until it was to be revisited as part of a much more pleasant time reminiscing.

While cradling a slate computer of her own in her arms, Private Dudowicz made her way to the front of her desk, turned, and leaned against it in order to address the class, "I've already beamed today's lesson plan to each of your devices. We'll start

with Slogr basics which'll lead directly into Space Force/Slogr relations. These are two very critical areas to know and comprehend as the Slogrs happen to be our terraforming partner out here.

First, and feel free to manipulate the diagram that's just shown up on each of your screens, what is a Slogr? Slogrs are referred to as Crabmartians - crustaceous bipedal beings who originate from their homeworld of Xenos. They're equipped with left and right pincer claws which sacrifice some of the dexterity of a Human hand but more than make up for it in power.

One of the largest matriarchal societies the Space Force has ever encountered, male Slogrs are all pitted to a queen they serve like worker bees. The Slogr Queen holds the reins over the entire society, however each female Slogr she bears becomes not quite a princess but a mini queen with an allotment of males to command."

Culturally foreign because the Space Force grew out a patriarchal society and simply became gender neutral, the news about the Slogrs' hierarchical rule netted a few chuckles. The female cadets shunned the possibility as unlikely or uninteresting. After all, it had been said Slogr queens gave birth to millions of offspring and this was not at all appealing. The male cadets could not imagine being under a female rule forced to serve the whim of girls like slaves. Some of those underdeveloped minds actually caused their mouths to toss jokes around verbally about weakness, sissies, and emotionality in shooting down the idea of these queens running a society as vast as the Slogrs effectively.

"Ladies, the biggest mistake women made throughout history was believing men when they told us what we were and weren't capable of. Gentleman, don't knock it until you've tried it as many of you may take a liking to it.

Moving on, the Slogr Queen doesn't seem to ever mate with other Slogr males because of the importance of the hierarchical structure and a possible incestuous overtone. Taking a male Slogr would create the position and a situation of there being a Slogr King. To circumvent this, she only takes males from other species as mates and normally chooses the most powerful to ensure her own species is populated with prime stock. The Space Force has no raw data on the mating procedure, but these alien men have never been heard from again. We only know about this because the majority of the information was volunteered during negotiations. Whether by threat or coincidence, the reasoning simply eludes us.

The Space Force and Slogrs are tentative allies currently. Relations have always been fraught with misunderstandings and mistrust, but joint operations like these have the purpose of moving each faction past the enemy tag and toward a more trade-based partnership. Both sides are very powerful, and for them to engage in war, it'd test the theory of 'quality versus quantity'. The Slogr fleet is estimated, conservatively, to've expanded with creation with no sign of slowdown. Our fleet carries the title of the most dominant fleet in this universe. The respective sides would beg to differ on the perception of troop strength, however it's something the leadership on all sides would wisely rather not want to settle anytime soon.

Going to war with Slogrs would present a number of challenges because they can biologically survive in harsh conditions where Humans are unable to and without the need for protective gear: Underwater, thin air, fire, intense cold, and space are all of no consequence to them. As a result, there's no need for clothing of any kind.

This is to say nothing of Slogr technology. When an entire

hive of minds puts their collective heads together, you can imagine their mecha is pretty powerful. We'll get to it in a later chapter, but I'll just tell you right now to be glad Solstice Satellite is both fully operational and capable of protecting Space Force interests."

For the cadets, this was something none of them wanted to hear. How could anybody challenge their Space Force? The news was humbling if not too hard to believe. There was no reason for the Private to dance around a major fact of why everybody - Human and Slogr alike was working so diligently side by side on a terraforming operation that seemed to be such a random assignment at first. In divulging this point, she now had their tentatively undivided attention.

"Speaking of which, the Slogrs don't thrive off a hive or a mob mentality. Space Force sci/meds have witnessed a connection each Slogr has with their respective queen and the Slogr Queen overall, but this is likened to the bond any of us would feel for a mother or father. Other than that, they're independent thinkers capable of branching out on their own. Again like our culture, some branch out for the betterment of society while others branch out for the scavenging off of society.

And to top that off, every single Slogr is born with adult knowledge, so your responsibility is to embrace this final leg of your studies and make it out the Space Force Academy as not only a graduate who got by but a prepared soldier, pilot, or sailor who's ready to compete. They already have an incredible head start, and if you don't know it by now, I'm here to tell you universal dominance is not built in weaponry but knowledge. Powerful factions that stagnate - collapse. Powerful factions that innovate - thrive.

There's always going to be somebody out there somewhere who's stronger, but intelligence and patience can become the great equalizer. Ultimately those become an important bit of differentiation. So learn these lessons well as they'll be your last before you hopefully choose to accept the responsibility of furthering the interests of our wonderful Space Force for the next generations set to come along after you.

