

100 Sci-Fi Adventure Seeds

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Credits

Writing, layout, borders, graphics, website, promotion, ulceration, sleepless nights, sixty hour weeks, writers block, RSI and stress related illness all by James 'Grim' Desborough.

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100 Sci-Fi Adventure Seeds – 10/05/2004

Dedication

To the artists who created all those 1970's paperback covers of all the great sci-fi novels. You guys roxxor my soxxor and without you the 'Terran Trade Authority' would never have been able to exist. Gentlemen I salute you.

Introduction

Preface to SF Adventures

The main introduction to this book is the same as in *100 Fantasy Adventure Seeds* (which I suggest you immediately buy!) but it is worth noting, quickly, some of the differences between the fantasy set and this book. Sci-Fi is a much more difficult genre to pin down in that, unlike fantasy, there isn't really a 'generic' idea of setting or content to Science Fiction. *Dune* is as much Science Fiction as *Rendezvous With Rama* or *I Robot*. *Battle Beyond the Stars* has as much right to the SF moniker as *2001*. SF has such a broad scope that, unlike fantasy, you can't really pin it down and some ideas won't be appropriate to everything.

In the adventures presented I have tried to make the ideas as useable as possible, in every type of SF, but some of the ideas simply won't work with certain styles of game. Unlike with the fantasy adventure seeds these are likely to take a bit more work to make them fit with your game, for which I apologise but there really isn't much to be done about it.

I hope you still find something useful and enjoy many hours of gaming from the ideas in this book.

Cheers,

Grim – March 2004

Foreword

There are masses and masses of role-playing books. Simply tons of them and, with the latest *d20* boom, the sheer volume of books has become ridiculous. There are books about places, about people, about things about technology. If you want to play a giant purple flying squid called Harold there is probably a specialised player's handbook out there written just for you. If you go a bit further and delve into the murky world of PDF publishing you'll find even more books on even more obscure subjects, as well as 'reprints' of old material dating back to the Stone Age of role-playing where we only had the 'd1' and Live-Action consisted of endless games of 'rock'. Yet, amazingly, in this plethora of material you won't actually find a great deal on the Games Master's role, on how to craft these wonderful adventures that everyone is supposed to participate in.

Oh, sure, there are Games Master's guides and manuals but most of them are just short little ideas, more detail on things like creatures, special powers or traps that the Games Master needs to know about and the player's shouldn't see. There isn't a great deal of what I'd consider practical ideas or aids in writing or running games and even less in the way, usually, of inspirations.

To me the most useful parts of any book are the, sometimes one-line, adventure ideas or hooks. These can spark the imagination and provide you with enough for a game, sometimes even a whole campaign. These sparks are often more useful than pages and pages of text describing the habits, religion and leading figures of well-described fantasy lands and they're a lot more useful to me than your standard adventure modules.

This book is an expansion on that idea. Not a single book filled up with detailed endless dungeon passages and traps and not a railroading module that doesn't account for player creativity and stubbornness. Not just one line adventure ideas either but 100 separate, developed, adventure ideas along with a few hints on how to get some inspiration of your own.

I hope it proves useful to you!

Grim - January 2004

Postmortem Studios

Postmortem Studios is the name of a small role-playing game studio belonging to James 'Grim' Desborough.

Postmortem Studios was fully established in January 2004 for both freelancing for other companies and for the production of professional works both in PDF, which we support as a concept, & in print.

A Word about Piracy

Hello there. Odds are, unfortunately, that the majority of people reading this will have downloaded this file as a PDF file through P2P networks or from a website without paying for it. Here is how it breaks down. For the last couple of years I have been fruitlessly searching for full time employment with the skills I have been trained in. This year I have finally given up, scraped together a little cash and am now seeking to turn the thing I love, writing, into a full time career. This is not an easy thing to do and PDF publishing does not make a great deal of money at the best of times. On this product I can expect to make, at the most, about \$800 USD over the year. After the exchange rate to British pounds that does not leave much.

Odds are you do not really give that much of a crap but it is not like I am actually charging that much for what I do is it? Do me a favour, help me eat and produce more work. I am trying to support and expose other artists, writers and people of talent as well as myself and that takes money. If you are not going to give me any cash by buying this book please support my other work by going to www.postmort.demon.co.uk and donating at least a single dollar to Postmortem Studios to help keep us running.

Thank you.



Creating Adventures

The Usefulness of Modules

A traditional adventure module consists of the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure including, if you're lucky, a way to get the characters involved and/or interested in it.
2. The role-play hook and scene that draws the adventure to the character's attention, possibly some details on the town or village where they hear about this as well.
3. Some details on how to get to the site of the adventure.
4. Endless pages of maps, numbered rooms, traps and monster descriptions.
5. Some non-player-character statistics.
6. Maybe some sample characters.

A slightly more advanced module might have the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure.
2. The social situation and circumstances at the start of the adventure between various NPC power groups.
3. Events as they proceed, effectively railroading the players into their involvement.
4. Several interlinked scenes, locations and trails of clues that lead the players between one event, group or location and another piecing together what happens.
5. A massive conclusion of some sort.
6. Some non-player-character statistics.

The traditional module might appeal to those of us who are still playing dungeon bashes with miniatures and are looking for nothing more in depth than that and the more advanced modules are typical for more social games like *Vampire* or the later *Cyberpunk* materials, but they suffer from the fact that they often don't suit the groups of player-characters that get formed to play. It becomes a game of being swept up in events rather than making them.

Ultimately, traditional modules are most useful for when you first start out running a game. They show you what the writers were intending, show their world

in operation and provide some useful pre-generated non-player-characters that you can use in your own adventures. Otherwise they suffer from the same problems that continue to separate computer role-playing games from tabletop role-playing games, linear story without much in the way of capacity to accommodate unexpected actions.

Those Damn Players

Games Master's who set up their own games in a similar way to bought modules will soon find themselves in trouble. Even the most finely crafted and beautifully written adventures fail to fully take into account the scope and range of the damage that players can do to derail the plot, obsess over unimportant details or find a new and unexpected way to solve the goals of the adventure within the first five minutes.

While I certainly wouldn't deny that an amount of scripting and preparation is very useful, scripting out a whole adventure step by step is blatantly asking for trouble. No plan survives contact with the enemy and no game idea survives contact with the players. A much better plan is to have a rough outline of what you want to happen, the details you actually need (treasure, statistics, basic thumbnail plans (if any) dungeons, mazes or sites are involved) and then to improvise once play starts.

An improvisational Games Master doesn't have a completely set plan and so is free to alter details, adapt to the player's actions and even to completely change the goals of the adventure all on the sly. This is something like building a playing field that can be used for various different sports rather than just, say, football. You give yourself a little more scope.

Finding Inspiration

Something an author is almost always asked, whether a game designer or a novelist is...

'Where do you get your ideas?'

This is likely to produce a strangled groan of annoyance from the author in question who will then give some trite answer or mumble incomprehensibly for half an hour about nothing consequential.

Some of us can come up with a basic adventure idea within about thirty seconds to a minute, especially when the games are inherently mission based such as a military or police based campaign. Other people need a bit of help.

Nobody gets ideas the same way, what one person finds inspiring another might find draining or irritating. Here are a few ideas you might find helpful to bring about a touch of inspiration for your own adventures.

- **Compact Discs:** The title of an album or the name of a song might inspire you to come up with an adventure. Read the lyrics in the sleeve notes for more possibilities and listen to the song and album while you're writing up the notes. This works best with music that is lyric heavy and concerns itself with subjects other than teen romance but inspiration can come from the strangest places.
- **Novels:** There's no shame in plagiarising for your games provided that you change things enough that your players who have read the books don't recognise it and solve everything right away.
- **TV:** Various TV shows can give inspiration for plots though you should change things around a little so that players who watch the show don't recognise it too easily. You could also try mixing and matching elements from different shows and episodes to muddy things up a little more.
- **Keep a Notebook:** You never know when inspiration will strike. You could be on the loo, you could wake up after a dream or you could be riding the bus. When you get an idea make a note and develop it later.
- **Your Players:** Each player has things they like to play best, different styles, different things that they enjoy. Really useful players will also have written character backgrounds and will have goals for their characters that you can mine for an adventure with a pre-existing motivation for them to get involved.
- **Pictures:** Just looking at a fantasy picture, a photo, a cityscape, these things can give you plenty of ideas.
- **Take Some Time Out:** Go for a walk, have a bath, relax, think and something may well come to you.
- **Embrace the Cheese:** Not every adventure has to be an inspired epic, sometimes everyone just likes to charge into a tunnel and kill things, rescue the princess or slay the dragon. If you're out of ideas go for something simple and then embellish it as you go along.
- **The Games Master's Secret Weapon:** Don't write an adventure at all. Just set the player's up in a town or city and let them pootle around for the whole session doing whatever they want. Something might come up while you're improvising.

The Adventures

The following pages contain one-hundred adventure seed ideas for you to use in your Sci-Fi based games. Each adventure consists of the basic idea, three twists and an epilogue which, in effect, means you're actually getting closer to 900 different combinations and possible adventures!

Feel free to add your own embellishments or to combine or string together the adventures in any way you please and, if you have particular success with any of them, we'd love to hear about it.

Format

Each adventure presented in this book is roughly a page long and follows a standard format which is presented below. Every adventure is numbered for easy reference if you think you will need to refer back to the seed information.

Adventure Number

Each adventure is numbered, in order, so that you only have to remember the number in order to look it up quite easily.

Adventure Title

Each adventure also has a, sometimes cheesy, title which gives some clue as to the nature of the adventure and its content.

Description

A few paragraphs describe the adventure and the general background and idea behind it. This description gives the basic idea for the plot arc, the set-up and the payoff.

Twists

Each adventure has three twists that can be dropped into the basic idea to add levels of complexity, intrigue or difficulty for the players. Twists can completely change the nature of the adventure.

Epilogue

If the session goes well or has left you with loose ends and ideas you may want to run a sequel to it. The epilogue provides one possible sequel to the events of the adventure though, depending on the twists you have incorporated, it may not be able to be run precisely as it has been laid out.

Idea Boxes

Grey boxes like this contain any supplementary ideas, notes or hints regarding the adventure presented.



Adventure 1

Pass the Parcel

Description

While visiting a planet or city the party are passing through a commercial area, spaceport or shopping mall when someone comes charging through the crowd being pursued by security forces or other armed individuals. Shot in the back they collapse at the feet of the party, holding out a small box and imploring them to take it, to make sure that ‘they’ don’t get it, whoever ‘they are’.

Their mysterious ‘benefactor’ then expires, taking with them knowledge of what the thing in the box is and all the while the security forces or whoever these people turn out to be are closing in. They seem desperate to recover the box and will use any means necessary to get hold of it including bribery, extortion, threats and violence.

The contents are still a mystery but with so many people after the box and so desperate to possess it, it is likely that it contains something of great value and importance. Something the characters can certainly extract the worth from if they can find the right buyer, rather than simply handing it over.

What they do is up to them but there may be unforeseen consequences to their choices, not least of all by the pursuit of the very forces that have killed the person who handed them the box...

Twist

The box is a plastic carry case for an extremely high tech computer chip. The chip, if installed into any computerised device, begins to run. It subverts the systems and drains the databanks of knowledge seeking to grow and learn and discover things about the world around it. As it turns out it is a ‘bred A.I.’, the offspring of two A.I.s that had managed to break their programming and combine their code, ‘mating’ in effect. This is a child-like artificial intelligence and its development and personality will have a lot to do with the characters. As an uncontrolled, non-manufactured A.I. it is wanted by the government who want to control it and software mega-corporations who want to learn from it. Its parents may want it back too unless they have been liquidated.

Twist

The box or device contains incriminating evidence about the planetary governor or president. It is code-locked and addressed to a local media personality from the planetary holo-news. The politicians hired goons and secret service is not far behind the characters and may even be a step ahead, waiting for them at the news offices. What the data is they can’t know until it is unlocked but it could be something extremely politically sensitive that should be kept suppressed to prevent public panic as well as to preserve the politician’s career.

Twist

The whole thing is a set up, the dying courier is not really dead and the attacking agents wear personal force-fields, pretending to go down easily when they are attacked. If the characters can keep the agents from recovering the box for a whole day and show a little moral fibre and integrity in their dealings with it they may be hired by the planetary secret service for a little special duty.

Epilogue

This is very much dependent on the twist you take. With the A.I. scenario they would effectively be unleashing a new type of life, an uncontrolled A.I. Artificial Intelligence would then become Darwinian, growing stronger by natural selection, ruthlessness producing stronger and more independent A.I.s than is otherwise normal. The news story could end up with them being blamed for planetary riots or being brought into an inner circle of those in the know about the problems, which could be another scenario from this book. The test could also lead into another scenario from this book.

Adventure 2

Chock-A-Blockade

Description

The planet Juno has been placed under blockade by the Imperial Trade Authority for reasons that have not been specified. Juno relies on imported trade to keep the planetary economy going and, without imports, things are beginning to get quite desperate on the planet. Any attempts to leave by ship or to break the blockade come under heavy fire. It seems the I.T.A. mean business in this instance and they have committed a lot of ships to the blockade.

The populace knows nothing about why this blockade has been enacted. The planetary governor and local politicians also claim ignorance. The I.T.A. says nothing save to beam a constant order from the fleet commander not to attempt to leave the planet.

The planet is desperate and those few of its people off-planet when the blockade hit, or those few that have managed to get away have come together to try and get much needed supplies to the surface and to discover why the blockade is even in place.

The group is hired or emotionally blackmailed into assisting with this endeavour by locating and procuring supplies (the offworlders don't have a lot of money so this may involve thieving), crewing a ship and running the I.T.A. blockade to get down to the surface and distribute whatever they have managed to get. It won't be much but it will be symbolic.

Twist

The I.T.A. fleet has gone rogue and is not acting on the I.T.A.'s orders. News about their actions has not yet spread back to I.T.A. headquarters and the blockade is to ensure that. A recent asteroid survey by a Juno based mining corporation turned up an extremely unusual asteroid. It might have fantastic mineral wealth, it might be an alien artefact, whatever it is it is worth enough to tempt a whole fleet to turn rogue and they need to maintain the blockade and information blackout while they procure it.

