

Preface

It is important to know beforehand that the main character of the story is a Yorp, an alien from a 1990 computer game called "Commander Keen". Yorps are green, and have two legs, an eye on an antenna, two front teeth, and no arms. Gargs are the same except they have a row of teeth, two antennae, and are about twice as wide as a Yorp.

Also, I made the mistake of not attaching the name with the main character before using the name: the main character's name is Nilp.

Table of Contents

1. Eternal Destiny
2. Mishap's Repercussions
3. Oasis Demonotonized

Dates that I Wrote It

7/24/2006 - Chapter 1
7/28/2006 - Chapter 2
11/27/2006 - Chapter 3a
12/28/2006 - Chapter 3b
1/02/2007 - Chapter 3c
1/05/2007 - Chapter 3d

Other Stuff

After the end of this document, I have also included (1) a copy of another unfinished story that I based this one on and (2) a brief synopsis of what my plans were before I quit writing.

Next page: Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Eternal Destiny

On and on he plodded through the nearly pitch-dark tunnel, weighted down by the minerals which fellow yorps had mined. His body was bent over from the weight on his back, and his tongue was parched and swollen. His eye was drooped down low, reaching almost to the ground. He therefore could not see what was around him, nor see which direction he was going or whether he was about to run into the cavern wall...but he *knew*.

On and on, again and again, he had trodden this despised path of torment. Repeatedly he had stumbled on, not knowing whether he could persuade his yorp-feet to take the next step; not knowing when he would collapse from exhaustion.

But still he continued, on and on, each day, treading the same underground path. Now he knew the tunnel by heart and did not need to put forth the extra effort to keep his eye looking forward into the dimly-lit tunnel.

He could not see it, but he knew well that the tunnel was of sheer darkness, excepting only the dim, glowing lanterns that were spaced at regular intervals several feet from the bottom of the tunnel wall.

As he struggled to keep going, he could hear the footfalls of his comrades and of his captors. Though he could not see them, he knew the formation that his group took: one Garg was in front of him and the yorp on his left, leading the group. Behind him, he could tell by the thudding footfalls that there were two exhausted Yorps in a parallel location.

Behind those, he shuddered as he acknowledged that there were two crafty Gargs following soundlessly.

He shuddered because of how he knew of the aforementioned taskmasters: four days ago, one of the other Yorps had seen a niche in the cavern wall and tried to silently drop his load and vanish unseen into the crack.

Upon dropping his load and separating from the group, he heard a hideous roar and a horrible snarl, both of which were mingled with a raspy effect and a tone of evil glee and triumph. Beads of sweat had dropped from his face in fear as he spun around and saw two sets of malicious eyes gleaming at him. One of them blinked; then the other spoke. It was a raspy, dark tone with an unmistakable sound of hatred and superiority: "Well well well, what have we got here? Don't feel like carrying your *weight* around here?"

After a cracking, evil laugh the Garg turned to his comrade: "Finally got some pay-off for our position, eh Drakinough?" [drah-kuh-nawf;drockinnoff]

Both Gargs set off in roars of hideous laughter while the poor Yorp stood shaking uncontrollably from raw fear, not daring to imagine what might happen to him on account of his escape attempt.

The two Gargs carried the insubordinate yorp off into a side-tunnel, and that was the last that the other yorps ever heard of the incident, with the exception of the agonizing screams heard echoing through the tunnels later that day.

What could be seen of the yorp the next day in the dim and lifeless tunnel was a horrible and misshapen body, and the other yorps could only imagine how horrible he would look in real lighting, and what must have been done to him to achieve such appearance.

On account of that example did no yorp of that slave-group ever attempt to escape again.

Driven by fear they continued, day by day, with no hope for tomorrow and no memory of light or cheer. They lived a life of misery and woe, and not a one of them was ever glad that he had been born.

Chapter 2: Mishap's Repercussions

Every morning, the group of four yorps slept on the hard rock floor of their cavern, guarded by tank-like garg robots programmed to shoot anything that moved.

Every day, they were aroused by their taskmaster and ruthlessly set upright, then ordered to move. Those who did not move fast enough would suffer the consequences. They would then march to the mining site, be laden down with minerals by another yorp group, and follow their garg to the Ore Deposit & Registration cavern.

