

Cossack Ascends the Throne by Cheezey

All things considered, it was a good day on planet Doom. King Zarkon was in an exceptionally fine mood, mostly because he had just received word that a planet he wanted in his empire had been conquered, a small and out of the way world called Threll. It was not quite as exciting as it would have been if it had been, say, planet Arus, but planet Threll had two qualities that made him like it—a sizable chunk of prime quality lazon and no uber-powered, blazing-sword-wielding, smarmy-piloted robot protecting it. That was always a plus.

“Word has it that you conquered Threll, sire?” the witch Haggar’s distinctive voice asked as she entered the throne room, carrying her wooden staff as usual and with her blue cat familiar at her heels.

“Indeed,” Zarkon replied with a victorious grin. “Now all that lazon is ours for the taking. And it was so easy, without that annoying Voltron Force butting in like they always do.”

“How did you manage that, anyway?” Haggar inquired.

Zarkon grinned. “It was all part of my master plan when I sent out two battleships. One to get Voltron’s attention and keep him occupied, and one to actually do the conquering.”

“You must be very pleased with Prince Lotor’s success then. This will be his first conquering victory after a string of 37.5 failures,” the witch noted.

“I thought it was 38?” Zarkon said, giving the old witch a quizzical look.

“I only count that last one as half a failure, since he managed to blow up a few cities and singe the fur off of two of those pesky little space mice before Voltron handed him his hide,” Haggar

replied with a shrug. At the mention of the space mice, Haggar's cat licked its lips hungrily and rubbed against her robe.

"Well, whatever," Zarkon continued, "either way, Lotor actually racked up another failure today, since it was him I sent to engage Voltron." Zarkon paused. "By the way, you know that experimental turbo robeast you had in your lab? He used that. Or should I say he *wasted* that, since it's now in four pieces courtesy of the blazing sword."

Haggar pouted. "He didn't!"

"He did."

"Maybe you should have let him go conquer Threll while Merla took on Voltron. On average, she goes through 25% fewer robeasts than he does."

"I didn't send Merla," Zarkon informed the witch.

Haggar raised an eyebrow, although the gesture was not visible due to the shadows of her hood. "No?"

A leer crossed the king's features. "No, today was 'massage day' and boy, did I need it! Oh yes."

Haggar scowled, burning with jealousy. How dare that pink-haired, metal-bra-wearing tramp of a queen move in on *her* Zarkon when she was already promised to his pretty-boy son? *It's definitely time to put a mini-robeast in her underwear drawer*, the witch decided. Forcing herself to keep a neutral tone, she eyed Zarkon curiously. "So who did you send to conquer planet Threll if not Merla?"

The king of Doom chuckled. “Cossack.”

Haggar blinked in dubious surprise. “Cossack conquered Threll? He can barely conquer the concept of shampoo!”

“Be that as it may, he’s done better than Yurak at any rate. He never managed to get me so much lazon.”

“My cat could do better than that dog-eared buffoon ever did,” Haggar scoffed. She had never made a secret of the fact that she detested the arrogant and now deceased former commander.

Zarkon leaned back in his throne, still pleasantly feeling his now-I-control-yet-another-world high. “And Lotor, at least as of late. With all of his screw-ups lately, it’s easier to send him to annoy the people on Arus and gawk at the princess to fire up Voltron than it is to get him to do some serious bloodthirsty conquering. I think all that wine he drinks—oh, excuse me, his ‘mean potion’—has permanently pickled his brain.”

“That and staring at his beloved little princess causes what blood his pickled brain gets to flow elsewhere,” Haggar agreed. “You know, sire, your logic is brilliant! I’m just amazed that Cossack didn’t screw it up.”

“So am I,” Zarkon laughed. “But still, I was thinking of rewarding him. Throwing him a bone for good service.”

“Because you admire his unwavering dedication to you, King Zarkon?”

“No, because it’ll really tweak Lotor to see Cossack get a reward when he doesn’t.” At that, Zarkon let out another nasty laugh. “My upstart son needs some humbling anyway.”

Haggar's laughter mingled with that of her king's for a moment before she asked him another question. "So what sort of award did you have in mind? You already awarded him the prestigious Golden Skull some time ago."

The king stroked his scaly blue chin thoughtfully for a moment, considering the possibilities, and then his eyes lit up with decidedly devious inspiration as a mischievous smile spread across his lips. "I know just the thing."

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"Yahoo!" an extraordinarily jubilant Cossack exclaimed in victory as he stepped off of his battleship, followed by the remaining Doomite robots that had accompanied him and survived the mission. "We won! See what happens when we don't run out of bombs?"