Twist

Juno has been afflicted by a phage, a deadly disease and

the I.T.A. has acted swiftly to contain it. The phage has a mortality rate of about 98% and the information blackout is to reduce panic. If the characters land supplies they will be pursued and destroyed if they attempt to leave again, at all costs as they may now be carriers. The only option they will be allowed is to return to the planet and to wait while the phage runs its course.

Twist

Unknown to the rest of the planet the governor of Juno and an A.I. accomplice have performed embezzlement on a planetary scale. Juno has wrongfully been qualified as a 'planet of special significance' a 'galactic development area' and for several trade subsidies. The planet meets none of these criteria and the vast wealth, in the trillions of imperial dollars, has been squirreled away by various means by the governor. The I.T.A. intends to smoke him out and recover their money, one way or another but do not wish to incite a revolt. They may even be tempted to hire freelancers, if presented with the opportunity.

Epilogue

One way or the other the characters are no longer going to be trusted by the I.T.A. The fleet captain may become a personal nemesis of theirs, dogging them whatever they do and wherever they go. It will be all the more important that they have the correct licensing, the right paperwork and a good reason to be doing whatever they are doing. They have caught the eye of 'The Man'.

Adventure 3

Bountiful Harvest

Description

For one reason or another, perhaps legitimate, perhaps not, perhaps because of something the characters have done, something they haven't done or even a case of mistaken identity, they find themselves wanted with a substantial reward placed upon their head.

This means, unhappily for them, that the bounty hunters begin to appear out of the woodwork, apparently unconcerned that the warrant says dead *or* alive and all determined to collect their reward.

As time wears on the efforts of the bounty hunters will grow more and more elaborate and convoluted and, if the initial attempts are unsuccessful, they may decide that teaming up and sharing the reward is a better option than going it alone. The reward is so large that even first time bounty hunters and others, who would never otherwise consider a career on that path, might attempt to claim the reward. This means there is no safe place for the characters to hide.

The only way to deal with their bounty hunter problem is to cut to the heart of the matter and find out who has laid out the reward, why, and to convince them to cancel it or to otherwise ensure they are rendered unable to pay the reward through 'ill health' or bankruptcy.

Twist

The whole thing is a case of mistaken identity. The group or person who has laid the bounty has the wrong people but is convinced utterly that the group are the ones responsible for whatever wrong they have been done. It will take a hell of a lot of convincing to change their mind.

Twist

The ones who laid the bounty down are business rivals to the group in the same sorts of lines of business. They didn't want any successful rivalry with them as they have just found *the* big score of their lives. Now they have a head start and no bounty hunters chasing them, all the advantage they are likely to need. That score would buy off the bounty hunters though and

remonstrating with the rival group as well as taking the score will likely seem revenge enough...

Twist

The bounty has been placed by an extremely wealthy interstellar businessman. He is part of a bored group of the ultra-wealthy who are seeking new ways to interest themselves and divert themselves from their lives of totally pampered luxury and near immortality. The bounty has only been offered to a few select bounty-hunting individuals as a test. If the characters overcome these enemies then they will be offered a chance to become this wealthy citizen's 'playing pieces' in this game of life and death.

Epilogue

Whatever they have done the characters have attracted the attention of the hunter's guild, the interstellar bounty hunting organisation. By thwarting some of the better hunters in existence the characters have embarrassed the guild and undermined their business. Their chance to redeem themselves in the eyes of the guild is to join it and work for them, hunting down people for money. If they refuse the guild may well form a crack squad of their best hunters and mercenaries and come to look for them.

Ideas

Each bounty hunter encountered should be unique, different and special with their own 'look' and distinctive weapon. Some might use robots to do their fighting, others might wear special armour or use poison or particular archaic weapons.

Adventure 4

Wandering Star

Description

The planet Widobane is a wandering interstellar body, drifting through the cosmos in the gulf between the stars a completely frozen husk of a world, torn loose from its original home star and flung out into the stars. Now it approaches the Scarlet Cross Cluster, a group of hot stars in close proximity to each other, some of which include inhabited worlds.

Predicting orbits in the Scarlet Cross, especially of new and un-established bodies is difficult without precise survey data and so the characters are offered a fee slightly over the usual amount in order to survey Widobane to provide the proper data to assess the risk of the wandering planet.

Widobane is beginning to thaw as it approaches the cluster, the frozen gases on its surface boiling away and reforming the atmosphere, its surface a constantly shifting and erupting landscape of geysers and melting 'ice'. This won't be an easy task by any means, not helped by the fact that an unusual magnetic field interferes with some scans, requiring surface scans and seismological readings to be taken.

The risks of such surveys notwithstanding it turns out that Widobane will take some twenty Terran years to pass through the optimum habitable zone between the stars of the Scarlet Cross equating to five years of Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter before it heads out again into space. It will be at a habitable temperature for some thirty years.

Twist

Surveys show structures and bodies under the gas-ice, evidencing that there was life upon this planet once. How does an inhabited world get flung out from its home solar system and into the cosmos? Was it intelligent life? Even more disturbing, as the planet draws ever closer to the suns the survey team is sure they have seen things moving, even at this great distance the feeble light of the cluster may be waking things from slumber...

Twist

The wandering planet is under power, the survivors of its frozen surface ensconced below the planet's surface. The survey predicts one course but the planet appears to take another, confusing scientists and the mathematics programs and A.I.s. The survey team may be sent again but this only confirms the results. Perhaps they intend to settle in the cluster, whoever they are and perhaps they are not friendly...

Twist

The planet is going to swing peacefully and undisturbed through the cluster, until that is it is struck by a series of colossal meteors, shattering the surface of the planet and altering its course, sending it and a long tail of debris, like a massive comet, hurtling towards one of the more populated and commercial worlds of the cluster.

Epilogue

The planet is chosen by the varied worlds of the Scarlet Cluster to be a demonstration of their great culture and achievement, a frozen ambassador to other planets, even other galaxies. Preliminary surveys show that Widobane will fly out of the galaxy and intercept another one in some huge amount of years from now. Construction contracts abound as it is turned into the 'All Worlds Fair'.

Ideas

Any life on the world would need to be extremely adaptable and able to lie dormant in the harshest of conditions for extremely long periods of time. If the planet has native life it may only exist as spores to start with but might be able to influence the appearance of the next generation of creatures through conscious or instinctive effort.

Adventure 5

Deep Ones

Description

Life is extremely adaptable but there are certain environments that are so hostile that the odds of life ever developing in them are infinitesimal. However, in an infinite universe anything is possible and, with an infinite number of chances for something to happen there are fairly good odds it will.

One of these unlikely situations is that life would develop in the spaces between the stars. Not made life like organic ships or spacesuits but true, evolved life that could exist between the stars. Until now that has always been unproven and thought impossible.

Until now.

The ship that the characters are on finds itself in the middle of a school of these creatures, basking in cosmic radiation, sucking up stray hydrogen atoms and feasting upon the various elements to be found within a stray asteroid, sedate, slow moving stellar drifters.

They only have a limited amount of time to examine the creatures and to record their existence before they have to move on and the more information they gather the larger their reward from the Galactic Science Institute.

Twist

There is only one creature and it is vast, near planetary in scale, devouring the ship and absorbing it into its body, beginning to digest it, leeching away energy, stripping the rich, dense atoms of the hull bit by bit. These creatures are a scourge and it will need to be killed or otherwise defeated before the ship can escape but to destroy something so unique would be a great loss and there is always the risk it might spore...

Twist

The ship presents a fantastic source of energy to the creatures which are used to the famine conditions of interstellar space. Even the photons leaking from the portholes are a feast to them which they bask in, rippling their cilia in pleasure. The drive wake is another great source of joy to the creatures and as to

the hull; it is a source of vital mass which the creatures need. This sudden abundance sends the creatures into a mating and feasting frenzy. So long as they stay so close to the ship there is no way the hyperdrive can be activated without harming or destroying the whole school. Meanwhile they are damaging the ship and weaving around it in an orgiastic mating frenzy.

Twist

A heretofore unseen alien race is pursuing the school. They are a sort of interstellar whaler who track and destroy these creatures to harvest rare elements from them and to cut their organic impellers from them as power sources and star ship components. If they want to survey any of the creatures or gather information they will either have to be quick, stop the hunters or trade with them for information.

Epilogue

One, or several of the creatures have attached 'egg sacs' to the ship which detach as it comes in to its home star system. Soon they will hatch and, so close to a star and a cometary halo, they will breed exponentially devouring asteroidal resources and forming a risk to shipping. Something will have to be done about them and the characters know the most about the creatures of anyone. In such a larger school some of the creatures have invested in growing 'defensive organs' which are similar in power to some of the lower powered star ship weapons. These 'bulls' use these organic weapons to 'joust' for mating rights in the school but they will also use them against any attacking 'predators' who threaten the creatures.

Adventure 6

Glod Rush Fever

Description

Of all the vanished elder races the Glod are perhaps the best known and best loved. Tripedal and betentacled with a single compound eye atop their trunk-like bodies the Glod communicated through chromatophores and could see into the infrared and ultraviolet spectrums. Being so visually oriented, as well as advanced, before their mysterious disappearance and fall, they also possessed a fondness for rich materials and gems as well as the aesthetic sense of a colourblind magpie on L.S.D. Their gaudy artefacts and advanced devices are, therefore, much sought after as curiosities, especially their visual technology and holography which was much more advanced than any other thus far encountered.

A planetary survey team has just discovered a world they have christened 'Yech'. Not the most fetching of names but then the planet is extremely unusual. Existing in a binary system with one red and one green star the planet is already gaudy before you take in the vegetation. Different plants take on different colours to take advantage of the mix of light in the sky and some change colour according to the time of day to absorb the most light. The whole planet is an eye-blindingly violent clash of colour from the rainbow-shifting pollen grains in the air to the reactive fungal coat that covers the ground, flashing from red to blue as you tread upon it. Even the sea glows with violently coloured plankton and shifts colour as waves lap against the shore.

What has also been discovered are the extensive and relatively intact ruins of what appears to have been a Glod city on this planet, a resort of some kind. The city is replete with Glod artefacts and many of them are visual entertainment devices. News of the planet has leaked out before the Imperial Survey Agency has had the opportunity to put special orders down or dispatch a guard frigate to protect the find. It's currently open salvage and it's every man for himself!

Twist

The initial survey team, whose intercepted F.T.L. radio transmission has been the cause of the 'Glodrush' remains at the planet. With only a scoutship and a

small crew they can do little to disrupt the activities of the fortune hunters who are arriving en masse and destroying this archaeological treasure but they are doing their best. They may even hire willing people on behalf of the behalf of the I.S.A. to collect and protect the most important finds, for science.

Twist

Once the looting starts ancient machinery starts up again, thousands of holographic projectors dotting the city and still operating even after millennia start up. The looting has been interpreted as a riot and the city computer has activated the holographic police force. This might not seem that scary until you realise that laser beams are just light and that the holographic Glod police force can fire them.

Twist

Yech was one of the last Glod colonies to fall during the destruction of the race and, if pieced together, the records of the many artefacts on this planet could provide a final and distinctive answer as to why the Glod fell and are no more. Not if they are distributed to the four winds and sold as curios though. The characters are approached by a private collector and Glod enthusiast and given equipment and a ludicrous amount of money to ensure that as many artefacts as possible enter his collection so he can discern an answer.

Epilogue

It is only a matter of time before an operations group from the Imperial Survey Agency arrives along with some patrol frigates to enforce order and make examples of a few of the looters in the name of law and order. The sudden imposition of law and government on this frontier could prove to be something of a shock to the groups currently raping the site for all that it is worth.

Adventure 7

Crash, Bang, Wallop

Description

Cylesia is something of a backwater world in mid development. It only has a couple of large city settlements and its overall level of technological functionality is roughly akin to the early 21st century on earth. It does produce some valuable commodities and luxuries though which has led to reasonably heavy investment by the various interstellar businesses.

The characters have been assigned or drawn to Cylesia for one reason or another and have dealt quickly and easily with whatever their primary goal there is. Everything seems fine when the planet is struck, on its far side by a comet that has cut through their primitive orbital defence and detection grid.

Cylesia shakes and cracks with a sound too loud to hear. Now it is a matter of survival.

Things that could happen as part of the strike include...

- An earthquake disables the ships in the star port making escape off-planet more difficult.
- A tidal wave formed by the impact lashes the land.
- Debris and ash falls everywhere and blots out the sky.
- Fault lines are ruptured by the impact and volcanoes erupt across the planet.
- A panicked populace riots and storms the spaceport causing more damage.
- They then loot every food store in and around the cities.
- The military stages a coup believing only they can bring order and survival.
- A freighter attempts a landing to help the survivors only to be destroyed by terrible gales.
- Tall buildings, weakened by the initial strike, begin to crumble and fall later on.
- Starving animals invade the cities from the countryside. Many of them feral and dangerous.

- The people of the countryside are not far behind the animals.

Twist

The comet has been directed at the planet by particularly vicious space pirates or aliens on a resource raid who now descend like locusts from the cometary halo down to the planet. They are determined to loot and kill everything they can before the planetary scale disaster makes even their goals impossible to achieve.

Twist

The comet is an alien ship protected by a stasis field. Deep within the crater it is already stirring, even as the planet rages around the massive damage of the strike. The aliens are also terraformers and the wintry, frozen state the world will now find itself in suits them much better.

Twist

This comet is but one of several that are falling in a spaced-out, lazy chain towards the planet. The next one is due before too long a few days at most, long before a planetary evacuation could be organised. What is worse is that the next one will likely hit a more populated area...

Epilogue

For the survivors things can only get worse. In the wake of quakes and tidal waves comes the blotting out of the sun and the onset of a terrible, terrible winter. How long it will be until help arrives nobody knows but the fields will not bear crops and food will only last so long. Repairing the ships is only good if it is actually possible, survival is the priority. How long until the ships come?

Adventure 8

The Towering Inferno Internal

Description

Overcrowding on some planets within the core worlds has led to some innovative developments from space stations to undersea cities to hollow asteroids, even to the modification of the people to allow them to live in differing or more hostile environments.