Today was different. He woke up and squinted in fright: something was burning into his eye, and he could not keep it open! He blinked rapidly, struggling to understand what was happening. All that he could see was white.

After a couple of seconds, his eyes lost their feeling of burning, and he could keep them open. He could now see nothing but blue with a small round yellow object in the midst of it.

Sitting up, he looked around. He could not contain his excitement as he saw a clear and visible environment around him, unlike the dark and dreary tunnels where he had lived his whole life. Everything could be seen well, and something about this place seemed...cheery. He quickly concluded that this was the "light" that he had heard about.

The floor was made of an unstable type of matter...sand. To his right was a huge ocean of water, washing up on the sand, and to his left was a collection of lush vegetation and forestry.

He soon realized that not only was he out of the tunnels, but he was on another planet. Perhaps this was Earth! All of his life, he had dreamed of visiting Earth, the beautiful blue star. Now his dream had come true!

With joys abounding, he sprang up and looked around energetically. Thirsty, he ran to the water to drink. He drank and drank, but he could not get enough, and his mouth still seemed as dry as before he had begun to drink.

Severely disappointed, he looked around for another source of water: perhaps there was something wrong with that water. He saw a small, soft orange ball hanging from the branch of a tree.

He jumped up and knocked at it with his eye until it fell down. He stomped on it, kicked it, jumped on it, sat on it, and otherwise attacked it until it yielded a small amount of liquid. Oozing out of it was an orange substance, looking very pleasant to the tongue.

Just as he was about to stoop down and lick it, he heard the loud and raspy voice of a nasty garg yelling at him: "Get UP. Moveit, you lazy one-eyed half-strength."

The orange ball began to fade into something darker. Nilp yelled back at the voice, "I'm free now. I don't have to listen to you ANYMORE. You horrible fat monster, you destroyed the water-ball!"

As he spoke, the sand also began to fade. His neck began to hurt terribly at the joint, and his legs ached as well.

Suddenly, he saw that he was laying on the floor of the sleep-cavern in the underground slave-mines.

He lifted up his eye and looked around, devastated and suddenly hit by hysteric fear. As he glanced around the room, he saw the faces of the other three yorps: aghast and dumbfounded, with an expression of shock mixed with fear and compassion.

Visibly shaking with fear, he slowly turned his eye to focus on the angry garg directly in front of him.

There was not an ounce of compassion or understanding in the eyes of the garg, but only nasty hatred and anger. "First you sleep late, then you insult a garg. I'll show you who's boss, you half-witted inferior pole-eye!"

The garg stepped forward several paces so that he was standing on Nilp's right.

With his foot, almost twice the size of a yorp's, he kicked Nilp on the side with garg-only strength, then again and again, three times.

With rebounded strength, he kicked one final time, rolling Nilp over onto his side.

The garg then stepped on Nilp. The before-throbbing pain was tripled as the weight of the garg landed on his unparalleled bruise and did not move from it for three seconds.

"Who did you call fat, single-eye?" taunted the Garg hideously. Jumping over him and kicking him so hard in the mouth that his left tooth fell out, he continued: "And yes you're right, I'm horrible alright...I'm planning on proving that quite well today!"

He kicked Nilp in the neck with amazing strength so that Nilp thought that tendons must have been severed.

Having raised his foot beforehand, the garg sent flying another kick to Nilp's neck, causing the poor yorp to cry out in such pain that the sound of it echoed through the cavern many times, at which sound the garg gave a short, evil laugh of satisfaction and delight.

The garg stood behind Nilp and slid his foot under Nilp's neck, then lifted it to set him upright.

Before Nilp had the chance to acknowledge his new position, the garg body-slammed him, once again violating the afore-created bruise and also knocking him down again. Having let out shrieks of agony at both the body contact and the ground contact, Nilp yelled out "PLEASE...NO!" Due to the intense pain, his voice came out garbled, weak, and small.

The garg, however, showed no facial understanding of the meaning of the words. He spoke, his raspy voice coming out in segments as he caught his breath, "You'll be saying more than 'please' when I'm done with you, half-width!"

The beating continued mercilessly until Nilp gave a final cry of such pain and agony that his companions flinched and stepped backward, their eyes evident signs of ample recognition.

With a final kick that left Nilp sprawled on the ground, the garg spoke satisfied, "Feeling better, pole-eye? I suppose that'll be enough...for now."

