

# **THE TRADITIONS OF M'VORTHOK**

I have always admired science fiction writers' ability to create worlds and languages of their own. In addition, they get to capitalize a lot of words that normally don't get capitalized. This alone IMHO is worth more than the Average Human Being can possibly imagine.

Having some spare time on my hands between gigs with VFTM (Very Famous Traditional Musicians, I could name names), I decided to try my hand at the following...

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*- The heat from the Three Suns is unbearable, even for this time of the cycle, thought Thmelethaar, the Fourth Lord of Penyeggen, as he looked wearily out over the purple expanse of the Ibuprofen Forest. - Hardly the time for the Molecular Rearrangement Festival. But even I, a Fourth Lord, cannot alter what has been appointed by uncountable generations of my people: the Molecular Rearrangement Festival must be held on the 8th and 9th Balathok Subcycle. Or else...*

But it had always been that way, ever since his ancestors had fled Terra for the hospitable Cygnian planet called M'vorthok just before the first Heliac Cataclysm. He would not - could not - change it.

His musings were interrupted by the entry permission tone at the paraport. Glancing into his viewer, the Fourth Lord saw his secretary Beelish Pluff and a group of ... well, he wasn't sure what, except that they were holding boxes of some sort at their sides. The Critical Intention Scanner showed green, not the red that weaponry or threatening devices of any kind would have elicited, so he paradiddled the Greetings Exchange Cursor to the appropriate level and awaited the response from outside.

*- Salutations, Lord Thmelethaar, and may the Mover of the Three Suns be kind to you and yours. Beelish Pluff intoned the ritual greeting to a Fourth Lord that he had recited every third paracycle since inheriting the coveted position of Secretary from his father and grandfather.*

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- Greetings, Beelish, replied the Fourth Lord, and the Mover's blessings on you and yours. I will emerge shortly but in the meantime please tell me the names and occupations of the entities you have brought to visit me.

- Certainly, Lord Thmelethaar. These are a group of travelling Sonic Vibration Modulators from the Green Island in the Great Western Ocean. They are attending the Molecular Rearrangement Festival and made a special request to the Chair-entity of the Festival to be permitted to perform in your presence. Since you were off-planet at the time, we directed the request to the Lady Thmelethaar, and she was delighted with the idea.

- Wonderful, thought the Fourth Lord sourly. - Here I have at least sixteen sub-cycles of work to get done and that incomparable Daughter of Bunyuhaar I married has cheerfully requested the presence of a wandering band of SVMs. Oh well ... maybe it's not a bad idea to get my mind off the job occasionally.

Aloud, he acknowledged Beelish Pluff's information and adjusted the Internal Greetings Cursor to "affectionate" and destination to "consort". - The Mover's blessings on you, my dearest, said the Fourth Lord gently into the Voice Module. - Our visiting SVMs are here to entertain us.

A woman's sleepy voice replied. - Mooblessyoutoo, it muttered, then more intelligibly after a few nanocycles: I'll be right out ... will you be a dear and order Early Subcycle Nourishment for everyone?

- Certainly, said Thmelethaar. - Your usual - scrambled avian ova and infarcted paraporcine casings?

- That would be delightful, said the slightly less sleepy voice. - And about two hundred munzeels of hot black qaffa-liquid.

Thmelethaar moved the cursor to Nour/Replen/Voice and, after placing an order sufficient to include the needs of his guests, put on his robes of office and went out into the antechamber to greet them. Beelish Pluff and the band of SVMs all rose respectfully to their feet as the Fourth Lord entered the room. Beelish Pluff greeted the Fourth Lord ceremonially and proceeded to introduce the SVMs.

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When the introductions were complete, the Fourth Lord made known his desire that everyone relax and, in the quaint phrase of lost generations, "make themselves at home". The SVMs looked doubtfully at Beelish Pluff, who nodded encouragingly, and the group sat down. One of the younger SVMs approached Beelish Pluff and whispered nervously in his ear. Beelish Pluff pointed down the corridor and indicated something to the right. The young SVM was in such a hurry to depart that he completely neglected the Leave-Taking Ceremony that protocol would normally have required.

Beelish Pluff glanced at the Fourth Lord, who smiled and made a gesture not perceptible to anyone but the Secretary, indicating "don't worry about it". The Secretary returned an equally imperceptible sign of gratitude.

Three servbots entered the hall with the food and drink requested by the Fourth Lord, and after the prayer of thanks to the Mover, the meal was commenced. Meanwhile the Lady Thmelethaar, resplendent in her most fashionable vork-pelt robe and bedecked with the rarest Caladrian jewel-creatures, had swept grandly into the chamber and allowed herself to be introduced to the company.

Under the relaxing influence of the not-quite-intoxicating hishkeba beverage that preceded the meal, the SVMs slowly became less awed and more communicative. This suited the Fourth Lord, who felt that he was a better listener than talker. The Fourth Lady, meanwhile, was excellent at both, and the SVMs were clearly responding to her considerable charms as well as to the hishkeba.