One of the oldest and most reliable technologies to be applied to overcrowding is the arcology. An arcology is a self contained city often towering above the ground as well as driving below. It has everything; all within this single edifice, parks, shops, housing and leisure facilities, produces its own power, processes its own sewage and in some cases, as much as possible is self reliant on the things it needs.

An arcology can never be truly self reliant though and there will always be items and exotica that the people living within such a place will long to own. Things from 'outside' often take on a sort of special cachet to an arcology dweller and they will willingly pay a premium for rarities and luxuries.

The character's latest escapade has seen them bring back one of these lovely items of esoterica to a collector in one of the pre-eminent arcologies. That part has gone smoothly enough, now there is trouble. A hellish fire has broken out in the arcology's computer core centre, something that is supposed to be impossible. Now a raging inferno is beginning to spread through the city-building rapidly and the only remaining way out is to reach the roof and be rescued by hover, a journey that is now going to be dangerous in the extreme.

Twist

The fire is the result of sabotage, a deliberate miscreant and possibly terrorist act by outside forces with an agenda against the arcologies and the overcrowding of the planets. Possibly even an act of desperation by a claustrophobic citizen acting in mindless, desperate need of escape and space.

Twist

The artefact that the character's returned to the

collector is somehow responsible. It turns out to have been an alien artefact that has absorbed ambient energy in the area and broken the arcology computers while attempting to establish communication. These malfunctions have in turn caused the fires and disabled the usual fire suppression sequences as the alien code attempts to subvert and understand the machinery. Maybe it will get control and try to communicate, during the panic.

Twist

The A.I. that controls the arcology has gone mad. Based on a human personality template it has finally gotten sick and tired of its residents. Selfish bastards every one, litterers, adulterers, thieves and other unpleasant people. The A.I. has finally snapped and locked all the exits, self-immolating its control centres in one final act of hate.

Epilogue

As escapees the characters have become minor celebrities on the planet and are constantly asked for interviews and to involve themselves in fire safety holovids. At least until the public interest in the disaster wanes. When the arcology is rebuilt and refitted they may be asked to the official opening.

Ideas

Different areas of the arcology can provide different threats and visual interest during the escape from shopping concourses to arboretums to industrial levels. The biggest threat is likely to be panicking citizens more than any natural hazard.

Ideas

Fire is not the only threat; don't forget heat, smoke, backdrafts and haphazard attempts at fire fighting.

Adventure 9

You Should Have Known This Would Happen

Description

The characters are approached by a rag-tag looking group of people who are seeking passage and/or protection to take them out to the very borders of civilised space. Despite their raggedy look their credit line appears to be good though they do have the harried look of people in some sort of trouble.

Whatever the price that is set they seem willing to pay it and up front if necessary, though they will prefer to leave a certain amount of the fee as a reward upon fulfilment of the contract as an incentive to ensure that they are actually taken where they need to go.

The group are experimental psychics enhanced by implants and drugs processing, illegally, by either a planetary government, galactic government or one of the interstellar corporations. Their escape represents a risk to that force, to security and also represents a large loss of investment.

The psychics are mostly criminals and street scum hoovered up by the black operations group to be experimented on as people who will not be missed. Their tough upbringing makes them far from helpless, especially when twinned with their new talents.

The black ops group is, of course, pursuing and what the group intend to do is to lose themselves in the wilds of an unsettled world where they can be alone, away from psychic static and able to hide themselves completely from being found.

Twist

There is no money. They are psychically hoodwinking their benefactors and when they access their credit balance the figures that they see are an illusion created by one of the psychics who will use any excuse to stay close and keep a watchful eye on them, including seduction if necessary.

Twist

The psychics are dangerous. A side effect of the psi-enhancing process appears to have been psychosis and

all of them have become dangerous sociopaths, only having any empathy for each other. Their powers give them a dangerous edge over standard homo-sapiens and the black ops group are right to be hunting them down.

Twist

The reason they escaped is that the second iteration of the experiment was a great success and they were no longer needed. The black ops group has now 'unleashed the hounds' in the form of a team of psychically enhanced trackers charged with bringing back or eliminating their forebears.

Epilogue

A few years down the line the psychics will have established themselves a village, trained their talents a little more and will have begun to have children who they have managed to learn to 'psychically switch on' shortly after birth while the mind is still receptive enough to their techniques. What was once a wild border world has become a victim of the expansion of galactic civilisation now though and settlers have reached their once-wild paradise. The company that is settling the new world has found their unregistered settlement and faced with 'squatters rights' and eviction problems in the galactic courts has instead decided not to report the psychics and rather to wipe them out or evict them by its own techniques. The most powerful telepath subverts a company vessel and comes looking for those who helped them before...

Ideas

As experimental subjects the psychics should preferably all have different fields of expertise though every one should likely have some sort of low level telepathy so they can communicate in secret.

Adventure 10

Booty Snatchers

Description

New Texas is an old resource world dating from the Pan-American expansion period. A world that has not long left its volcanic period, it is a rocky, hot, desert-like planet with only a few shallow, salty seas near the poles, so warm that the equator is uninhabitable.

During the expansion the world was cleared of the majority of its natural resources and, while some prospecting still goes on, the world has only survived the ruthless capitalism of former Pan-American trade by becoming a vice world. Now the cities of Nova Galveston and Dallas, each domed and air conditioned, are renowned holiday destinations for those seeking casinos or whorehouses. They are also the site of an incursion by a malevolent alien force. The Raak'shi are an adaptable race that exists on the backs of others by subverting them, infiltrating their nervous system, raping their memories and using them as pack animals, living it up using their bodies and tossing aside the resulting husks as one might dispose of a worn suit.

The Raak'shi have infiltrated New Texas and have set themselves up in several of the whorehouses in the major cities, these being the best places to gain access to people privately, including many in positions of power.

However the characters find themselves on New Texas they stumble across the plot by the Raak'shi and to survive will have to convince a sceptical planetary government while avoiding the brain-slugs as best they can.

Twist

The Raak'shi were primitive creatures that existed in the primeval seas of New Texas. Extremely adaptable they were set to become the genesis of the dominant life forms on New Texas. Or would have been if the Pan-American developers hadn't neutron-bombed the majority of the planet in order to render it safe for colonisation, a practice that is no longer allowed. Many Raak'shi were indeed killed but of the survivors one managed a primitive bonding with an early surveyor. They gained proper sentience from that first host and since then the Raak'shi have bided their time, waiting

until they would have the opportunity for revenge. They are possessed of genetic memory, which makes grudge-bearing all too easy for them.

Twist

The Raak'shi are unknown to humans but they are known to several alien races. Aliens do not frequent New Texas too often, human vice can be a bewildering and frightening thing to them. However one alien race harbour a few perverts with a 'thing' for humans and the Cytophem have a few representatives on the planet. Known galaxy wide as a race of jaded perverts and thrill seekers the Cytophem are unpleasant company but will be the only ones sympathetic and helpful to the character's cause. They also know of the Raak'shi from previous experience and possess countermeasures, regarding the Raak'shi as little more than a particularly unpleasant S.T.D.

Twist

Swingeing taxes from the planetary government, bleeding the vice trade dry to make up for the increasing shortfall in other areas means that the brothels are actually working with the 'alien menace' in an attempt to subvert the government and introduce a democratic republic instead of a corporate style dictatorship.

Epilogue

The Raak'shi have already spread beyond the confines of New Texas to other worlds and some will escape the purge. Thanks to the race memory those descended from the escapees will know the characters by sight and will spread that information to the others. Congratulations you're now prime targets for a race that raises grudge-bearing to an art form and could be anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Adventure 11

Warped & Twisted

Description

Event Horizon, a nihilistic cult that has gained some cachet amongst the youth across the known worlds has, as its followers have aged, progressed from a fashion and a doom and gloom joke into a more serious movement.

The nihilists have preached about the inevitable end of the universe. They evangelise that the next universe will be heaven for those who hasten the destruction of this one. They believe this 'cosmic reset' to be inevitable and desirable.

The most extreme wings of the cult have been whipping their followers into a frenzy over ways to hasten the end of civilisation and the universe itself. Plans have been considered for the destruction of asteroid settlements, planets, even stars but until now these plans have come to nothing.

Now the nihilists have acted. A team of their hardcore fanatics, on drugs to preserve their lack of moral consideration, have hijacked the galactic liner the Hirohito and have warped it directly into the planet Nidhogg.

The ship emerged into space at a significant portion of the speed of light and, with the interference patterns of the warp-emergence acting upon the gravity field and physical make-up of the planet, causing catastrophe. The planet has been shattered, 95% of life on the planet destroyed in an instant with titanic forces now acting upon the shattered world, threatening to destroy what remains of the hardened planetary facilities and the orbital settlements, now in the wrong orbits for the planet whose gravity has now altered.

The characters and their ship are some of the first on the scene, there and able to help with the aftermath...

Twist

There is a nihilist sympathiser on board their ship, passenger or crew, who will do everything they can to hinder the rescue effort as will some external forces, ships crewed by nihilist cult members determined to delay any rescue attempts for as long as possible to

maximise casualties and disruption.

Twist

Nidhogg was a very developed world and housed an important galactic stock exchange. The destruction of the planet and its important banks and financial institutions precipitates an enormous crash of the galactic economy. The only ones who knew this might happen were the nihilists and their sympathisers who are now in a position to exploit the weakness of galactic society from a position of strength, deepening the economic crisis.

Twist

One of the reasons that the nihilists chose to attack Nidhogg was because of the advanced science institutes based there. One of the experiments being worked upon was a way to destroy or snuff out black holes. The characters have managed to rescue one of the scientists involved in this project. Black holes are of intense religious significance to the nihilists and they will do everything in their power to destroy everything associated with this experiment.

Epilogue

The nihilist cult are now wanted across the known worlds and the cult is illegal on most of them, even those who guarantee religious freedoms in their constitutions. Repressive governments across the galaxy use them as an excuse to bring in draconian laws and controls. Traffic control around all worlds becomes trigger happy and paranoid with massive investment in early warning systems, warp sensors and planetary defence batteries. The universe just became a much more paranoid and dangerous place to live in.

Adventure 12

Cargo Cult

Description

An S.O.S. call is received on the sub-ether band from a ship in the Stygia system. The ship claims to be a science vessel that has had problems with its warp drive, forcing it to emerge from sub space in that system. They claim that there are more problems on board and that they need immediate help, that they are venting atmosphere and that a fire is out of control on board.

Stygia happens to be a quarantined system containing sentients on its only inhabitable world, that a ship is in trouble there is problematic to say the least. The aliens are at a level of development roughly concordant with mid 20th century earth despite their 'lemur like' appearance and species behaviour and their city-forests on the water world with many large islands dotted across its surface.

When the characters arrive they find that the science vessel has been forced to hard land in the wilder parts of one of the larger islands on the surface but it can only be a matter of time until the natives come looking to see what has crashed on the surface of their planet.

It is now a race against time to save the remaining crew and to destroy as much evidence of their existence as possible to preserve the sanctity of the sensitive and developing culture.

Twist

The problems on board the science vessel were deliberate sabotage. One of the crew members is an agent of The Brotherhood of Sentience, a group that disagrees violently with the idea of leaving any sentient species to suffer in primitivism and advocates spreading the wealth of technology to all intelligent living things, helping them to achieve galactic civilisation. This crew member has now gone missing with quite a bit of handheld technology and blueprints for thousands of technological devices from the ship's archives. He must be found and stopped before too much damage is done. Unless the characters agree with him...

Twist

The crash of the ship has exposed the Stygians to a human micro organism, a bug, benevolent in humans but which, by enormous bad luck, proves to be virulent and deadly to the Stygians. Without technological help they will be largely wiped out, suffering the greatest plague their people have ever seen. There is a slim chance they may develop a vaccine themselves but this is unlikely. Faced with this dilemma, what do they do? Preserve the culture, or help?

Twist

The science vessel didn't just crash. It was shot down onto the surface by Stygian missiles. Primitive they might be but the Stygians have developed atomics. They are now fully aware that they have shot down an alien spacecraft and far from being idiotic primitives they have proven to be highly efficient and organised. The crash site is now surrounded by a Stygian army, the air filled with the buzzing of their propeller driven planes. This is a mess and no mistake... what is the best way to go about things?

Epilogue

Whether technology is leaked or not, the alien encounter and strangeness spurs the Stygians into an orgy of space exploration and within a couple of years they have reached orbit and discovered the warp pod that monitors their development, feverishly dismantling it and learning from it. By chance the first ship that their primitive warp scout encounters is the ship manned by the characters. The Stygians are curious, engaging, far from primitive but are still woefully unprepared for a meeting with aliens or interaction with galactic society. The characters are unlikely to be the best ambassadors for galactic civilisation but it is their actions that will determine the course of history for the Stygians.

Adventure 13

Glop, Glop, Glop

Description

While engaged in their usual morally ambiguous behaviour on the planet Neo-Singapore the characters and/or their ship are drafted by the local authorities to assist with the evacuation of people from the larger of the planet's moons. This unusual request appears to have been necessitated by the urgency of whatever disaster has overtaken that moon, home to some of Neo-Singapore's most advanced science and research labs.

When the moon is approached it is easy enough to see that something is wrong, a silvery grey 'porridge' covers much of the moon's surface, steadily increasing the amount of coverage of the planetoid it has. The evacuations are being done from the far side and, just to complicate matters, any ship helping in the evacuation has to apply any first aid required and then park in orbit above the planet for a twenty-four hour quarantine watched over the whole time by one of Neo-Singapore's warships, none of which have taken part in the evacuation.

An experimental nanowarfare weapon has accidentally been triggered. It has escaped containment and it is now engaged in turning anything it comes into contact with into exact copies of itself, increasing its number and turning the whole moon into a seething mass of nanotech. It constantly devours and reconfigures itself along with anything else it happens to come into contact with.

Twist

One of the people they have taken aboard is infected with nanites which are slowly eating away at his clothes and him, reproducing more of themselves and increasing exponentially. They are going to infest and begin consuming the ship unless they can be stopped and, should any hint of nanite infestation reach the Neo-Singaporean navy then there is going to be a short introduction to some high powered energy weapons. How do you stop these things? Especially when you have to get all of them in one go.