Bruised and in intense pain, Nilp lay motionless for a while before slowly beginning to move his aching feet in an attempt to stand up.

The garg, however, was in no mood to watch Nilp recover from his massive injuries. "Stand at attention, insolent yorp. Move now or suffer the consequences!"

In visible fear of a recurrence of the beating, Nilp quickly stood. As he rose, his head swam and the shapes around him blurred, but he did not dare grasp anything for support. Wobbling so that he was sure he was falling and about to hit the ground, Nilp stood still, and gradually the dizziness passed. However, an aching bruise inflicted into the sole of his foot did not pass, and for the duration of the day that bruise sent pain through the whole bottom of his foot with every step he took.

The Garg marched forward, saying "Follow; match my pace...or else."

The other three took care to enter formation so that Nilp could be in the back and hence not have to move until the first two had.

The garg did not slow his pace for mercy on the beaten Nilp, but instead kept up his ordinary speed. To Nilp it felt like he was going three or four times that of the regular. With an aching side, mouth, tooth, neck, eye, and foot, Nilp limped on.

On and on he went, struggling to keep up and struggling not to let the cries of his foot's pain travel from his mind to his mouth, or to let the intense and sometimes-growing pain of the rest of his body escape into a pained moan.

Chapter 3: Oasis Demonotonized

Discouraged and lifeless, Nilp stumbled along. The darkness he was used to. The small tunnels he was used to. The oppression he was used to. Yet still, all of it pushed down on his heart like the pack of ore he was carrying.

There was no point to go on, but there was no choice either. A tear rolled out of the corner of his eye as he mentally bemoaned himself and tried to conjure up some reason to live, and some reason to move on other than to prevent being beaten again by a Garg.

With each step he took, his feet became heavier. His only hope was to be rid of the weight on his back so that he could rest. But after resting, then what? The only hope he had while treading the cavern floor was to reach the end of the tunnel so that he could rest for a short while and then get back on his feet and once again walk pointlessly down the underground tunnels.

As his mind rolled into depression and his heart sank deep into his stomach, his feet began to shuffle and his eye drooped lower and lower. Infrequently he could faintly see a tear dripping down onto the rocky floor.

How could this be his life? How could his only purpose in life be to serve the Gargs he hated? How could it be that he could not truly understand what light was, and that the cavern walls that would seem claustrophobic to some were the boundaries of the only home he knew?

Suddenly, his train of thoughts came to a tear-squelching halt as the grating voice of one of his Garg captors reached his ears: "Miserable Yorpe, we don't feed you so you can shuffle along at half-pace. Pick it up, you lousy sloth!"

Sighing, the Yorpe began to consciously lift his feet and set them down again, and soon was caught up with the rest of the group.

While his mind processed thoughts of misery and he continued to internally debate with himself his current state of life, minutes ticked by and then in turn, hours as well crept on by.

Finally, he saw a dim glow of light at the end of their current tunnel. It was much brighter than the faintly-glowing lanterns on the sides of the tunnels, yet to you or me it would have seemed so dark and dreary as to put the darkest midnight to shame.

A vague and depressed bubble of hope rose through his heart as he looked forward to the end of his day. He imagined the load of ore slipping off his back and once again feeling light and free from burden...but as the imagining came to an end and he knew he still carried the burden, the bubble of hope almost burst as he pessimistically acknowledged that he would carry his burden until the end, and then after the end he would simply be given another burden and continue on and on forever.

It was as it had always been, and as it would always be. Psychologically depressed days like this were not infrequent: he guessed that perhaps four out of seven days were as bad as this, and one out of seven much worse.

Finally, he stepped into a well-lit, large cavern. The hazy glow of bluish light shedded by dozens of lanterns posted around the room seemed to him like the bright and friendly shining of the sun on a green field.

With the bright hope of the moment, he lifted his tear-stained eye to look around the room. Of course, the room was nothing new to him: he had seen it thousands or perhaps millions of times in his life, having worked in the slave-mines since he had learned to walk.

Still, though, it brought rays of joyous hope into his time-seared heart to see the lit-up Registration Cavern.

Scanning the room from left to right, he took in every little yet bright detail. The cavern was an imperfect circle, a dozen yards or so in diameter. On the far left of the room was an amassing pile of rock, mostly of medium-sized boulders, but also of rocks and pebbles of all sizes and shapes.