"Huzzah!" echoed a number of the robots on the right.

"Bombs forever!" added an equal number on the left.

One of the soldiers sent to greet the victorious ship passed the commander a beer, which he began to guzzle thirstily, leaving traces of beer foam on his nose. "What a great day," he said cheerfully after swallowing hearty mouthful. "I conquered a planet! I conquered a planet!"

"Well *you're* rather high on yourself today, aren't you?" Queen Merla's sarcastic voice greeted him as she weaved her way through the crowd.

Cossack narrowed his eyes at Merla. He never much cared for the snooty queen. She was stuck-up, incredibly condescending and rude to him, and thought she was the gods' gift to planet Doom. Granted, Merla was pretty and all, but her clothes always smelled like vulture from her bird sitting on her shoulder and in his humble opinion Princess Allura's remark about her lipstick was dead on, so he did not see what she had to be so high on herself about. And to top it all off,

on that day of all days she dared to show him disrespect even though *he* had conquered a planet and *she* had not? *I don't think so, Queenie. You're not stepping your prissy red boots all over the hard-earned glory of Cossack the Terrible today,* he thought as he watched her approach.

“Hard earned glory?” Merla sneered, picking up on his thoughts telepathically. “Oh please. What did you do, drop bombs until they surrendered? Or did you just let the leaders of Threll get a good whiff of your armor?”

“Speaking of armor, you have bird crap on your shoulder, your highness,” Cossack retorted in a sarcastically polite tone. “Just thought you’d like to know. Maybe you ought to let your vulture out more often,” he added before he strode past her, resisting the urge to stop and yank her goofy pink braid and instead proceeding toward King Zarkon’s throne room.

“How dare you insult me like that, you toad-pond born worm?” Merla snapped in outrage at the retreating fleet commander’s form and the robots that followed him.

Cossack paused, about to fire off an equally witty reply, when one of the Doomite robots saved him the trouble. “He is correct, Queen Merla,” the robot stated in its mechanical tone as it pointed to a spot on the back of her shoulder. “There a spot of vulture excrement upon your shoulder armor. Cleaning is recommended.”

Frowning, Merla craned her neck and adjusted the armor so she could see it, and sure enough, a white streak decorated her chic and evil war gear. She let out a disgusted noise, which grew louder when she heard Cossack snicker. “Told you so,” he retorted oh-so-maturely, and then proudly walked off toward the throne room with his head held high.

King Zarkon was reclining upon his throne, Haggar still at his side, when Cossack entered. The fleet commander walked to the foot of the staircase that led to the throne and bowed respectfully to his liege. “I bring you good news, sire. Threll is ours, and with it all of its lazon and some slaves. Some are even pretty enough to qualify for the royal harem, and I wouldn’t mind conquering one or two if I do say so myself.”

“Cossack, you’re babbling,” Haggar said disdainfully. “Don’t debase Doom’s victory with your ‘enlightened’ commentary.”

Zarkon let out a grunt and rose to his feet, picking up the small box that had just been delivered to him a short while ago that was to be Cossack’s award. “Stand up, Cossack. Don’t pay Haggar any mind—I never do.”

“Hmph!” came in an indignant huff from the witch’s direction, while Cossack rose to his feet as ordered, facing Zarkon as he descended the stairs and stood evenly with his subordinate.

“Anyway, Commander, I’m very pleased with the addition of Threll to our empire and by extension with your role in securing it,” Zarkon told Cossack, who was clearly basking happily in the praise being bestowed upon him by his king, as evidenced by the goofy smile on his Drule features. “Therefore, Cossack, I would like to give you a reward for your loyal and excellent service to the empire.”

Cossack beamed from ear to ear. “Oh thank you, your highness! Cossack the Terrible is honored to serve such an evil, yet generous ruler such as yourself, King Zarkon.” He paused, and eyed the monarch hopefully. “Does this mean I will get one of the pretty slaves? I’d love to have someone to shampoo my hair to make it shiny like Prince Lotor’s...”

Another unintelligible noise of displeasure came from Haggar’s direction, and she shook her head beneath her robe and muttered in disgust. “Oh, for the love of everything evil, is every man on Doom a pig?”

Ignoring Haggar yet again, Zarkon held out the box intended for Cossack. “I’ll give your request the full consideration it deserves, Cossack, but actually this was the reward I had planned for you.” An evil gleam twinkled in Zarkon’s reptilian-like eyes as he handed the grinning commander the box.