If we've learned nothing else about the Slogrs, it's that the legacy we leave behind means everything. Their entire culture is based upon this edict, and ours would do well to take a page out its eBook.

Can I please get a volunteer to begin reading from the chapter on Slogr military rank that should've just appeared on each of your slate computers? It'd be nice to know who ranks what and how to properly address their highest ranking officials you may run into in the corridors," Private Dudowicz decided.

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SpaceStation Thelion

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Humans are so frail. We waste so much time having to fortify the environmentalists for their benefit, and then they still need to wear protective gear on top of their normal clothing! Vanity and trepidation aren't good qualities either alone or in combination.

-Scakdkvbbq
Slogr Engineer

Slogr technology is so gaudy. Everything is so overdone it's almost an embarrassment to the sciences. I'm not putting my sign of approval on this workmanship unless I can tamp some of their overhead down to a more tepid overkill. Elegance people - elegance!

-Sharif Rady
Space Force

The beauty of a fully terraformed planet is quite the sight to behold, and it's something I never grow tired of. In many respects, I'm in envy of the Slogr Queen for her having breathed life into so many offspring as doing the same for these dead planets is the closest I'll ever come to anything of the reproductive nature.

-Captain Ernest Morris
Space Force

My stance has softened considerably on Humans since having seen how far the adult of their species comes from those cadets of their species. They're truly a race of progress, but one more of these Ding-Dong Ditches, and there'll be some problems.

-Iiplrsciee
Slogr Captain

For

Those who See Diplomacy not as an Inconvenience but an Obligation.

01: The Beginning

SpaceStation Thelion

"Oh no," Cadet Lemuel Bear said beneath the muffling of the sandwich that consisted of a smothering pillow and sweltering covers while only his right hand lay outside the warm cocoon clutching a slate computer. For the sleep to have been this good, it meant only one thing: He had overslept!

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Flinging himself up out the most comfortable sleep of his life with both the pillow and the covers flying in unintended directions, Lemuel stared frantically around the barracks-style main area of the Soldiers' Living Section allowing his eyes to adjust to the light and his mind to wrap itself around some harsh clarity. With a sigh, he expressed, "That's cold." And it was, for all the other cadets were at class. This competition thing was getting a little bit out of control.

a DOPE ENTERPRISES publication

But the cadets were not to blame for Lemuel's unexcused absence, and neither was he if only his next realization had a chance of even being humored by Private Dudowicz. The slate computer was set to wake him up at six hundred hours, and the stupid thing did not go off!

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Hopefully it was not the battery, but this would not have come as any bit of a surprise to Lemuel. In many respects, he was a power user writing in the device constantly. The blog feature was the most efficient way to keep his mom, dad, and twin sister apprised of his daily activities for the purposes of keeping them from worrying about this latest deployment out somewhere in the system known as Explorigvasun.

SPACESTATION THELION

Not one to keep a diary or any sort of other journal, this

blog grew on Lemuel because he was genuinely fascinated with the prospects of learning. Being this far out in the uncharted waters of space was uncharted territory for many not fortunate enough to make it to another planet let alone explore the most expansive, furthest-reaching leg of the universe that could still be colonized. His parents had always harped on broadening the horizons, but they probably never expected him to stumble upon anything quite this vast. Regardless the frequent updates kept them from being anymore concerned than normal.

based on the SpaceStation Colt novels by Edmund Alexander Sims

It just so happened that in taking a liking to this writing, Lemuel may have found a new calling. All the signs were there. He was obsessed with the blog, spent more time around the slate computer than his friends, and sacrificed nourishment plus sleep for the purposes of typing away incessantly on the device in order to flesh out those rather involved logs. Creative writing, journalism, or perhaps just a personal hobby - the application of this new talent's practicality eluded him.

P.J. BEAR

Lemuel just knew it felt right. But whatever it was or whatever it felt like, it made him horribly tardy. Still not court-martial-worthy, he propelled himself off the bouncy mattress of the bottom bunk, made it over to a trunk/night table, and slapped on a fresh Space Force uniform in order to mitigate the added damage (stemming from an unkempt appearance) and not further press his luck. The Private was not to be trifled with, and his other concern outside chastisement was over the reputation that could unavoidably be earned with frequent mental blips like this.

FIAUPTGE

Lemuel found himself streaking across Soldiers' Living in fear of the ramifications for what was thankfully a first time occurrence. Also the normal uniform did not need to be pressed, so despite his mussed hair, the clothing he wore still managed to communicate a respect for the Space Force through the cadet's otherwise acceptable appearance. The normal uniform's 'one size fits all' special polymer had a lot to do with this because it customized itself to the wearer's individual physique for that perfect fit.