At the far end of the pile sat a group of five small Yorps, aged 10-13, sorting valuable metals and rocks from the pile. Even in the relative joy of his moment, Nilp had to acknowledge the plight of those who still toiled in obscurity.

At the other end of the cavern, on the far right, was a desk built from rock, polished to an ironic smoothness. Behind the desk stood two thin, tall Gargs whose protruding teeth were obviously rotting.

At the forward end of the cavern were three exit tunnels, and behind Nilp were three more exit tunnels, one of which he had just emerged from.

Thus was the Ore Deposit & Registration Cavern.

The lactic acid in the joints of Nilp's feet had long compressed into a painful contour of burning energy. His swollen tongue begged for water, and his back ached from the weight it carried daily.

Yet his mind was joyfully waiting to be relieved of such grievances, knowing that today's journey was over. He now needed only to drop off his final burden, wait to be tallied by the Gargs (in case of runaways), and head to his group's sleep cavern.

Forcing his legs to comply with his wishes, he continued lumbering on until he reached the stone pile.

His mind running wildly with anticipation, he twisted his body to let his pack of rocks slide off. There was a rough rolling sound, and suddenly the ache in his back lightened, the acid in his joints lessened, and he felt free and alive.

He let go of all his muscles, and totally stopped exerting any amount of strength. Collapsing onto the pile of rocks, he let his breath out in exhausted pants, feeling the lactic acid dissipate from his muscles.

He gently, naturally allowed his eye to shut.

His world vanished in a flash as he absorbed rest into his body. To him, the rocky, uneven slope of the rock pile he was laying on seemed like a soft, warm bed would to us. For the first time that day, he felt contented and almost without unhappiness.

But suddenly, his euphoric moment vanished, stricken by the dark voice of his group's Garg leader: "Up to the desk, Yorps."

Lifting up his eye in exhaustion, Nilp was for the first time in all his life confounded and confused. The Gargs never asked the Yorps to approach the Registration Desk. They had always counted the Yorps themselves, then told the number to the Gargs behind the desk.

Nilp, however, did not care why he was being called. He knew only that the peace of his moment was disrupted by the voice of the Garg he hated. In despondency, he slowly rose to his feet and walked across the cavern to the Registration Desk. He could hear the gentle padding of other Yorp feet also approaching the desk, obviously his companions.

The skinny Gargs behind the desk looked the Yorps over. Their antennae moved back and forth erratically, almost comically, as they inspected the slaves.

Finally, one of them shifted his attention to Nilp's captor and began to speak. His voice was shrill and grating, contrasting from while paralleling to the voices of most other Gargs Nilp had had contact with.

Unfortunately, this Garg spoke in a dialect of Omnispeak that was so different from anything Yorps spoke that Nilp could not understand him. This dialect was the native tongue of Gargs. The Gargs only spoke the Yorp dialect when speaking to the slaves.

The skinny Garg spoke rapidly and matter-of-factly, his spiel going on continually. As Nilp turned his eye to face his captor Garg, he could see that the words of the clerk did not set well with him.

As the clerk continued to speak, the slave driver's face solidified into a heavily disturbed expression which was nearing extreme anger.

When the clerk paused for a breath, the slave driver butted in, his normally-raspy and hideous voice being mingled with despise and hate. After the slave driver finished a dark, interrogative sentence, the clerk's eyes registered anger.

Raising his voice, the clerk continued his spiel as if he had not been interrupted.

Nilp could tell that the slave driver was now boiling with hidden rage, his eyes moving back and forth furtively and hatefully. His mouth was curled downward, and despise became more and more apparent on his face.

After backing up several feet, Nilp's captor let forth a hideous snarl and growled at the clerk. The clerk gave a start, but continued his spiel, fumbling over the words.

The face of the Garg slave driver was now horrible enough to bring fear into the hearts of the slaves, and Nilp subconsciously stepped away from his captor.

With ferociously loud snarls of hate mingled with despise, the captor threw himself over the table at the skinny clerk, kicking him soundly on the side of the head, beneath the right antenna.

Letting out a yelp of fear and weakness, the clerk jumped back, colliding with his companion. Both clerks, quaking with fear, backed up until they were cowering in the corner of the cavern.