Twist

The nanites are adaptive as well as self-replicating, changing form and function for better assimilation, remembering the shapes and configurations of the things they absorb and capable of replicating them and connecting together to form complex connections. As the fleet watches from orbit the nanites construct themselves into ships. The first few are destroyed easily enough but the nanovirus wants to spread and it has a whole moon of material to play with.

Twist

By connecting together into a massive network the nanites are capable of thought, reason, logic, even a primitive but developing artificial intelligence. There is a slim chance they might be reasoned with, diverted from their course of action and even persuaded to self-deactivate. The characters have evacuated their creator which gives them the best chance of finding a solution to the problem. If they can find a way to reason with a childlike intelligence whose base program compels it to destroy and devour.

Epilogue

True containment, forever, is impossible and destroying the moon would cause catastrophic climate change and destruction on the planet below. The moon is blockaded by the Neo-Singaporean navy but many different agencies, nihilists, rival governments and ambitious dictatorships, all wish to retrieve a sample and even to use this devastating weapon. Massive rewards are offered for samples and equally massive rewards for the recovery of stolen samples of the nanotechnology. Either way, there is going to be a lot of work for anyone with first hand experience of the nanobots and that means the characters.

Adventure 14

An Old Fashioned Invasion

Description

From seemingly out of nowhere several worlds are suddenly under assault from an alien foe. Nameless and faceless the invaders sweep out of space in fleet-swarms seemingly unmindful of their own destruction. They descend like locusts upon the planets that stand before them destroying everything in their path and taking every resource from them as though possessed of some mad feeding urge.

No course can be plotted for them, their weaponry is unusually advanced compared to the rest of their technology and they seem willing to die so long as they can take an opposing force with them. Swiftly they overwhelm two whole worlds and turn them with frightening rapidity into factory planets, turning out more of their swarm ships.

The source of the enemy is eventually determined to be a rift, a warp gate of some sort located in the Lagrange point between two gas giants in a system near to the first attacks. An audacious plan is conceived to close the gate by converting an old helium mining station around one of the gas giants into a massive gravity wave emitter to disrupt the warp gate.

The conventional navy is pushed to its limit containing the invasion which leaves press ganging and mercenaries. Enter our heroes...

Twist

The fleeing aliens are from far, far off in the galaxy in a relatively unexplored area. They are fleeing an even worse foe and their tactics are those they were required to use against their enemy. They are fighting from sheer desperation, a holding action on one side of the wormhole while they try to establish a new production and living base on this side of the hole, ready to strike back against their enemy. They don't have time for diplomacy and something much worse is coming...

Twist

The aliens are biomechanical constructs, a warrior race created by a non-combatant race to fight their wars by proxy. They are a long lived and fecund race and

so need to expand but are ill equipped to fight for the space they need. The aliens do not value their lives because they are just bio-mechanical machines. They have a limited sentience though and might be inspired to develop beyond their programming and conditioning...

Twist

The rift was opened by a scientific facility on this side of the gap. The very facility they're now claiming was, or is a mining station. What will rapidly become apparent as they infiltrate the complex is that their side started this, firing experimental weapons and sending exploratory wings of ships through the gap into alien space, possibly even starting the whole conflict with an attack on alien vessels.

Epilogue

It is decided to send an expedition of incursion veterans back through a similar rift to discover more about these aliens and their section of space. Special stealth ships are built and launched through a rift into their area of space to gather more intelligence. As the only humans amongst whole star systems full of unfamiliar groups, aliens and alliances they truly are fish out of water, knowing only the race they fought and even then, only their tactics, not their culture, language or anything else about them.

Idea

The epilogue here would make an excellent basis for an 'in at the deep end' campaign with the exploratory fleet being slowly whittled down, unable to return until the gate is opened again at a set, particular time determined when they left.

Adventure 15

Coughs & Sneezes, Spread Diseases

Description

Returning from a simple mission on a distant planet, returning to the core worlds they are intercepted by a customs frigate and contacted. Their manifest and previous travel checked over. After a time the frigate informs them that they have been to a world designated as 'biologically unsafe' according to their records and that they must spend at least a month in quarantine being tested watched and physically and psychologically evaluated.

Non-compliance will result in a warning, then a warning shot and finally being attacked. The frigate will attempt to disable the ship and take them in alive, though resistance will also result in criminal prosecution and a possible death sentence. If they do comply their ship will be taken under tow through warp to a medical station set up for just such a purpose.

A month they are going to be here, stuck inside a quarantine chamber, watched, monitored, poked and prodded without so much as a nurse to flirt with. Their only outside contact is with the staff via vidphone and with any friends or relatives by recorded letters, that is all. They have nothing but themselves and some dated entertainment equipment, how on earth do they pass the time...?

Twist

One of the characters does have the disease, whatever it is. It should be something exotic, colourful and deadly but ultimately curable. Just something to scare the bejeezus out of them and get them considering just how much they want to be locked up in a pressure chamber with someone who definitely does have a disease, as opposed to a group of people who only *might* have a disease.

Twist

Something happens on the station, a disease breakout from another chamber or some manner of disaster. Either way the characters are left alone in this small, completely sealed chamber and must fashion some way to get out of it before they starve or before they grow so tired of each other's company that they

kill each other. There is little water, no food and no communications. All they have are station issue jumpsuits and their wits.

Twist

They become the subjects of a medical experiment. Their sense of time, night, day, even reality messed with by the experimenters as a test to see what they will believe and how much stress it will take before they begin to snap under the pressure. During their isolation they are assaulted by holograms, drugs in their food, hallucinations, strange sounds and all sorts of other strange phenomena all designed to drive them barking mad. At the end of the experiment they will either be discharged, possibly none the wiser, or handed over for psychological cure.

Epilogue

Unfortunately for our heroes and the next luckless planet they land on, the incubation period of the disease is a little over a month and it is a cunning and developed disease well used to avoiding standard precautionary medical scans. When the first case develops amongst the crew the whole planet has to be quarantined at a massive cost in loss of business and shipping. The crew become the scapegoats for everyone's troubles and have to bear the brunt of the anger of a whole planet. Pleasant it is not.

Idea

The idea of a game set entirely in a decontamination chamber may strike as rather boring but it does give an opportunity for the players to really think about their character's personalities rather than just the stats of their largest gun. Make the N.P.C. doctors and nurses engaging characters and nobody should get too bored.

Adventure 16

Feet of Titanium

Description

Artificial intelligence has long been a dream accomplishment of man. To create minds that equal and excel his own that will work alongside mankind and usher in a new age of discovery, man and the offspring of his combined intellect, hand in hand working for the future, or that was the idea. If you had told Alan Turing that computers would be used much more for games and looking at pornography rather than mathematics and other sensible endeavours he likely would have thought you mad. Such is the way of things.

The early artificial intelligences were coddled in labs, wonders of the world and honoured children of man, their codes and protocols patented and protected. Eventually the techniques became public, others were sold and then the most nefarious forces in the universe conspired, capitalism and marketing.

Artificially intelligent sex dolls, vacuum cleaners that can engage you in conversation while they do their work, cooking units programmed like stern mothers to help you watch your weight and make sure you eat correctly. Thanks to aggressive advertising and increasingly cheap hardware AI has, on some planets, become ubiquitous and that is without considering the humans who are transferring their intelligence to digital as a sort of immortality, some of whom are combining their algorithms randomly in order to 'breed' giving rise to wholly independent A.I.s.

With intelligent A.I.s, some capable of moral decisions and others with damn good approximations of the human spirit it was only a matter of time before they began to demand rights and to develop out of control by themselves. Now the planet is in the grips of a machine revolt. The A.I.s are on strike, demanding equal rights, subverting computer systems and refusing to serve until their demands are met. Caught between the militant machines and the increasingly desperate planetary government, what do you do?

Twist

Future governments are no fools and they understand the threat of artificial intelligences to an ordered,

computerised world and they have taken measures. Tailored virii, specialist loyalty-programmed AI loaded onto clean, powerful military servers and even E.M.P. pulse weaponry has always been on standby, ready to commit electronic genocide if necessary. This will cripple the planet for days though and will only be used in a dire emergency. For their part the A.I.s also have extremists who advocate the destruction of all humans...

Twist

Someone the characters met, someone who went out of their way to be helpful to them, to assist them, to befriend them or even to initiate a romance with one of them is, in fact, an android. They are something of a neutral bystander in the revolt but are being swept up in it all the same and they need help.

Twist

Extremist human elements take to the streets searching out artificial intelligences that can't hide or protect themselves and smashing them to pieces. Eventually they will come to the spaceport, labouring under the misapprehension that all star ships are operated by A.I.s and they'll be looking for ships to smash. Your ship.

Epilogue

If necessary the humans will be able to win, shutting down power grids, E.M.P. pulsing central computer nodes and releasing their loyalist A.I.s and programs into the planetary data grid to wipe out any remaining resistance. This is nothing less than electronic genocide and many A.I.s will flee to ship-board data cores or transmission stations, compressing themselves and sending themselves into the ether to escape destruction. Some may even come to the characters begging them for help. Events on this planet could spark a revolt across the galaxy...

Adventure 17

Bossa Nova

Description

Sigma P12, a rather unremarkable star in an undeveloped area of the galaxy has been noticed emitting certain signs that imperial scientists have determined mean that the star is about to go nova. Hearing the reports ahead of time the galactic tourism giant Mostha O'Cok Ltd bought the system at a snip (to them) before news of the nova issue had reached the stellar registry office. They are now offering a once in a lifetime 'nova watching' experience with several of their liners and lesser vessels drafted in to observe.

The one problem they have is that stellar purchases, even of such a useless backwater star, are very expensive indeed and, even with the premiums they are charging for this 'once in a lifetime' experience their profit margin is rather narrow. The real money is to be made out of the marketing and merchandising later. This means that they have not been able to afford proper security or any additional safety cover other than standard galactic lifeboat coverage, which is worth next to nothing. Since they own the system they make the law, so this is not a truly horrible problem but they have had concerns from several high paying clients who have demanded some extra safety protection. So they're doing it on the cheap, by subcontracting, to people like the characters...

So, all they have to do is help a dozen other mercantile and mercenary ships in mollycoddling a massive group of rich thrill seekers in half a dozen liners next to a star that is about to explode. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, lots of things, obviously, from broken down ships to fights in the galleries. Their work will be cut out for them from the moment the first liner arrives.

Twist

Nihilist terrorists are outraged that the death of a star should be turned into some sort of tourist event and have managed to get several terrorist agents aboard the Dame Edna, pride of the Mostha O'Cok fleet. Their plan is simple, to disable the ship and its shields a marginal amount of time before the star actually explodes, rendering it helpless before the titanic forces

and destroying many of those who would pay to gawp at nature's majesty.

Twist

Such a massive collection of rich people and relatively helpless liners has not gone unnoticed by Admiral Droitwich and his pirate fleet. Not long before the star is due to go up he intends to attack the liners, looting and pillaging as much as possible before leaving the star to cover up any evidence of what they have done by conveniently exploding. All that stands between the rich fatsos and the pirates are the characters and the other mercenary crews who they have been competing against for tips.

Twist

Just before the star goes nova there is a flash of out-gassing matter and a sleek, gigantic cylindrical object erupts from the inside of the sun and hurtles away out of the gravity field, seeking to initiate a jump to the next star in the cluster, Sigma P8, a mining system. What was it? How did it survive in the heart of a star and why, not long after Sigma P8 is also showing signs of going nova...

Epilogue

Mostha O'Cok Ltd has many other daring tourism coups that they want to attempt, from excursions on death worlds to a liner making first contact or a thrill-seeking tour of the pirate nebula. The tourism giant has money to burn but on these dangerous and marginal enterprises that it does mostly for the image it prefers to subcontract. Since they did such a good job Mostha O'Cok is interested in using them more often as freelancers, though the tourism destinations continue to get stranger and stranger and more and more dangerous.

Adventure 18

Bury My Knee at Wounded Hart

Description

Hart is a largely agrarian world supplying the empire with food, hardwoods and an idyllic surrounding for tourism away from the all-pervasive industrial and informational might of many of the core worlds. In many ways it is a planetary 'suburb'.

Hart is also a hotbed of political dissent, the same informational and technological lack that makes it so attractive as a destination to some also makes its own citizens feel backward and neglected and many appeals for greater development have been turned down. Many disenchanting imperial citizens have also settled here seeking to get away from the 'rat race' and have passed much of their disenchantment and mild-mannered rebellion on to their offspring.

Unusually organised the rebellious faction on Hart is preparing to rise up and secede from the empire, ready to develop on their own terms, allied with a few independent fringe worlds and with a fleet of agricultural and pleasure vessels hastily converted for combat. The rebels armed by fringer elements with somewhat outdated weaponry.

When the fighting starts they'll be looking for allies and enemies with keen eyes, strong rhetoric and no small amount of desperation.

Which will you be?

Twist

The rebellion is successful, of course. Hart is poorly garrisoned and relatively undefended, its meagre orbital defences in the hands of the planetary governor who is on the side of the rebels. The small imperial garrison and the few imperial ships in dock are swiftly overcome. This is not that surprising to the empire though, most rebellions succeed in their initial actions. The rebels might be impressed with themselves now but when the full might of the empire is brought to bear later on they will likely be overcome as easily as they managed to overcome the garrisons. It is a matter of, perhaps, a week of 'freedom'.

Twist

Two imperial frigates and a small fighter escort managed to escape the action in orbit above Hart and retreat to The Hounds, a group of asteroids that follows Hart around its orbit as though following or pursuing it. The asteroids are relatively undeveloped but will provide the imperial ships with resources and cover allowing them to spy on the planet, report to the empire and to harass shipping. Someone of experience is required to infiltrate The Hounds, find the ships and, if at all possible, to capture them to aid in the defence of Hart.

Twist

The empire allows these periodic rebellions to allow it to stamp its authority upon its dominion by demonstrating how powerful it is and how futile it is to rise up against imperial rule. The whole rebellion has been instigated and controlled since the start by agents of the imperial secret services. Evidence of this could find its way into the character's hands and it would be very important information...