ERNEST MORRIS

The normal uniforms were of a dark sterling gray metallic color which its black boots really accentuated. The jacket and pants held a certain weight to them, so a person could equate the feeling to bundling up, but mobility was strangely not affected as they also felt incredibly lite. A weighty white undershirt shone through the opened jacket providing an additional contrast to the gray and black. As usual, the curled insignia of SpaceStation Thelion sat embossed on the left breast of the jacket - in black.

LEAH DUDOWICZ

Upon reaching the outside corridor to the main area of the Soldiers' Living Section, Lemuel hurried over toward the nearest transport module with his slate computer in hand. The Docking Bay Section was the next stop and two sections over from here, but a person could not tell nearly one hundred meters had been traversed by the near instantaneous time it took for him to be let off just outside its lowest level. This was due in part to the incredible speed and efficiency of the transport system.

IIPRLSCIEE

Almost in stride of rushing inside the transport module was Lemuel hurrying out it, pushing for the doors that led to the entrance of the Docking Bay, and bursting through those like a running back who had just broken into the open field with the slate computer tucked away in his grasp like a football. Instead of yards however, the Space Force measured in meters, and he found himself hauling across the center of the large open-ended section until he reached a pair of open fifty meter high bay doors. Blowing by an array of ships on either side of the three levels that included Class III Fighters and shuttles in the assortment, the cadet was understandably focused on his attendance goal but not exactly dismissive of an incredible aerospace opportunity he could choose as a career path once the academy training completed.

SHARIF RADY

Choices abounded as Lemuel could choose to become a pilot, soldier, or sailor after graduation. There was always the possibility of him using all this Space Force training as a learning experience and taking his chances with the private sector. He was unsure and fortunate enough to not be in a position where a decision had to be made immediately. Floating the soul-searching was not optimal for the long run by any stretch of the imagination,

but it sure was convenient in the short run.

SCAKDKVVBQ

SpaceStation Thelion was six hundred fifty meters long, three hundred eighty-six meters long at its widest point, and had compartments standing at fifty meters high. In order of frontmost direction, the spacestation consisted of ten compartments called sections: Cockpit, Conference, Ranking Officials' Living, Security, Docking Bay, Non-Ranking Officials' Living, Soldiers' Living, Science/Medical, Engineering, and the Giant Thruster. As one of the Space Force's most formidable vessels, a spacestation was so well-known (if not feared) throughout the universe by friend and foe alike that every stationary spacestation was capable of docking this mobile variety with universal moorings. One could imagine the stationary counterparts were proportionately as massive because of their capability for accommodation and would be correct in the enormous assumption.

and

Upon stepping officially outside SpaceStation Thelion and

into the Slogr satellite installation - Botswarra Outpost, Lemuel noticed and was swept up in the emotion of a sequence needing to be recorded and reviewed later in order to be believed:

As one would imagine, the hallways to this Slogr satellite installation are large. Actually that's an understatement. This corridor could be the size of a small town back home with all its intricacies and pathways. The place is freaking huge! But strangely, this isn't the part I find most interesting.

It's the trail of Slogrs with this swagger.

There are rows of Slogrs - lines of them attending to their business, and they each walk with this bob as if it were in response to grooving to a hot music track while they do so. The focus and an apparent comfort in their purpose - being born and bred to work is compelling. It's so compelling I find myself mesmerized by the ethic as my eyes lock in step with their movements.

I'm swaying gently to the Slogr rhythm as a line of patrols passes by my position on foot. None of them notice me, and my curiosity almost seems to creep me out as I just stare with no regard for personal space but rather a voyeuristic arrogance of elementary education. It somehow gives me the right to examine, study, and watch another species. I'd want other cultures to feel the same way about me honestly, but in the universal scheme of things, I am really not all that interesting.

Purpose. This is something I may have to elude back to because the Slogrs have clearly found theirs, yet I'm floundering in seeking out mine. A certain pride

accompanies the ability to have work and know what you're supposed to be doing. Their culture stays on the grind. Is it too presumptive to ask if this culture is capable of knowing anything more? Or is it shortsighted to realize this is the fate awaiting me?

The Slogrs are programmed to do this, but in a way, so are Humans. We're trained for a number of years, and then we have to hit the workforce for the bulk of our next years. Hopefully we can see a little retirement after breaking our backs, however I'm not completely sold on the thought. It really seems like a scam, and some people don't need to work. Those fortunate to make it to that level watch the rest of us slave away ultimately for their betterment. I'd imagine I wouldn't be doing this directly for the sake of my health if another choice existed. Indirectly if I didn't, I'm pretty sure my health would wind up suffering because I would be broke in the process. Funny how things work out in any event, right? Well no, wrong - depressing seems more likely. In a universe as infinite as this, there has to be something more.