*- We are involved in the traditional Sonic Vibration Patterns that have flourished on the Green Island for chiliads, explained the group leader Zerl Pekven. - We reproduce these patterns on these instruments that we have brought with us, and most entities find them pleasant and meaningful. For our part, we are proud to maintain the ancient culture of our people and to make it better known in whatever way we can.*

*- Well spoken, Zerl Pekven, said the Fourth Lady. - I visited the Green Island when I was young, and I believe I may still have relatives there. I have always loved the sonic vibrations that are reproduced there. Tell us if you will about your instruments.*

*- Certainly, my Lady, said Zerl Pekven. Then, in the Island dialect: Lads, take your yokes out and let's give these nice people a demonstration.*

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The cases were opened and various strange contraptions brought forth.

- This is called a kardeen, said Zerl, opening and closing a bellowed instrument adorned with buttons, and Jorf there, he's playing a float. Jorf held up a black tube perforated with holes. - Q'ab Undix plays the wo-hlian pipes, and Miron Mench has a bowron.

- Those pipe-things remind me of a kalamar, a tentacled sea-beast from the third moon of Sargassion, said the Fourth Lord. - My father battled one in his youth and never tired of telling the story. He never mentioned sonic vibrations, except perhaps the ones he himself made yelling and screaming during the fight.

There was polite but sincere laughter. - Tell us again the name of that circular instrument, asked the Fourth Lady.

- A bowron, m'Lady, said Zerl Pekven. - It's a frame of paralignium covered by the skin of a dwunk. You hit it with this bit of stick to keep time. And then we have Ersh here on the fid'l and finally Gmu Hernta on the b'zooki.

- The b'zooki ... I thought that instrument came from the Dark Mountains near the Middle Sea, said the Fourth Lady. - We had a Nourishment Processing Technician at home who used to play one, and that's where he was from.

- Originally it did come from there, but many sonic vibrators on the Green Island play them now, explained Zerl Pekven. - Our culture adapts whatever it needs to survive and grow.

- I had a few lessons on the fid'l when I was a youngster, said Beelish Pluff, but I never was much good at it. My mother was from the Green Island and thought I should know about its culture, but my poor father was from the Plains of Smunyip and couldn't tell one sonic vibration from another. It appears I inherited his shortcoming.

The company laughed. - My father had the same problem, said Ersh, so I guess whatever talent I have must have come from my mother's side - and she was from the Plains of Smunyip!

- Please perform a few pieces for us, said the Lady Thmelethaar in her most persuasive voice. - My good Lord here knows little about vibration patterns. This will be his first Molecular Rearrangement Festival as Fourth Lord and I'd like him to become familiar with what he will be hearing.

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- Certainly, my Lady, we'd be happy to do that, said Zerl Pekven as the ever-attentive Fourth Lady signalled one of the servbots to bring a few more rounds of hishkeba. - Our group will be appearing on both subcycles of the Festival and we'd be honored to have you in the audience. **Again in the dialect:** Lads, what'll we play?

- Let's start with a few old jigs, said Q'ab Undix as he finally succeeded in getting his wo-hlian pipes in tune, a process that seemed to amuse the Fourth Lord and Beelish Pluff considerably. - Maybe Lark in the Morning and the Kesh, what say?

- Sounds good to me, said Zerl Pekven. - Twice each, on count of four ...

- Wait a nanocycle, said Ersh. - I'm still having problems with this A string ... Right, I think that's it. Off we go!

A period of intense sonic vibration followed; even the servbots could be seen rhythmically raising and lowering their parapedal extremities. *That's odd, thought the Fourth Lord - I wonder who programmed that into them?*

- Oh my! said the Fourth Lady at the completion of the set, and even the Fourth Lord was smiling. - That was marvellous. Could you do a few more for us?

- Our pleasure, m'Lady, replied Zerl Pekven. - We'll do a few reels. Any ideas, lads?

- We could do the Coleman set, suggested Miron Mench. - You know, the Long-ford Collector, Tarbolton, and Sailor's Bonnet ...

- Except that he never played the Longford Collector first, said Jorf the froot player. - Always the Tarbolton first, THEN the Longford Collector ...

- Are you sure about that? said Gmu Hernta. - I always thought the Sailor's Bonnet was first, THEN the Tarbolton, THEN the LongfordCollector ...

- Are you crazy? said Ersh heatedly. - Sailor's Bonnet first? You've been spending too much time inhaling vapors at the Crater of Forgetfulness. Coleman NEVER played anything but Tarbolton first ...

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- *It's been 256 chiliads and there's still nobody in this galaxy or any other who played three better reels than those, order be damned, said Jorf to no one in particular. - Coleman - may he rest with the Mover on the Sun of Peace - could do no wrong in my book. Sonic vibrations were never the same after he came along ...*

**A quiet but meaningful cough from the Fourth Lord brought the discussion to a conclusion. - Right then, sorry about that, said Zerl Pekven absently. - Ready, lads? Tarbolton, Collector, Bonnet, twice each, count of four ...**

**Gmu Hernta grumbled but followed instructions. - I still think Bonnet was first, he muttered to one of the servbots, whose paraoptics immediately flashed green to confirm receipt of the statement and then, a split-nanocycle later, flashed yellow to indicate lack of comprehension. - You're as bad as Jorf, thought Gmu Henta unkindly.**

**TO BE CONTINUED...?**