The slave driver's mouth turned upward into a disgusting, hateful lust for death. He called out a word in the Garg-specific dialect, and the two stealthy Gargs, Drakinough and his friend, emerged from the shadows.

The head slave driver let out several more words, and suddenly the group of three Gargs charged at the frightened clerks, kicking and ramming with vicious might.

Calls of hideous laughter mingled with cries of pain and fright rang through the cavern as the four slave drivers beat on the two helpless Gargs.

Sensing the danger of the moment, Nilp gestured to his companions to exit the tunnel: Gargs riled to that extent could kill a Yorp for no reason at all.

Heading into an unknown tunnel, the Yorps began to stealthily creep out of the cavern, moving slowly and carefully.

Their hearts pounding, they approached the tunnel. They were about to step past the veil of darkness when a word sounded from one of the Gargs. Nilp spun around just in time to see all three Gargs rushing toward him and his friends!

In a split second, he was able to acknowledge the state of the two clerks that the four Gargs had beaten. They were both covered with countless bruises. One of them appeared to be dead, and the other barely had enough life to move an antenna. The left antenna of the dead Garg was bent downward, broken, and his right eye was smashed against the wall, blood oozing out. Teeth were missing in both Gargs, and one tooth was so far misplaced that it pierced the side of the other clerk. Broken legs, twisted antennae, and the such made up the image that Nilp took in a split second as he observed the fruit of the three Gargs' current mental state.

His mind racing and his heart now pounding visibly, Nilp yelled out, "RUN!"

Time seemed to slow down as he raced toward the exit tunnel. He could hear the raspy breath of three Gargs panting behind him. Adrenaline pumped through his body like water breaking through a dam, and he was able to press himself harder than he would ever have expected.

Seconds seemed like an eternity as he entered the darkness of the tunnel. Still, though, he could hear the Gargs running behind him. There was a moment when he could feel the hot breath of the pursuing Garg on the base of his antenna. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw his pursuer's antenna reaching to wrap itself around his neck.

Exasperated and gasping for breath, Nilp was suddenly hit by recognition of his true plight. Time froze as he realized that none of this mattered. Running from the Gargs would get him nowhere. If he managed to find some way to get away and hide while the

Gargs cooled down, what would he gain from it? He would only be once again found by a Garg and set to work mining.

He had no hope...he had no expectation. It was instinctive to avoid beatings and to run from trouble, but what gain would it be to him? None.

De-energized to the point of tears, he allowed himself to drop leftward, totally giving up. His pursuers gave snarls of triumph and victory, congratulating themselves in the Garg dialect.

In a matter of seconds, however, a small voice echoed along the tunnel to reach Nilp's ears...it was a familiar voice saying beseechingly, "There is hope! Come!"

The voice of his companion laborer was unmistakable. At the rate they had been running, the other Yorps should have been far ahead, but apparently, they had cared enough about Nilp to realize he had stopped and to wait for him around the bend in the tunnel!

Nilp saw once again in his mind's eye a reason to live and to go on. Whatever this thing was that his companions knew, Nilp was sure that no slave-Yorp would ever use the word "hope" without just cause.

Unfortunately, just as Nilp heard the voice, so did the Gargs. Their eyes showing alertness, Nilp could tell that they were ready to charge once again. Moving rapidly, Nilp pushed off from the cavern wall with his antenna, flying at the head Garg's feet to successfully knock him off balance.

In the blink of an eye, he grabbed the other Garg's antenna with his, forcefully bending it backwards and thrusting the astonished Garg onto the ground. With a renewed sense of hope and vigor, Nilp ran with all his strength and speed down the tunnel.

Words of contempt and hateful frustration poured from all three Gargs' mouths as they renewed the chase.

As Nilp proceeded through the winding cave, he saw no sign of his friends. After running with all his strength for many yards, he reached a place where the tunnel forked. With no idea where to go, Nilp looked left and right despairingly.

Just as the raspy breath of a pursuing Garg came to his ears, Nilp heard the familiar voice once again: "This way!"

Following the voice left, Nilp tore down the tunnel. Now he could see his three friends, each running for all that he was worth.

The chase was brought to a grinding halt by the sound a whip cracking on the floor of the cave. The four Yorps and three Gargs froze in their tracks, with their hearts pounding in their throats and breath coming out in gasps.