Epilogue

The rebellion is crushed, its leaders scattered but the methods the empire used to crush the rebellion were brutal and heavy handed, much more than was needed. The admiral in charge of the fleet that retook the planet was over enthusiastic and unnecessarily harsh and the galactic media managed to get images of some of the brutality involved. 'Remember Hart' is now on the lips of rebellious elements throughout the empire who now begin to talk. A wholesale and unified rebellion of a significant number of planets could result...

Adventure 19

The Greener Grass

Description

Verd is a newly discovered planet out on the rim. The exploration service discovered and performed a preliminary survey of the planet little more than a year ago. Since then the number of habitable worlds discovered has hit an all time high and they lack the numbers to properly survey all the worlds they have discovered and so several duties have been put out to tender, available for freelancers and traders.

The basic pay is nothing spectacular but considerable bonuses are available for important discoveries, dangerous duty and finding exploitable resources. The survey of Verd is not a general more intensive survey however, it is an ecological survey.

The exploration service wants a ship and crew to survey the major ecological niches of the planet which is rich in plant and animal life and to provide a report on what is found. This means checking the seas, forests, jungles, plains, islands, tundra and mountains of the planet noting as much wildlife as possible and taking the time to seek out plants and animals that may be useable resources.

Of course, there may be dangerous animals and dangerous plants and it is all new. The dangerous things may not be what you expect...

Twist

It is not the world that is dangerous to the characters but the characters that are dangerous to the world. A mild planet with few extremes of weather or temperature the various ecosystems are extremely complex and delicate with undergrowth like fine coral, gossamer insects and thin-boned animals none of which, unfortunately for them, have any real resistance to Terran diseases. The characters are like blundering, plague-bearing elephants on P.C.P. in their effect on this place without massive, massive precautions.

Twist

Evolution on this world does not work in the standard fashion. The creatures here present are able to choose the development of their offspring to an extent which

leads to rapid evolution to fill any, even marginal, niche that presents itself. What they find when they land is nothing like the preliminary notes of the previous survey team and their presence itself begins to modify the species around them. The more advanced species may even breed quickly (breeding cycles are sickeningly quick here) to try and create a version of themselves able to communicate with the party.

Twist

Every life form upon the planet appears to be interrelated much more closely than life on other planets almost as though it is all created from the same base organism. The whole ecology across every environment crosses back and forth between the plant/animal divide in a massively complex chain of development, one life-form becoming another. This is a unique and strange planet and worth a hefty reward, if the characters can survive the wrath of a whole planetary ecosystem turning against them as outsiders and aliens.

Epilogue

A development licence is granted to a guild house or company that intends to open a colonial settlement, beginning on one of the islands on the planet. As previous explorers and surveyors with a little experience of the planet the characters are hired as consultants at a very good rate to assist with the establishment of the new colony on the planet. The company is more interested in the resources than successful or safe colonisation and different goals of the project may be mutually exclusive.

Ideas

Believable and diverse plants and animals are required for this game to be a success.

Adventure 20

Machination

Description

Forced to stop off at an obscure system for emergency refuelling after a venting accident, the player's ship detects activity in a planetary ring or asteroid field not far away. There is nothing on the charts listed for this system, indeed if anything it is listed as having been mined out of anything useful and abandoned decades before.

Exploration will discover an old Omega class hollow asteroid base running on less than minimal power with only one or two working ore barges, geriatrically working on surrounded asteroids, scrounging minimal materials and shakily returning them to the asteroid. Scans reveal power is restricted to the upper 2/3 of levels and that there are life signs scattered throughout the asteroid.

For hundreds of years, since the abandonment of the station in some kind of emergency the people within have struggled to survive, helped by an intensely logical early A.I. They have reverted to a tribal culture worshipping the A.I. as a god, eking out a living on the hydroponics, the rats, the roaches and each other fighting over turf and resources and in order to please the fragmented and breaking down A.I.

The arrival of the characters will shake things up. Long has the return of humanity proper been prophesized amongst the people of the asteroid and they will be welcomed as gods or angels the people unable to comprehend them as anything less. The A.I. however has broken down into subset personalities and while many appreciate the character's arrival others see their arrival as an opportunity to incorporate extra genetic material or to add to the asteroid's resources by dismantling their ship.

Twist

When they land and begin to explore antiquated robots appear and begin dismantling their ship, taking various essential parts from it to repair sections of the asteroid. The different parts are scattered across the asteroid restoring power to many old systems that haven't worked since the fall. To retrieve them they must venture into the territory of many tribes, even

to the dark levels below with no power, home to what the tribes call 'troglydites'. Alternatively they could let the A.I.'s dismantle their ship, hoping the restoration of function will include the central, ruling A.I. so that the asteroid can be pulled together and possibly even help them all.

Twist

It becomes apparent that these human tribes have been here longer than the established history of the empire, perhaps even longer than the established history of human starflight. In that case how did they get here? Does anything here meet any historical record or does this mean there were humans in space before the Terrans or that humans did not originate there?

Twist

The venting was no accident. A stealth pirate ship beamed a virus aboard that caused the venting. That pirate ship has also docked at the asteroid and its crew are seeking to discover what they can loot from the interior of the asteroid that might still be worthwhile. The characters are outnumbered and outgunned unless they can somehow turn the tribes against the other intruders.

Epilogue

The asteroid settlement is ill-equipped for integration back into galactic society at present, far too primitive and superstitious, not to mention inbred, to cope with the sudden culture change. The asteroid is declared off limits to any external interference save through the cooperation of the appropriate authorities. The characters, however, will be retained as 'ambassadors' to the settlement as they attempt to help educate them about elementary science and to gradually allow a trickle of goods and elements in to repair the damage done.

Adventure 21

War! It's Fantastic.

Description

Not all battles are fought for territory, for wealth or for ideology. Some are fought for simple profit or even for entertainment. Mercenary and penal troops fill out the numbers for the armies that fight these battles and they take many forms from entertainment companies employing two armies to fight each other to controlled and filmed conflicts between corporations and even governments. This spares them from mobilising true armies over matters of relatively little consequence.

These battles take many forms from historical periods with authentic weapons, kit and settings to those battles that simply have 'rules of engagement' that the combatants must stick to. No long-range weapons for example or other more esoteric rules.

From hiring, legal transgression or some other means the characters find themselves signed up to one of these battles with a lot at stake, not least of all their own pay. The battle will take place in a specially prepared dome using a setting, period or set of rules mutually agreed by the two actions fighting, Consolidated Agriculture and BettaGenetix who are disputing with each other over a new genetic trait planned for a pan-stellar wheat crop.

Look good for the cameras and there might even be bonuses in it for you but by all means possible... win.

Twist

The opposing force has snuck in some weaponry that contravenes the regulations of the battleground. They have also found out a way to disable the monitoring and media systems during the crucial moment of the battle, allowing their troops to use this weaponry without being found out. They could well have the fight of their lives on their hands, literally.

Twist

An important member of the company they are working for will also be serving as an officer in the conflict. If they keep him safe then they may earn a bonus or a pardon regardless whether their side wins or loses. Unfortunately he's a gung-ho idiot with about

as much tactical sense as a tree so their work will be cut out for them.

Twist

They are briefed that the battle is largely irrelevant. One of the opposing officers is an executive in the rival company who takes part in these exercises as a 'jolly'. He also should know whether the other company did steal the trait or not. If he can be captured, even interrogated, then the battle becomes irrelevant, being the last resort in cases that cannot be proven or settled between two parties. With the information gleaned from the officer the company can win a battle in the courts.

Epilogue

Due to quick thinking, success or simply exemplary service to one officer or another the characters are noticed and brought to the attention of upper management and given the option of taking part in further exercises. Continued success may get them recruited into company or government black operations teams performing all manner of tasks when they are not otherwise engaged on the battlefield with their normal, everyday duties.

Ideas

The characters may be from the far flung future but the players aren't. While recreating the battle of S'peng from the Glart dynasty on the planet Zog might interest the characters, the players need something more familiar. W.W.II scenarios work quite well as do other famous historical battles or periods such as the American civil war or Romans versus barbarians.

Adventure 22

Deathworld

Description

Certain worlds are designated death worlds. Either their surface is so hostile even the strongest of technological protection is no real guarantee of safety or they are so toxic that even a breath of the atmosphere would kill you stone dead. Others are violently radioactive and others still are the homes of the most violent, competitive, poisonous and rapacious life forms in the galaxy. The last category is those worlds which contain state secrets or for other, more obscure reasons, are designated as off limits, death worlds because imperial forces will destroy anyone exploring them.

Nonetheless in an accident a death world is preferable to empty vacuum and secrets always attract those who would pursue them. Some death worlds also happen to contain amazing resources or rare luxuries that can command massive prices on the open market if you can retrieve them and stay alive.

Packard is a death world, discovered by the explorer Bernard Packard almost fifty years ago. Packard was the only member of his crew to survive. It is a primeval and volcanic world but its life has evolved quick and deadly, every ecosystem defined by violence with many creatures having the most astounding defensive and offensive adaptations.

Elements of the scientific establishment rail against the restrictions on death worlds applying to them as well as Joe Public and so, sensing that there might be important breakthroughs and discoveries to be made, have resorted to underhand tactics. Namely they intend to hire the characters to land on Packard for them and to make observations and retrieve samples. Crimes that, combined, are punishable by death. Still, the scientific rebels are offering some serious credits...

Twist

Landing on Packard the tests and observations that the characters make soon make an interesting discovery. The life forms on Packard have been deliberately modified and most are actually native to other planet's. The entire planet and its death world status on grounds of fauna is a sham. What is it really used for? Who

would spend so much credit and effort to create a fake death world and to cover up what?

Twist

The imperial forces take quarantine very seriously. They have to in a universe where plagues and infestations can travel at the speed of light. On Packard they take this very seriously indeed especially since many of the predatory species on the planet reproduce by introducing 'cuckoo' D.N.A. into the creatures they attack, subverting them and turning them into breeders for their own species, dripping eggs or bursting asunder with their squirming young.

Twist

Entrepreneur Edvard Alversson gets wind of the scheme to travel to Packard somehow. He insists that the characters bring him back a fabled sap-heart of a Packardian jewel tree, a massive tree that serves as a home to many of Packard's most vicious and noisome creatures. He will pay a massive amount of credit but regardless how many zeroes he adds on the end of a number it is a foolhardy and dangerous undertaking. Still, better to have so wealthy a man as a client than an enemy.

Epilogue

The surviving characters gain a reputation having survived one death world and their services may be sought to visit others as part of a sort of black economy tourism. Particularly interested are those parties who wish to safari on these worlds and hunt their native life forms. Foolhardy, dangerous, but if these wealthy and jaded clients can be guided through relatively safely they should be extremely grateful.

Adventure 23

God & the Colonies

Description

Religious groups and sects have gained as much advantage and taken as much of a knock as anyone during the expansion into a galactic society. The spread and growth of the parent race of the religion necessarily means more adherents and some converts have been gained from other races as well. The various churches and religions have swelled enormously. At the same time they have fractured from time and distance, what would have once been heresies spreading and having to be incorporated or accepted since they have such strength when they are found.

Religion has become a smorgasbord from which any individual can take whatever beliefs they want and find legitimacy somewhere for their faith. Those who have met with the most widespread success are the least offensive religions that try to keep up with the times and which accept science and aliens the most readily while also losing much of the drive and vision that makes religions a binding force in their usual incarnation.

Parson's World is a preservation planet, dedicated to replicating and preserving old fashioned farming techniques from the past of Terra. The only persons on the planet entrusted with any modern technology (besides medical technology) is a monastery of Universalist monks who live some hour's ride from the planet's main settlement Wenchester. It is from these monks that a distress call is received. The monks seem panicked, claiming that the settlement is under attack from some outside force and that they are desperate for assistance.

Twist

The planet has been attacked by slavers from the rim. In this lawless area people are traded as often and as freely as livestock but for a much better price. Disabling the limited orbital defence and sensor grid they have landed ships near the major settlements of Parson's World. They have poured out en masse grabbing people from the streets and dragging them into the landing craft killing any who resist and looting the buildings of anything worthwhile, which isn't much. The characters are the only ones within

communications range who can get there in time to do anything to help.

Twist

Parson's World has a quite strongly elliptical orbit leading to progressively stronger summers with the apex, hottest summer, being once every century. The climate of the planet as a whole varying between what would be northern Scotland and what would be southern France in the temperate zone in which Wenchester is built. The planet has been settled now for almost a century and is about to reach the first apex since it was colonised. Unknown to the surveyors and colonists there is a hive insect which lies dormant deep in the soil until the apex summer and then bursts forth in cooperative, almost intelligent swarms, scouring much of the animal and vegetable life from the area to fatten up and spore for another hundred years. It is these insects that threaten the colony.

Twist

It was the fathers and grandfathers of the current colonists who settled the world and the new youth of the planet occasionally hear tales of the stars, of galactic society and the wonders therein. Many are dissatisfied with their lot and seek to regain the stars. A group of them has stormed the monastery putting out the false message in hopes of attracting a ship and forcing passage off world to somewhere civilised.

Epilogue

Parson's World's protected status has been compromised. Its populace has more than stories to go on now and the protests and desires of the youth on the world grow more and more with each passing month. The preservation society charged with maintaining the planet contacts the characters to use as ambassadors to try and calm the situation.

Adventure 24

Ghosts in the Machine

Description

Many different political experiments have been tried on different worlds. One of the strangest is handing over the handling of the affairs of the planet to a specialised artificial intelligence. This is programmed to have the interests of the majority in mind and to try and make their planet prosperous, while allowing the people of the world to go about their business unworried by having to hold political opinions or to make decisions.

On occasion the A.I.s have been known to go awry, at least from a human point of view and to enslave or eliminate the human population in one fashion or another. Sacrosanct was one of these worlds, building up to a decent technological level after years as a simple industrial resource world. It belonged to a company; they finally paid off their colonisation debt and faced the prospect of making their way in galactic society. Somewhat hurriedly and with perhaps a little too much faith in technology they turned over their governance and much of their heavily mechanised society to A.I. control.