Perhaps the biggest breakdown to any cultural bonding was the language barrier. Meanings could always be misconstrued between two disparate parties, but that was when both could convey as much on the level playing field of speaking a similar tongue! How many times had an awkward situation occurred when one group was speaking in a language another did not fully comprehend?

YFAYOJHGFI

Was the one group talking about the other? Why was the one group speaking in their language: Because they were much more comfortable with it or because they were trying to hide the conversation from the other? What is the problem with everybody just speaking one language?

music by DJ VOICECRACK

Well Ear-To-Mouth Coms solved this or really something that was not a problem for anybody except the close-minded and nosy. Thanks to the extensive set of translation codex accompanying every device, the communication gap was bridged in perhaps one of the most intuitive ways possible.

story by EDMUND ALEXANDER SIMS

Lemuel fit the Ear-To-Mouth Com around his right ear and traced the thin boom down his cheek as it sat almost unnoticed by

its lite weight and ergonomic design. The passing conversations of every Slogr were then translated into a dialect a Human could understand and fed to the cadet's right ear in real time.

The brilliant part about Ear-To-Mouth Coms was the fact the opposite ear was left free to still pick up the auditory stimulus of the non-translated speech. This allowed a person the chance to pick up patterns in the cadence of a foreign dialect that could be mapped to what was being converted in the ear possessing the com.

Ear-To-Mouth Coms were intuitive because the more a person understood from a language, the less this language needed to be translated, so an intended sync would ultimately occur which might actually cause the user of the codex to start thinking in the foreign dialect. Nothing was lost in translation. And the universal conversation did not happen to be so different from species to species where words were even capable of holding any sort of greater significance or enhanced meaning as proponents of the technology might have originally insinuated. But what was more was those very same proponents might have now realized their microscopic piece of the cultural melting pot happened to be just that: Verily insignificant and not even worthy of the ethnocentric criticism it at one time warranted short of demanded.

"Glad I'm not like one of those types," Lemuel thought as he activated the translation codex for the sheer yet voracious purpose of wanting to learn more about the Slogr culture. The Ear-To-Mouth Com was also paired to his slate computer, so the profiles of the individual Slogrs whose conversations he happened to be following were displayed conveniently on its face.

Now unlike an intently focused royal personal guard, the Humans' terraforming partner could have been said to have been equally curious about the proposition of working this joint

venture, so Lemuel was actually able to garner some eye contact and even a smile from one of a passing couple Slogrs.

"I kinda feel bad for that Human over there," Fiauptge smiled, "because he's almost certainly going to meet the ire of Private Dudowicz for his not being in class with all the other youths."

"Their masters burden us with their Human filth," Yfayojhgfi added, "and claim it'll one day become precious materials."

Well in so many respects, Lemuel had asked for this being talked about when he could have just gone on about his business and not known what the extent of the conversation was the Slogrs were carrying on. He also did not ask for his feelings to be hurt and looked upon the Humans' terraforming partner as more than a simple business partnership - a potential friendship. The hurtful words stung a little bit more because of the doused hopes.

Almost empathic of Fiauptge (as Slogrs made use of translation codex as well) when he noticed Lemuel's diminutive sigh of dejection, his response was to say, "Humans are really no different than this lifeless rock we're tasked with transforming into a sustaining nurturer and habitation that'll one day become full of life. They simply need a little jump start to their core, a spark of belief in their world, and an opportunity to become a fruitful atmosphere which can be revered by those who might make use of its budding beauty - or not, just the same. Of most fascination is the Humans' journey. Their origination leaves a little bit to be desired, but their constant search of the destination is something we Slogrs miss out on."

Yfayojhgfi was not buying the explanation and grumbled, "How in the universe can that thing grow up to become like Captain Ernest Morris? It seems like such a waste of an opportunity - not

to mention time and effort when their parents aren't capable of imbuing them with the knowledge of generations past upon birth. I'm sorry, my friend, but these Humans seem like they have issues. We might want to slow down our speech and speak more loudly when next we come in contact with some of them."

"Nonsense," Fiauptge countered as he and Yfayojhgfi continued onward, "it's their capacity to achieve what we already have that's the intriguing part!"

"Disgusting," Yfayojhgfi replied as he and Fiauptge made it out of Lemuel's view as they pressed further down the corridor.

The uneasy curl creating folds of despair within Lemuel's left cheek soon loosened up and joined his right cheek plus the rest of his torso in a relieved shrug and a smile. Short-lived as this moment was, he also just realized what Fiauptge's first words were intended to convey. The Private was going to reprimand him proportionately with how fast he hurried up to get to class meaning the longer his trek took the more severe his reprimand would be. There were varying degrees of reprimands, so the cadet sought to lessen his by taking off - running against the grain of the Slogrs' direction and momentum on path of the classroom and in an attempt to lower the amount of time/damage about to be associated with his tardiness.

Please purchase a copy to read the rest!