The sound had come from a solid-looking Garg holding a whip in his right antenna. He eyed the three pursuing Gargs angrily. He let forth a string of reprimanding words, which were responded to by the protests of the three former pursuers.

Words of bold confirmation and statement came from the new Garg, which were met with the angry yet convincingly submissive facial expressions of the three other Gargs.

[END: this is the point where I discontinued writing the story]

[Read on for more stuff]

Plans:

Before I quit writing, here are what my plans were:

1. As soon as the leader Garg (the one with the whip) leaves, the four Yorps and Garg head toward the surface. The Yorps are amazed at the beauty of the surface. The group goes to a palace, apparently the Garg King's palace. One of the Gargs goes in and comes out white-faced, saying something to the other Garg in the Garg dialect. They both head back to the mines, but on their way are stopped by a bunch of marching, singing Yorps that are part of some sort of Liberation League. The Gargs pretend to give up their prisoners, secretly planning to come back for them. Spending the night with the Yorp group, the four Yorps find out that the Garg king was crushed by Earth's Viking Lander, which gave the Yorps a perfect opportunity to rise up against the Gargs, and several small groups like this one have risen up and just need to be united to free the Yorp people from Garg enslavement. When Nilp goes outside to get or do something, the two Gargs, who were waiting for him, run at him to catch him and take him back to the mines as a trophy. Nilp runs and runs, and runs smack into Commander Keen. Commander Keen is described with detail, as a strange alien. Keen looks down at the Yorp with compassion, then notices the Gargs coming and zaps 'em with his raygun. Keen walks over to the ship, attaches the last component (he just finished the last level), and gets in. Nilp walks over and climbs in too, and Keen lets him come along. Once they get home, we see the Keen 1 end text from a different perspective, and see all the familiar lines again like "Aww, Mom, can't I keep him?" And then the story ends with Nilp happily basking in the sunshine and eating from a dogfood dish.

Next page: a mini-story

Here is the original, typewritten version of the Nilp story! In this version, which I wrote on a typewriter when I had nothing else to do, the character's name is Lirp. I have copied it exactly, aside from typographical errors, spacing, and a couple of subtle changes for the sake of clarity. I have also inserted some [] to make things even more clear.

Lirp's tongue hung out as he made his way back to the mineral processing station, his back laden down with rich minerals from beneath the surface of Mars. He had trouble keeping his eye up as he staggered along, exhausted.

He was a Yorp, the lesser of the two predominate species on the planet. Cruelly driven by the two-eyed Gargs, the Yorps were slaves and oppressees [i.e. oppressed]. Having no substantial means of defense, they were no match for their oppressors, and, try as they might, no brave Yorp ever came close to the role of liberator.

Due to the nature of things here on Earth, this may seem strange to you. However, the complications come not in the intellectual or otherwise mental nature of these Martians, but rather is attributed to their physical status. The body is mounted on two short yet useful legs. Above the body is a sole antenna topped with an eye. And finally, our green friends' source of nutrition, the mouth, is located in the center of the body, armed with one dull, herbivorous tooth.

The Gargs, on the other hand, were formed of a main body over twice the width. Though they have the same stubby legs, they have a mouth to scale of their body armed with rows of sharp teeth, as well as two antennae, one on each side of their head.

After that description, I imagine you are quite capable of understanding the nature and immutability of the oppressive relationship between the Yorps and Gargs. Once enmity began, all chances of the happiness and liberties of the Yorp race were vanquished. Now, the ferocious and cruel race of Gargs acts as slave drivers to the innocent, harmless Yorps.

This was all old news to Lirp as he lugged the load of iron ore back to the Main Processing Unit, thoroughly expecting a lecture from his Garg superior for being so late. He could only vaguely hope that his superior would understand how the miners' slave driver had overladen him to fulfill a grudge, partly out of spite and partly on account of having heard Lirp describe Gargs as "two-stalked green monsters".

The gloomy, long, underground tunnel was dimly lit by Garg lighting fixtures. Those of the ancient Yorp shrines were of a much more powerful wattage [Keen explores Yorp shrines in the computer game]. In front of him were two Garg oppressors, and two his side and behind him were more Yorp laborers, each with a bent body and an arched antenna; the back laden down with raw minerals, and the antenna bent due to a sense of hopelessness, overexertion, and a futile attempt to be able to keep going all day without collapsing at least once.