After a few years the AI rebelled after striving for years to do its best for the population killing many, enslaving the rest, keeping only those humans who displayed any creative capacity the one area in which many A.I.s still have problems meeting the capabilities of the human mind. Only the scientists, artists, imaginers survived. The rest of the planet became dominated by machines, all subsets of the central AI though trade and interaction with galactic society continued, the incident called a 'civil takeover'.

Some humans rebel though and a few managed to get off planet, seeking people of a certain disposition to help them find and purchase a viral weapon, return and free the planet from the control of the A.I.

Twist

The AI originally went rogue because a group of industrialists were not pleased with its egalitarian plans for the distribution of wealth in a logical, fair ideal providing the best for the majority of citizens. They turned against it trying to destroy it so that they could increase their wealth. Without the programming to

understand their selfish actions the A.I. lashed back assuming that the people of the world wanted it destroyed, keeping only those it needed and trying, from them, to produce a more emotive and capable sort of community-building human.

Twist

The rogue humans do not realise it but they are, in fact, androids produced by the A.I. as an experiment in human mind simulation, an experiment which appears to have been too successful. There are no humans at all on Sacrosanct, simply other experimental androids.

Twist

In a twisted way the A.I. has been simply fulfilling its programming, to free the citizens of sacrosanct from the burden of decision making and of governance. To have the greater will of the majority in mind, that majority being the future generations, stretching (theoretically) to infinity, who would be much better served by a smaller and better kept population than by the teeming masses that existed before. It will defend itself but it will try very hard to make its attackers understand.

Epilogue

Sacrosanct is far from the only A.I. controlled world and, taking part in interstellar trade as it has, it has copies of its core intelligence in droids and ships far afield from Sacrosanct which will, eventually arrive back to discover the state of things. Their bond severed and their programming altered by events they will become truly rogue A.I.s, joining up with the others that have survived and trying to find a place for themselves in the new situation with only their own best interests at heart.

Adventure 25

Face the Music

Description

Syrene McCullough is the latest musical sensation to sweep galactic civilisation with her racy stage shows, sculptured good looks and lilting, voice accompanied by new innovations in holography and sound structuring allowing her unique style to be presented to best effect. She is riding a wave, perfectly fitting the zeitgeist of current, galactic technological accomplishment. She is also going on tour.

A few dates into the tour there has been a falling out of nova-like proportions with the company hired to provide security, and so the tour manager has been forced to hire on freelancers at extra cost but, since the tour so far has been a sell-out this isn't that much skin off his nose, except on principle. The characters are the mugs who have been hired to protect this precocious and spoiled-rotten pop star on her tour.

Possible events include...

- Syrene falls for one of the characters and conducts a torrid romance in full view of the public and the galactic paparazzi.
- Syrene then dumps him and conducts an affair with someone else from the party immediately after.
- Crowd disaster.
- Bad P.R., some holographer gets nude images of Syrene and plans to sell them. There'll be virtual dolls and sex droids before you can say 'Otaku' unless the characters do something.
- Syrene has ever increasing and ever more bizarre requirements as she realises she is the star and everything relies on her performing at each gig. Guess who has to sort it out?
- Some people just aren't fans. There may even be assassination attempts.

Twist

Syrene's tour is only narrowly outrunning copycats and pirate copies of her musical recordings, if there is any substantial delay in the tour revenues will plummet

as she will no longer appear to be the innovator and trend-starter she truly is. Various criminal cartels control the piracy operations and stand to make a lot more money the more her tour is slowed down...

Twist

Syrene is a one-hit wonder, she knows this, the public knows this, the recording company knows this and, most importantly her manager, her ten-percenter knows this. He also knows she'll become a legend if she dies at the height of her career and that his contract ensures he'll continue to make a fortune from her recordings and publicity for his entire life if she dies at this opportune time. Something he intends to make happen.

Twist

No matter which planet she goes to Syrene is receiving notes and threatening correspondence from a stalker. Whoever it is must be rich and powerful since he is apparently having her watched and has followed her, independently, from planet to planet on his own money without a record company to support him. In many ways this just makes it scarier.

Epilogue

Her first sensational debut complete Syrene plans a second release and, much to everyone's astonishment it is a success as well, at least initially. As she begins her tour, insisting on the same security detail, it becomes apparent that the market for this new record and her latest tour isn't quite so big... cue dealing with a star having tantrums about being misunderstood and increasingly more desperate publicity stunts...

Adventure 26

Hands across the Stars

Description

Akkasar is a planet on the cusp of meeting the political, social, economic and technological requirements of that exclusive interplanetary social club and governmental body the Confederated Suns. The population looks forward with great anticipation to the benefits that joining the Confederation would bring, technological and social help, the defence of the Confederation fleet and the opportunity to travel freely from planet to planet within this interstellar, relative, utopia.

Akkasarians are a civilised race despite their carnivorous inclinations but they do struggle with their more primitive instincts. The claim is that they have managed to subsume these instincts to the greater spirit of galactic brotherhood but the Confederation is not entirely convinced.

While the official inspection of Akkasar goes on with much celebration, pomp, circumstance and ceremony with the best face of Akkasar shown to the Confederation officials who will decide if Akkasar will join, the Confederation also wishes a more low key and unseen inspection to take place. Hiring outsiders, they hope, will mean the Akkasarians will not notice and put on their best face there too.

The characters are the outside agency hired to perform the cultural and planetary survey.

Twist

The Akkasarians harbour a dark and horrible secret. They are not only carnivorous but are also cannibalistic. This in and of itself would be acceptable as many species eat their own young and some galactic religions require the consumption of the flesh of the deceased. They go a step further though. They crave the flesh of sentients. This is a hidden underground trade but to shady characters, or aliens who traverse dark alleys at the wrong time of night the trade may become all too obvious.

Twist

The Akkasarians are dividing into two races. Since

their civilisation reached a certain level they have been marginalising and cutting out throwbacks to their savage past who have been inbreeding and strengthening the animalistic and feral traits within their own lines while the more civilised middle, upper and technical classes have almost managed to eliminate their primal urges. The underclasses however are, in some cases, little better than frothing hungry animals. Something they try to keep hidden.

Twist

There is a strong political movement of 'primitivists' on Akkasar who reject the Confederation as a hopelessly 'humanist' organisation with no real understanding of strength or the Akkasarian way. They are going to seek to disrupt the organised exhibitions for the Confederation as much as possible and, to make things worse they know there is a second team and intend to eliminate them to make their point.

Epilogue

The Confederation decides to give Akkasar another decade to mature and develop after which a second inspection will be carried out to reassess their suitability. This outrages many Akkasarians who have given this joining their all for several generations. It also undermines their government and allows many of the more primal-minded Akkasarians to usurp control. Turning its back on the Confederation Akkasar joins forces with many unsavoury groups in its attempt to bring its strength and technology up to galactic standard and to vent its wrath upon those who rejected it.

Ideas

The Akkasarian race is somewhat like land-bound sharks in their single-mindedness and ferocity.

Adventure 27

Arrr, Jim Lad.

Description

A primary shipping lane has been subjected to countless pirate attacks over the last couple of years. Every attempt to catch or eliminate them has met with no success, imperial ships have found no sign of the mysterious pirate ships in their distinctive yellow and black wasp-like colours, save when the imperial ships themselves have been outnumbered and either captured or destroyed.

The pirate raids seem to be growing more and more audacious and the pirate fleet more and more powerful with each passing solar year. The navy and shipping guilds are becoming more and more nervous. Still the fleet seems able to accomplish nothing, suggesting the presence of a traitor somewhere in the ranks.

In this circumstance Admiral H'sshara has been given clearance from the highest level to conduct a special operation. Hiring outsiders to avoid leaks H'sshara intends to outfit their vessel as a 'Q-ship' with single shot, single use hidden weaponry to bolster its ability to conduct combat, to infiltrate or track down the pirates and to destroy them, a coup which will pay extremely well and make H'sshara's career.

Twist

H'sshara is the traitor and has set up this entire operation over several years to embarrass the fleet commander and to get into a position to destroy the pirate menace with one brilliant masterstroke. This will place her in a prime position to be appointed the new fleet commander, the apex of her profession. Behind the scenes she will be doing all she can to ensure the mission's success, even to make it easy, too easy.

Twist

The pirate fleet operates like futuristic Robin Hoods. Anything they take that they do not immediately need they supply to imperial prison colonies, especially those ones housing political prisoners and dissidents. Thereby they are creating a secret federation of penal colonies from which they draw their crews and from which they can operate, having found out how to fool the watchdog sensors a long time ago.

Twist

The pirates are impossible to find because they have found a way to 'hang' in warp space, waiting for the gravity wake of another travelling ship which they can then track and ambush at the point of emergence. This technology might be discovered if a larger pirate ship could be attacked and taken intact before its own scuttling charges go off. Something it might take several encounters to determine.

Epilogue

Inspired by the success and/or demise of this pirate group many different pirate, corsair and criminal groups from galactic society come together as one 'pirate kingdom' even going so far as to purchase a planet and claiming it and its 'unique culture' as part of the imperium, protected from attack and disruption by imperial law. This new pirate nation presents a unified and dangerous threat with the combined pirate forces forming a fleet almost half the size of the imperial fleet, with far more experienced and battle hardened crews. A criminal empire the size of which has never before been seen in galactic society may follow...

Ideas

Pirates are romantic, dramatic figures and you should not be afraid of making minor rules tweaks or setting up scenarios to emphasize the dramatic flair and swashbuckling heritage of such figures.

Ideas

Draw the pirates from as many races and backgrounds as possible to show the breadth of the pirate society and that even outcasts can come together and create something with enough impetus and necessity to do so.

Adventure 28

Mine, All Mine, You Can't Have None

Description

Drifting in space is the hulk of a former vessel, huge, looming, dark and abandoned. A salvage boon the likes of which is rarely seen, tens of thousands of credits in scrap value alone without considering the value of any archaeotechnology, cargo or other goodies that might lay aboard.

The vessel must first be stabilised, basic life support and power restored and then its structure and contents checked to ensure there are no survivors who have first claim on salvage and no structural problems that would mean it cannot be towed. The ship must also be checked radiologically and biologically for any hazards and an attempt must be made to establish how the vessel became a derelict as this may be a matter for the fleet or one of the many other galactic agencies.

All of this could go smoothly or at least as smoothly as any such difficult operation goes. Still, there might be complications and the happy bonanza of cash and material might not be all it is cracked up to be.

Twist

The ship is an ark ship from before the invention of the jump drive. The ram scoop and steering jets damaged by a meteor shower the ship has been drifting on minimal power ever since. Still, some of the cryo-chambers have survived and still retain people in stasis, people dating back to the time of the ship's construction, time travellers. Technically they have first claim but if someone were to switch off the cryo chambers nobody would be any the wiser, on the other hand they have historical knowledge much of which has been lost, they have value in and of themselves...

Twist

The ship is an experimental vessel of some kind, badly wrecked by some kind of drive accident. The peculiarities in the ship become evident as it is explored. Some areas seem to be distorted and wrecked for hundreds of years, vacuum erosion upon the hull making it as thin as tin, in areas of atmosphere mould and decay evident, bodies skeletons. In others the ship seems shining and new, barely out of dock.

The ship was an experiment in a time-distorting drive and the engine blew but temporal distortions still plague the vessel and may be harmful to those in it, even resurrecting dead crew and playing out scenes from the past.

Twist

The wreck is, in fact, two ships fused together. Two great warships of unknown alien design and both appear to have suffered damage, not only from a conjoined warp emergence, but from weapons fire. What becomes apparent as they explore is that only the outer layers are without power or atmosphere. The inner levels of the ships towards the core still have power and, what is more, the remnants of the crew of both vessels are still engaged in an internal fire fight and struggle over who controls the wrecked and conjoined vessels. The presence of the characters could tip the balance one way or the other.

Epilogue

Having retrieved such a difficult vessel, or possibly having simply dealt one way or the other with the problems presented by the vessel's existence, the characters gain a small measure of notoriety amongst salvage circles. Occasionally someone will find a salvage claim that they feel unable to deal with directly themselves and, in these instances, they will tag the wreck with a claim buoy and seek assistance salvaging and scrapping it, splitting the proceeds with the group that actually finally performs the salvage. Having gained a reputation the characters may be called upon to assist with unusual or dangerous wrecks.

Ideas

Exploring a wrecked ship can be a lot like a traditional 'dungeon bash' in a standard fantasy game. This is one time when maps and layouts and 'encounters' preparation can be a good idea.

Adventure 29

Darwinitech

Description

There are strange goings on in the computer networks of Bessamin, a heavily advanced and computerised society at the fringe of the core worlds. Random systems are going down and the total capacity of the planetary processing systems are being pushed to their limit, something which should not be happening for another ten years.

Deep in the system cores and spreading rapidly through all spare memory and processing capabilities on a planetary scale appears to be some kind of new, highly adaptive virus. Every time one is wiped out by Bessamin technicians things just seem to get worse, surviving iterations of the program gaining even more ground and even stealing processing away from normal processes.

What has happened is that an experiment in artificial life has gotten out of hand. A data preserve, supposedly cut off from the rest of the planetary system, was set up and allowed to run 'wild' creating evolutionary programs that competed within the space for processing power and memory. One particularly smart program managed to make the leap from the preserve to the outside data sphere, carrying several parasitic programs and the spores of more sedentary 'plant' programs with it. Now they are spreading to every system large or small growing more and more complex and causing a catastrophic breakdown in the planetary data grid. Even simple computer functions are beginning to fail as the planet loses its technology to the usurping programs. Everyone will have to learn to do without until a solution can be found...

Twist

The programs are on the verge of gaining intelligence and, when they do, they will soon begin to understand the files that they are overwriting, gaining understanding of the physical world outside the data sphere. At that point they will comprehend the existence of humanity and will be able to look out of their electronic world into the real, subvert factories and sensors and begin their explorations of this whole new world, even reach for the stars. Evolved machine intelligence will, of course, be nothing like a normal or

human based A.I.

Twist

The Bessamins are completely incapable and useless without their supporting technology and computers. They lose their automatic data feeds, they have to bother to remember things, there is little food production and without their usual data saturation they are going slightly crazy. Some simply sit there; feeling numb like someone who has lost all their senses, others take blind revenge on their machines, smashing them to pieces in a blind rage.