“Oooh, what is it?” Cossack inquired, eyeing it much like a young child would a big birthday present.

“Open it and see.” Zarkon’s tone was deceptively calm and sincere.

Without waiting for any further urging, Cossack flipped open the box, revealing an ornate golden key laid carefully on a red velour background. The fleet commander’s full name and title “Cossack the Terrible” was artfully engraved upon the handle. “Hey, a key!” he exclaimed, stating the obvious. “What does this go to?”

Zarkon grinned. “Well, Cossack, you always wanted a place of importance in my throne room. After some very long and careful deliberation about your contributions to my empire over the time you’ve been in my fleet, I decided that it was high time that you had a throne of your own—and this is the key to it.” The king of Doom raised his arm and pointed to a hallway off to the left that had several doors. “Second door on the left.”

Cossack snatched up the key like a prize and walked swiftly toward the door, almost running but not quite. After all, it would not do for one as fearsome and dangerous as Cossack the Terrible to look so eager and excited, even though it was painfully obvious to anyone looking that he was. As the Doom fleet commander made his way down the hall, Zarkon and Haggar exchanged knowing evil looks. “This will be priceless,” Zarkon snickered to the witch, who let out a snarky giggle of her own.

Reaching the door, Cossack ceremoniously placed the key in the lock and turned, standing tall and allowing the moment of anticipation to fill him with excitement. Finally, after all his years of service in the Doom fleet and his subsequent time logged as King Zarkon’s primary commander, and despite all of the nasty snide remarks and insults he had endured at the hands of those too foolish to know greatness when they saw it, Cossack the Terrible was finally being recognized for the fearsome military genius that he was! Unable to contain his excitement any longer, he turned the key.

As he pushed open the door, a light came on and he was surprised not to see a cushy throne or even a posh private lounge staffed by scantily clad slaves—it was a bathroom. Granted, it was among the nicest bathrooms he had ever seen, with expensive marble fixtures polished to perfection, their golden accents shining in the fluorescent light, and what portions of the floor were not covered with extravagant imported tile were covered with thick, high-quality shag rug, always nice on the tootsies after a long day. Despite its ritzy décor, the ambiance of the lavatory

was not girly in the slightest, but decorated to be a manly bathroom in color and tone, although clearly suited to one of taste. Certainly it was a far cry from the standard military issue bathrooms on planet Doom and an eternity above the one in his own quarters, which had not been cleaned since the last robot that had been assigned to it self-terminated during in the process.

But by far the most impressive thing in the bathroom was the toilet. It was majestic and imposing, upon a dais in the center of the room, constructed of sturdy marble. A grand bookcase was built alongside it, meant to hold volumes of reading material to be browsed at one's leisure, and the seat was crafted to the ideal specification for any self-respecting conqueror. And it was his—for engraved upon the back of the toilet in bold golden calligraphy was his name and title: Cossack the Terrible.

“Oh wow,” Cossack exclaimed, completely taken in by the sight and equally oblivious to the not-so-subtle insult of Zarkon equating his usefulness to a bathroom and making a throne for him out of a toilet. All Cossack could think about in his glee was that he finally had a clean bathroom, and a royal one at that. Grinning from ear to ear, he let out a loud shout to show his appreciation. “Yahoo!”

Back in the throne room, Zarkon and Haggar exchanged looks once again when they heard his euphoric shout. “Yahoo?” the perplexed Zarkon repeated, mildly disappointed to realize that Cossack was either hopelessly optimistic or legitimately dense enough to not realize when he was being picked on. Although he was not entirely positive, his money was on the latter.

The witch shrugged, equally puzzled. “I guess he likes it. His bathroom is a frightening place, you know. It even scares me, and I worship the dark spirits.”

Before the conversation could go any further, Cossack returned to face his liege, still smiling happily. “Thank you so much for your generosity, sire! The key to a royal bathroom, and it's all for me—for the mighty and feared Cossack the Terrible! I swear to put it to productive and frequent use!”

At that remark, Zarkon's eyes widened while Haggar visibly cringed at Cossack's sharing of entirely too personal information, but both remained silent as the fleet commander

continued. Cossack spotted a copy of The Daily Doom sitting out near Zarkon's throne. "Speaking of which, that sure was a long ride back from Threll. Mind if I borrow that?"

Still at a complete and utter loss for words, Zarkon nodded and handed the newspaper to his commander, who took it and folded it under his arm. Then, after giving King Zarkon a respectful and crisp military salute of thanks, he turned and strode confidently to his newly acquired quarters, ready to ascend his throne.

The End