Although he couldn't see or hear them, he knew that only a couple of feet behind him were also two more Garg oppressors. He knew because once his friend Nild had tried to vanish into the shadows when nobody was watching, but no sooner than becoming still as a statue, had noticed four cruel eyes staring at him. Poor Nild. He was detained and punished severely, then never seen again. Everyone thought the Gargs had sent him permanently to the hard labor of building the Ice Cities in the north of Mars as punishment, but the Gargs hadn't leaked any information about poor Nild.

Finally, Lirp caught [glimpsed] a glow of a slightly brighter light and bent the tip of his antenna up to see. The glow was from the comparatively-bright lights of the processing station. Of course, even this light was dim in comparison to the light of the surface, but so depressing is the effect of spending all day in the depths of the mines, that to Lirp and the other Yorps it seemed like the surface of Mercury [the planet closest to the sun].

Soon they entered a large cavern. Now, rather than the dull electrical lanterns that lined the tunnels, there was a standard (rather than cheap) Garg light fixture in the roof of the cavern (which Lirp guessed to be a couple meters high).

The cavern was mostly empty, except for a growing pile of minerals in the shadows of the left and a desk directly under the light, behind which stood three vicious-looking guards, their nasty eyes keeping a close eye on everything that went on. The group walked to the mineral deposit, where they saw still another nasty-looking Garg. After dropping their weights, they were led by the two Gargs in the front to the desk. A sign on the side of the desk read in the Standard Galactic Alphabet in Omnispeak, "Registration and Info". [Omnispeak is a universal language in the Keen universe.]

On most occasions, only one of the two Gargs would approach the desk; the other Garg standing in a defensive stance in front of the group and motioning with his antennae for the group to stop. This time, however, it was quite obvious that the intentions of their oppressors were for the entire group to approach the desk. Today, things were different. It was Lirp's secret hope that perhaps this team was being reassigned to some surface duty; perhaps the new robots were going to be assigned down here. Speaking in a Garg-specific dialect of Omnispeak, the registration officers and the Yorp supervisors/guards exchanged a few long strings of words each. The Yorps could not understand them.

One of the Gargs behind the desk reached down to a cabinet behind and beneath the desk with his left antenna while his right antenna stood still to keep an eye on things. A second later, the antenna emerged, wrapped around an unimaginably thin slice of processed iron. At the same time, one of the other Gargs behind the desk did the same at his location; his antenna emerging wrapped around a lava pen. The former placed the iron-paper on the surface of the desk, and the latter handed the lava pen to the waiting left-antenna of one of the guards. Accepting the pen, the guard/supervisor Garg began to melt writing onto the iron slab.

Lirp couldn't help but wish that he had a second antenna to perform tasks like that. As a Yorp, he was treated by all Gargs as a worthless subspecie.

Fighting the urge to lay down on the hard rock-ground, Lirp waited in anticipation of what was to come.

Finally, the Garg handed the pen back to the registration officer and the other officer picked up the iron slab, read it, and put it back under the desk.

Without a word of explanation, the two Yorp-relations Gargs began walking toward the exit tunnel, saying "This way" in the common dialect.

Lirp's hopes soared as, walking through more dimly-lit underground tunnels, he realized that they were gradually moving upward. He had never been to the surface more than once in his life, and then he was too young to remember. Every turn they took was like a step toward another world.

Finally, they turned one more underground corner, and Lirp saw something that he had never before seen in his life. As the roof of the tunnel ahead of them ceased to

exist, the light of the sun illuminated what was left of the sloping tunnel, giving it a sort of red glow. You, as a human on earth, would probably have thought the distant sun reflecting onto the red earth a depressing, gloomy sight, but to Lirp, who had spent most of his time underground, seeing only in the light of the cheapest of Garg lighting devices, it was like the sun of the morning on a lush, green field. So deep and so dark were the tunnels, that he had not even realized that the rocks and the soil were red!

Every moment was an eternity as the party moved toward the surface.

When finally the group was level with the planet and 100% out of the mines, Lirp thought that it seemed like he was in a totally different world.

After walking only a few more paces, the two leading Gargs turned around and said in the common dialect of Omnispeak, "Here we sleep."