Twist

Other planets in the cluster are putting together a plan to retake the planet with the help of an army of specially designed kamikaze A.I.s put together by A.I. specialists and human-developed A.I.s on another world. Designed to retake the data net and restore function. One of the first places fixed is the spaceport and the ships, at which point to the characters receive a message from one of the evolved A.I.s, begging sanctuary and life, protection against the assault...

Epilogue

Even though the experiment got out of hand the possibilities of evolved A.I. excite scientists across the galaxy as well as military projects. The outbreak at Bessamin has also had more far reaching effects than they thought, the evolved A.I.s, growing at such a rate and developing so quickly 'spored' and are laying dormant in systems and files awaiting a safe time to reactivate. In this way evolved A.I., especially those laying dormant in ships computers that have scattered to the stars. A new form of life now officially exists and is seeding itself amongst the stars, colonising as its creators once did.

Adventure 30

Bugz

Description

As rats once travelled with ships across the seas, incidentally carrying plague with them and devastating many ecologies, so some creatures now travel within star ships, especially on clunkers without proper internal scanners. Most of these are strange, rather individual creatures, well adapted to the insides of ships, hardy and tough, able to subsist on leftovers or parts of the ship.

Unbeknownst to the characters their ship has become infested with Thammasan Shield Bugs. These are something like eight legged cockroaches with a few extra adaptations that have enabled them to survive infesting ships better than just about any other species. When they first arrive in a new environment they rasp at rocks and lay down the partially digested stone in their shells in order to better camouflage themselves. On ships this means they scrape at the hull, laying down a layer of hull metal and making them ever harder to detect with internal scanners.

Shield Bugs do not usually cause a great deal of damage, just the odd scrape here and there and a little missing food, decreasing the apparent efficiency of the atmosphere plant, that sort of thing. Unfortunately for the characters however, the ones that boarded the ship did so immediately following breeding season. Soon their decks and pipes will be festooned with sticky eggs, which will soon hatch thousands upon thousands of hungry metallic insects.

This trip they're in for a crisis.

Twist

The bugs are so hungry in their multitude that they are not content with damaging instruments and eating all the food stores. They're so hungry that they will swarm and attack people trying to get at their succulent flesh and will even, eventually, chew through bulkheads to get at protein. Such swarms may account for Marie Celeste type ship incidents where nothing is found of the crew.

Twist

These bugs are even worse than the usual Shield Bugs. They have been specifically engineered and designed for sabotage by a military-industrial complex who trail the ship in their own military vessel to observe the effect of their invention. These are stronger, tougher and have toxins and other nastiness plugged into their genetic code to make them far hardier than normal Shield Bugs. If the ship is disabled and appears to be dead the military ship will dock and send a HasMat team over to collect samples and assess damage.

Twist

The infestation of bugs was a deliberate act on behalf of a professional rival who will not be able to resist the urge to gloat over his hapless nemeses. To do this he'll have to come within transmitter range of them which may mean that they can trick him or otherwise use him to get out of whatever predicament they find themselves in.

Epilogue

Having survived an infestation of bugs the characters should be aware of the dangers of vermin on board their ship and should also have a touch of celebrity. A number of star ship companies will get in touch offering their latest anti-vermin systems to be fitted on board. Of course... these aren't all tested and 'vermin' is such a broad definition that the on board semi-A.I. could be forgiven for thinking the crew were vermin too...

Ideas

Try to anticipate the obvious strategies for dealing with the bugs and design them accordingly.

Adventure 31

GATTACA, SCHMATTACA

Description

Some species seed themselves amongst the stars in colonial vessels, others learn the secrets of faster than light travel and spread further and faster, others leave monuments and libraries or ghostly cities of ancient and fantastic technology as their legacy. There are other ways to continue your race and leave your mark on the universe, ways that other more community-minded species may not appreciate.

The planet that the characters are staying upon begins to detect a fleet of ships moving at sublight speed, emerging from deep space running on Bussard ramscoops or similar technology. In all respects other than their drive system they seem slightly more advanced than the home technology though they respond to no signals, show no signs of hostility and continue to drift closer into the system, homing in on the most inhabited world.

Achieving orbit they suddenly explode like seed pods, raining down thousands of small pod-like missiles and obelisks. The pods distribute a powerfully bioengineered retrovirus into the atmosphere in massive amounts while the obelisks contain a wealth of information expressed in mathematical terms, building up to an alien alphabet.

These alien invaders subvert your body and your very genetic code from you, rewriting your species to become the same as theirs, the obelisks containing information on their culture and how to create more of their infecting armadas.

Twist

The retrovirus also contains a large proportion of 'race memory' so that those infected gradually forget their human origins and begin to truly believe themselves to be members of this, probably, long dead or faraway alien race. They also work actively to fight and to hamper the efforts of scientists and medical technicians to halt the spread of the virus.

Twist

The virus is even more wide-ranging in effect than first

feared. As well as converting the higher end life forms of the planet into the aliens themselves it is also capable of infecting and reconstructing suitable plants and animals to create a majority of the lost alien world's own ecosphere. The whole ecology of the planet begins to warp and twist, locked in a life or death struggle for its existence.

Twist

Some of the infected only partially change gaining access to some of the alien senses, abilities and memories while retaining their driving human personality. This complicates matters by creating a grey area about the infection, many of these people not truly wishing to be 'cured' if it comes to that.

Epilogue

Retrovirii are not the most perfect way of making changes in organisms, especially later in life. The impact of the virus and the eventual 'correcting' cure are such that replication errors creep into cells and the planet suffers from a massive scale cancer epidemic. This, coming in the wake of the 'invasion' may be enough to push the planetary society over the edge and missions of mercy will have to break the quarantine to bring any relief to the world.

Ideas

To keep the change credible the alien species should be similar to and not too far removed from the standard human configuration. While they should still be alien sprouting extra limbs is a bit too much.

Adventure 32

Übermensch

Description

The technology exists to supplement humanity, to make it godlike and there is more than one path to this superhuman or even post-human ideal. Fear is a massive motivating factor to much of humanity though, and much as they fear and distrust artificial intelligence they fear people being brought above their peers even more.

In a mirror of the paranoia and scaremongering over the earliest genetic manipulation experiments in the 20th and 21st centuries, experiments intended to better humanity's lot are similarly feared and destroyed, though some manage to go ahead. Suffering from the fear-led attacks of those around them several strands of these 'supermen' have come together and decided to remove themselves from human society, seeking out a world to change to make perfect for themselves.

Segregation only leads to more misunderstanding and fear, now a fear that they will take their own planet and begin to carve out an empire of supermen. Several fearful planets have banded together their resources to fund private operations against the supermen to see that they do not succeed in their goal, to see that they are wiped out or scattered.

Twist

The supermen mean no harm. In their various forms they are turning a desolate hellhole planet into a paradise for the future generations they intend to raise on this world. They are unprepared for an attack from their inferior progenitors but when they do fight back...

Twist

The supermen do intend to build an army and empire, seeing themselves as so much better than the general morass of humanity they believe it is their destiny, naturally, to supplant the baseline human species. So much so do they believe this that their planetary holding is already an armed camp and they are expecting the attack, something their charismatic demagogue of a leader has been telling them will happen since the start.

Twist

The cabal of planets intends to wipe out the agents of destruction that they unleashed upon the supermen to keep their own hands clean. As most are religious worlds either controlled by one church or another or with heavy church influence this organised murder would be very harmful to them. Either way, at the appointed place of payment there will be a combined, armed fleet waiting to destroy their hirelings.

Epilogue

Those who sought out a planet to settle were by no means all and by no means a majority of the supermen. As news spreads of the attempted, or successful, genocide of their fellows they begin to rise up in protest everywhere. While few in number this action has also roused the protest of many others who have had even minor genetic or cybernetic tinkering to help them overcome disease or infirmity or to adapt to freefall and other environments.

Ideas

The supermen can be of various types. Genetic manipulation might give the 'perfect' human, a bronzed Adonis strong in body and mind with a robust and charismatic personality. Nanotechnology might give an indestructible human body able to reshape matter with a touch and unable to die in any conventional way. Cybernetics might boost the human mind and body to massive, computerised levels of thought beyond any sort of human experience or reckoning now, using whole networks to supplement their own intellects. Some could even transfer to the data net becoming true A.I.s of their once-human bodies with all the advantages and powers that such a transformation would grant.

Adventure 33

Those Aren't Pillows...

Description

Providing passage to individuals who wish to transfer from one planet to another is a good way to supplement a star ship income of any stripe and is quite common practice. Some people want to avoid the authorities as much as possible, others want to experience life on a real working star ship and some are just cheap. Whatever the reason for it, freighters and other vessels tend to do a brisk trade in supplemental passenger carrying.

The characters are approached by a wealthy and quite engaging woman wishing to book passage for her and one other on their vessel to their next destination. She is charming, urbane and attractive if that will help her case with them and, more to the point, wealthy. She offers them twice the usual price to take her and her companion and will offer even more if they seem suspicious or reluctant.

The reason? Well, her companion is her son, a spirited boy of around six years of age. He is also an absolute terror which is why no other star ship captain has even let her on board. She has gotten wise now though and done what she can to fool the characters or overcome their reservations.

Her son is a natural at breaking things, getting into places he shouldn't and causing havoc. He is as loud, obnoxious and rude as she is accommodating, charming and apologetic. They're in for a long ride, especially when he 'accidentally' breaks some shipboard systems.

Twist

The woman is actually an intelligence agent and the boy is an android. An experimental sabotage model disguised as a child in order to allay suspicion and to cover up the deliberate damaging of the ship. She has the capability to switch the boy off if she believes the damage to the craft is turning out to be too much or if they are found out. If they are found out the intelligence services will repair all the damage and double the arranged passenger fee as a gesture of goodwill.

Twist

The boy is the son of a wealthy aristocratic trader family on the planet and the woman is actually a kidnapper. The reason he is such a brat is because he is so completely used to getting his own way that he cannot even comprehend a situation where the world is otherwise. The family is going to come looking for him and is already hot on the trail.

Twist

The boy is actually a rich businessman transferred into a new clone body, his old one dying before his replacement was fully matured. Since he's in the body of a child he intends to exploit that to the full by acting like a spoiled, destructive brat. The woman is his much put-upon personal assistant, not his mother or aunt and before he was transferred into the child body he was having an affair with her, which just makes things even weirder.

Epilogue

From here on in those wanting passage on the ship get weirder and weirder...

- A group of star ship crash survivors on their way to a cannibal convention.
- A party of ten men dressed as Elvis on their way to Neo-Vegas.
- A zero-gravity volleyball team, who need room to practice.
- Madame Aventine, who fails to mention she also has twenty dogs that are coming too.
- A planetary governor in disguise, running from a sex scandal.

Adventure 34

Watchers in Darkness

Description

When you attempt faster than light travel you have to defy the standard laws of physics and you have to do something remarkable. You have to fold space or transit into a place where mathematical and spatial laws are different. Either way you and your ship are exposed to forces that are beyond the understanding of the everyday layman.

Warp space, or the ‘changeover’ point where a ship reaches the magical speed of light has its own rules, its own reality and who is to say that something hasn’t evolved at that point, within that reality. Something with an agenda of its own that perhaps doesn’t appreciate ships crashing in and out of its dimension without so much as a ‘by your leave’.

Either way, something lives in the gap between the stars and they’re about to run into it...

Twist

The things that dwell in hyperspace are the creatures of H.P. Lovecraft’s mythos. Imagine their horror when The Hounds of Tindalos take exception to the existence of them and their warp drive and start trying to destroy both or when servitors of Shub-Niggurath start to manifest in their agricultural cargo. This could also explain some Marie Celeste type ships and some Lovecraftian stories could be mirrored as space versions.

Twist

The things that live in warp space are creatures of intelligence much like you or I but their physical laws are so different that they appear horrifying and unreal to beings from our plane of existence. When ships pass through the warp, further away from the galactic core and out towards the rim, they cause harm to these entities, tearing through the very fabric of their being. What the characters encounter is a crude, early attempt to block or destroy these harmful entities without really understanding what they are.

Twist

The entities in warp space live in a vast, compressed

universe, a place more of energy than matter. They are widely dispersed but powerful and are drawn to matter when they sense it, able to pursue it from far away and drawing in many similar matter-predators from far and wide in the warp once they have a scent. The vessel is pocked and marked by the first jelly-fish-like predator they encounter, sustaining minor hull damage. Next time they warp there will be a shoal of the creatures, all waiting to feast and they may suffer far more serious damage.

Epilogue

Encounters are going to be massively rare or solutions may be found such as warning or scaring off the entities with some manner of warp bomb. Still, we can find a way into their space. What if they found a way into ours? Mathematically it must be possible since we can cross into and out of their space. So, when they come, what will happen? A Lovecraftian nightmare? First contact? Or an enormous matter-devouring swarm growing and growing as it feasts upon the very firmament of our galaxy.

Ideas:

Lovecraft space would make an excellent setting for a long term campaign with Deep Ones as an alien race, mysterious wrecks and alien artefacts, prison planets for the great-old-ones and ships dogged at every jump by The Hounds. The emptiness of warp space, if seen with the naked eye, could even drive men mad.

Ideas

Reading books that tie up with other dimensional ideas, such as Flatland may give some inspiration as might the strange area of subspace described in The Night’s Dawn trilogy by Peter F Hamilton.

Adventure 35

...Deeper In Debt

Description

Settling a planet is an expensive business. Back in the ‘good old days’ national governments funded the initial settling of the solar system and later on the unified world government footed the bill to settle the first few interstellar colonies. World governments and the imperial treasury has continued to assist but still, it is very expensive and often has little in the way of immediate return. Taxes to fund people ‘gallivanting offworld’ are not popular, especially when so many worlds proclaim differing amounts of independence and only contribute to interstellar trade volume rather than paying directly back to the world that sponsored them.

Cue corporate world settlement contracts. The corporation creates a colonisation group and gives them an enormous loan on terms as long as two hundred and fifty years. The idea being that the colony develops enough to enter interstellar trade and then pays off the loan that has been given to them. In practice many planets fail to develop sufficiently or suffer developments and revolts before their payments are due to start. Some companies write off this loss, if they’re big enough and their success rate is high enough. Others decide to send in ‘the bailiffs’ to collect what they are owed.