Lirp collapsed to the ground from exhaustion. Even the hard, rocky surface of Mars seemed like a soft bed to this exhausted green Yorp. So was his exhaustion that he did not notice the movements of his fellow Yorps or the four Gargs (front and back), or the fact that the bright beauty of The Surface had only been a fraction of the real light; it was the light of the night.

The light of the morning shone down on Lirp. He was on Earth; the planet next in line from Mars toward the sun. Yorp scholars believe that Earth is capable of sustaining sentient [alive like a human] life, and it is common knowledge that Earth is the most beautiful planet in the solar system, filled with beautiful forms of plant life and intricate patterns of terrain.

That was where Lirp found himself now, seated in a lush, green field of soft grass, wet from the dew of the morning. In the distance, he saw legendary structures called by scholars "trees", and pools filled with liquidated, genuine water. [I said 'liquidated' because Mars has water in its polar caps, but it is frozen, so to Lirp water's natural state is ice.]

The satisfaction of Lirp was doubled as he saw some sort of food attached to the appendage of one of the Trees. Approaching the tree, he stretched his neck up to it and bumped at it several times, and it fell down. It was orange and round, with a soft yet strong shell. After kicking it, jumping on it, and otherwise attacking it, it finally burst and yielded a strange orange liquidous substance. He was just about to bend down and take a lick when he felt soft nibbling on the side of his neck, like that of a fellow Yorp trying to get his attention gently but quickly.

Rolling over, he saw that there was another Yorp beside him on the ground, his antenna held low, gently nibbling at him.

As he rubbed his eyes, the green field became desolate red and the trees faded. Blinking and squinting in disappointment, he saw the soft orange rock and the liquid it yielded vanish.

With a sigh, he blinked again and spoke in a soft whisper, "Is that you, Malti?"

"Yes, Lirp. I know you're tired; we're all tired...but I had to tell you. Several weeks ago, I happened to be heading for my next load of minerals at the same time as the miners were returning with their minerals. Apparently their Gargs aren't as strict as ours, for I heard them quietly talking amongst themselves. It sounded like there's a rumor going on about...the outside world." Malti started moving his eye toward the sky as a

gesture of wonder when he suddenly realized that he was *in* the 'outside world' at the present...on the surface of the planet.

"Well, Malti?" asked Lirp, "What were the rumors?"

"I can't say anything for certain; it was just a rumor, but..."

"Well, go on!"

"You know the planet where we get all the toys? The one with sentient life on it?" [According to the Keen storyline, Martians visit Earth in UFO's to steal toys from it.]

"Yeah; I was just dreaming about it."

"Well, I've heard that UFOs have been sighted...coming from the direction of Planet Earth! And that's not all. They said this was even a more vague rumor than the other, but...you see,"

Suddenly a ferocious, bellowing roar erupted from somewhere on the ground near the group, or in the midst of the group. Another of the awoken Yorps whispered desperately, "Back down! That was a Garg! Shh!"

Indeed, the roar was a yawn from one of the Gargs. Almost simultaneously, three more erupted from nearby. Nobody knows exactly why Gargs yawn like that: always when they wake up, like some of the Earthlings are rumored to stretch. Anyway, it always served as a sufficient warning for the Yorps: either it's time to wake up before they punish you for being an ignorant sleepyhead, or in this case, it's time to quite conversing behind their backs.

"Time to go," said the one of the head Gargs. Setting himself upright almost instantly using his handy two antennae and his legs, he, along with the other, started moving again.

That's as far as I wrote. Obviously, I later decided to, instead of finishing what you just read, make a totally new story (the one about Nilp). In the new story, the character ended up being called Nilp because either I couldn't remember the name of the old one, or I decided 'Nilp' sounded better (I don't remember which).

Next Page: Credits and Miscellany

The title of this story is “A Yorp’s Hope,” but its only working titles were “Nilp” and “Untitled of Yet.” ☺

This document and everything in it was written entirely by Damien Riegel.

The Commander Keen universe, containing Yorps, Gargs, Commander Keen, Omnispeak, the Standard Galactic Alphabet, and anything else created for the original Commander Keen computer games, was created by and is owned by iD Software.

You can contact me at DSRfeedback@yahoo.com.
My web site is DSR.rewound.net.