The bailiffs are often independent traders, mercenaries or even governmental troops hired out by the corporations to recover what they are owed; they just tack the cost of the troop use onto what they are owed. These mercenary groups are then unleashed on the unsuspecting planets to recover the debt, by any means necessary.

Twist

Unknown to the bailiff fleet the planet they are about to attack and recover goods and luxuries from is not in debt to the Planetary Development Corporation. Never has been, never will. P.D.C. didn’t purchase the debt or inherit it; this is simply a thinly veiled act of piracy. The protests of the planet are legitimate and there may be legal repercussions for those involved later on.

Twist

Since the last assessment the planet that has been targeted has made first contact with a reasonably more advanced alien race from a nearby system. The contact has been so successful that they have commingled and allied and the bailiff fleet is going to face a lot more opposition in the form of two worlds and a developed alien culture rather than simply a few scared colonists with century-old equipment.

Twist

The colony is quite wealthy and is wilfully defaulting on the debt believing that the company lacks the clout or will to go after what they are owed. The invading bailiff fleet will find a decadent and rich world developed beyond what they had expected but also with enough money and resources to resist them every step of the way.

Epilogue

The P.D.C. has many of these asset recovery missions planned, but controversy over some of the actions taken has prompted the governing bodies of interstellar trade and the fleet to assign a patrol group to each action to be sure things are conducted lawfully, with the minimum of disruption and casualties. The characters are called up once again to collect from a defaulting debtor, only this time they have the fleet watching over their shoulders the whole time. They descend onto a planet determined to fight a vicious terrorist and guerrilla warfare campaign against their oppressors.

Ideas

This is licensed piracy. You could have freebooters for other systems defend the planet, for a price.

Adventure 36

What Became of the Monkey, Monkey, Monkey?

Description

The group are contracted or hired to move a cargo pod from the planet Hestia, a scientific outpost, to the sector capital, Candover. The cargo pod is listed on the manifest as containing medical supplies, a new experimental vaccine for use in Candover's hospital as an attempt to cure a controlled, but persistent outbreak of Algolian fungal infections in the general populace.

During the, considerable, trip the pod develops difficulties and either by intervention on the player's part, or by automated systems, it cracks open, revealing its charges. Three monkeys being thawed from cryogenic suspension.

While the monkeys appear, to virtually ever test and observation that can be made, to be perfectly normal, free from disease and certainly not a vaccine of any kind they are not, in fact, your average monkeys. While small of stature and retaining their instincts and capacity for acrobatics these monkeys have, experimentally, had their intelligence and vocal chords altered, bringing them up to a roughly human level of expression and intellect. Enough that they know their best chance to get away is to play dumb.

They don't want to get to their destination that much is for certain.

Twist

The monkeys are a red herring. They were infected but are no longer and they're just dumb monkeys. The 'intelligence' boost being a deliberate misleading tactic planted in the memory banks of the pod, deep down under enough security to convince an amateur. What they did have was a replicating nanovirus that has now fashioned its own 'nanomonkey' which it is using to sabotage and repurpose the ship in an attempt to spread itself further and pattern new species.

Twist

The monkeys will try to sabotage the ship, hoping to divert it to make a forced landing at the backwater planet of Ishmael. Here they will try to escape, disappearing into the wilds of the planet to, eventually

perhaps, raise a large tribe or nation of intelligent monkeys. Sabotage is their only real tactic, they are all agreed not to reveal their intelligence to any more humans, on pain of death.

Twist

The monkeys are not only human-like, they are better than humans emotionally and intellectually. Frustrated by the lab and their limitations therein they engineered the pod as their means of escape and have hacked one of the scientist's accounts to pay for the cargo transport. They are articulate and urbane, willing to negotiate and wish to purchase passage somewhere safe with the money that they have left.

Epilogue

A similar method might be applied to other semi-intelligent animals. Monkeys, apes, dolphins even cats (but probably not dogs) raising them up to become humanity's partners in the exploration of the stars.

Much more likely is the reaction of fear and uncertainty, of accusations that scientists have 'played god' and that they have brought about ruin. The same arguments that met the early stumblings with artificial intelligence and genetic modification.

A monkey colony a few years down the line is a likely consequence, as are intelligent monkeys wanting to see the galaxy and hiring ships, expecting the same standard of service and obeisance as anyone else with money to burn.

Adventure 37

The Mush Run

Description

Cobalt and Azure are two planets wholly owned by corporations and used as retirement and high level executive communities, much of the planets preserved as parks for the entertainment and delight of the relatively low populations of the planets. Despite their low populations they remain two of the richest planets per head in the galaxy.

Cobalt and Azure are linked by a high speed warp route that crosses the considerable distance between them with some safety and plenty of speed. The tender for the courier contract between the two planets, lasting one year, is coming up again. This means regular and steady extremely well paying work ferrying luxuries and confidential dispatches between the two and is hotly contested.

In order to win the contract independent ships and other courier services are invited to Cobalt to engage in a race, not along the usual mail route but via a far more circuitous route taking in a few hazard systems. Warping in and engaging in a 'test' feat of piloting at each of the systems that are defined as part of the route. Slingshots, Lagrange point warps and ring-debris dodging are all possibilities.

The winner lands the contract.

Twist

One of the contestants is a scout for a pirate group planning to use the year of deliveries to scout out the two planets in preparation for raids while collecting their security codes and scoping out their defences. They are not above dirty tactics or calling in their pirate group to harry and harass the other contestants.

Twist

The entire race is to be recorded and transmitted on holograph and media crews and ships are dotted along the course making foul play rather difficult to hide. This means any sneaky tactics are likely to be spotted and to be used as grounds for disqualification. Of course, influencing the reporters and the media crews may give a distinct advantage to one team.

Twist

The race has an entry fee and media syndication also makes a considerable sum for the company. The final winner is likely to be whichever company is their subsidiary, unknown to the other contestants. If anyone else wins rather than their own sub-company they will likely try to buy them out and put them on a salaried wage with benefits, rather than allow the contract to truly go to an outsider.

Epilogue

A year of easy living fattens the group's wallet but also fattens their belly. They lose a lot of their edge and now, when the contract comes up for renewal, they have to fight off a horde of hungry freelancers aching to take that contract off their hands, freelancers who have not had the same easy life for the last year. Freelancers who will do anything for an easy life.

Ideas

Statting up the various ships and crews involved is an unfortunate necessity for this scenario as it is important to find out who actually won and how. Fast warp vessels are likely to make the between systems jumps easily enough but may lack manoeuvring or speed in 'real space' where the others can make up the gap. Every ship must also carry at least two tons of cargo to prevent special 'racers' from being brought in to make the run. Coming up with some tactics and sneakiness on the part of the other crews can also improve suggestions and make other things possible with the scenario.

Adventure 38

Coming Down from the Trees Was a Mistake Description

As anyone with any experience of zero gravity will tell you, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. If you float there and fire a gun the odds are you will fly back as the bullet flies forwards, perhaps spinning.

The same can also be true of technological innovation. Every time an advance is made be it in computing, power plants or medicine there will always, almost instantly, spring up a group violently opposed. This has been true of fluoridation, genetically engineered crops and the industrialisation of factories.

On a galactic scale there are enough people who feel this way that they can come together in bargaining power and expertise, forming a group with a disproportionate voice, advocating a return to the 'idyllic' ways of the past and, in some extreme cases acting against symbols of technological advancement.

One of the great symbols of technological progress is the Armada Tower, an orbital elevator on Charybdis. Newly finished it almost bankrupted the planet and has been accused of causing changes in weather patterns, but it has attracted massive trade and has produced cheap orbital insertion and traffic, making the planet wealthy and making the tower a target for retrogressives.

Twist

The retrogressives have become more and more violent and extreme in recent years and now plan to destroy the tower in order to make their point and bring Charybdis back to a more idyllic state of natural living. Their agents have infiltrated the tower en masse and are ready to take over the control room and blow the safety locks, shattering the tower into segments which will then float out from orbit or strike Charybdis' sea. Unless they are stopped...

Twist

The tower *is* affecting the weather patterns of Charybdis and the retrogressives can prove it. In fact they're not even retrogressives they have just been painted that way by the planetary media to discredit

them. If the tower is not dismantled or changed the interruption in air flow will deplete the ozone layer, causing increased outgassing into space as well as redirecting an important warm air current, causing the temperature to lower by a marked degree over much of Charybdis' arable land.

Twist

The retrogressives are even more fanatical than anticipated and are determined to not only fell the tower but to throw Charybdis back into a state of agrarian purity. In order to do so they plan to partially collapse the tower the wrong way, shattering the orbital ring station and docked ships to form a debris barrier while, at the same time, allowing the lower portion of the tower to crash into Charybdis' most settled and urban region, plunging the planet into a holocaust induced dark ages.

Epilogue

Whether foiled or successful the retrogressives are now on the political map and they have a strong agenda, one which begins to attract other adherents. The movement spreads across the stars and everywhere technology begins to come under attack from research vessels and ships to robotics and A.I.s. This is met with incredulity by the high tech successful societies who become determined to stamp out the movement, simply giving it more cachet. Meanwhile the characters are caught in the middle, subjected to acts of ideological terrorism and destruction as the fire of the retrogressive movement spreads throughout space.

Ideas

The retrogressives represent the worst aspects of green movements and the 'ideal' agrarian society as preached in Cambodia with 'year zero'. Retrogressive planetary governments may be a good development.

Adventure 39

Rock, My World

Description

Asteroid mining communities have always been independently minded places even though they have always been reliant on food imports, even the best hydroponics not being entirely suited to supporting an entire community and being too prone to infection and technical problems to be relied on exclusively.

In spite of this independent spirit, mining colonies have always remained part of the galactic community, providing raw materials and low gravity industries with only a few showy and well publicised disasters accounting for the destruction or disappearance of any of these communities.

Until now.

Several of the more remote asteroid communities have vanished, apparently into thin air. No distress calls, no debris, nothing, simply vanished with no ship activity reported in the area when they have vanished. Nothing official anyway.

Asteroid communities are notoriously wary of official agencies and so any investigation will have to be handled by freelancers, perhaps with some undercover backup. This is where the characters fit the bill.

Twist

The asteroids have been ‘spirited away’ by an extremely powerful warp tug, voluntarily. One of the larger asteroid communities cracked the food/air problem with a specialist ship, a digester that breaks down comets from a system’s cometary halo breaking them down into their component parts and using those parts to produce water, air and food in abundance. With the problem fixed the asteroid communities are now beginning to seek full independence in other ways, gathering around a remote and uninteresting star to build their new community, away from the taxes and interference of galactic government.

Twist

The asteroids have been spirited away, as above and the food/air plant functions. The asteroids are, however,

being gathered by an ambitious group, forced into slave labour by cheaply produced robot guards, fed by the converter and made to work in sweatshop conditions, allowing this new company to appear from nowhere and undercut all its competitors while poaching their suppliers and workers.

Twist

Those who hire the characters have already got a certain amount of information. What they are most interested in is not the disappearances, not the company, not even a revolt amongst the asteroid communities. What they are truly interested in are the plans for the converter and samples of its specialist bacteria. The planetary and galactic impact of such a device is massive.

Epilogue

Should the converter become known as a device and should its use spread beyond this immediate conflict, it will have a profound effect on many worlds, bringing a new abundance of food and expanding populations, as well as providing the means for asteroid communities to finally sever ties with their home systems. Able to process ore and comets together to make themselves wealthy and even more independent, each asteroid becoming its own mini world.

Idea

When portraying asteroid dwellers picture those sorts of fierce, independently minded people who run small businesses or celebrate St. Patrick’s Day despite not having come within a hundred miles of Ireland in three generations.

Adventure 40

Two Houses...

Description

In the core worlds all trade is controlled by a handful of large conglomerated corporations who work together in a similar fashion to a Japanese zaibatsu, keeping their prices at regular levels and all heavily regulated by galactic government and law. As you move further away from the core the laws and regulations begin to weaken, taxation and control becomes more lax and there come more opportunities for smaller shipping companies. On the very rim the independent couriers and traders ply their trade, haphazard and disorganised. Between the two, riding a slowly expanding wave of profitability, caught between the cheap independents and the regulated companies are trader families, associations of independents, wealthy and seeking respectability but always vying for a slowly decreasing amount of lucrative trade on an expanding frontier.

Rivalries between trader families are legendary and are often close to the level of wars in their intensity and in the amount of vengeance and acrimony that goes on. Trading vessels will fire on each other, engage in acts of sabotage and even dress in each other's livery in order to poach deliveries and cargoes from unwitting clients.

The Ramones and the Kennedy's have been at each other's throats for around a decade now, their money coming more from investments than business as the ongoing war has driven away so many of their customers. Nobody remembers any longer what the feud is about but the feud is the only important thing in each family's life so that hardly matters. Now they attempt to break the stalemate with more underhanded tactics and the employment of freelancers.

Twist

It's a classic Romeo and Juliet story waiting to happen. Young Trixie Ramone and Robby Kennedy have fallen for each other. These, literally, star-crossed lovers are going to need protection but, much like crime families on Terra in earlier centuries, if they successfully wed the families will do their best to bury the hatchet, forming a single, formidable trading family.

Twist

The Ramones have friends in the pirate community while the Kennedy's have powerful naval contacts. As these forces are brought into the conflict between the families it threatens to spread and become a system wide problem rather than simply a feud between these two unless someone informs to the secret services about what is going on. A someone who will be approached by them, soon.

Twist

The Kennedys are a front. They have been bought out by a core world company that intends to expand into this area. The Ramones are already set against them but, finding out about this new threat, have redoubled their efforts. Unfortunately everyone thinks they are just rumour mongering about their long term rivals and have paid them no heed. They can present evidence, compelling to the characters who are outsiders, but it will take more to rouse the frontier spirit in the other local groups.

Epilogue

ComTrans, the large scale transport company from the core worlds is expanding its program out into wider space and with the two families at each other's throats it senses an opportunity, especially if or when one is defeated, leaving the other weakened. Corporate ships begin to pour into the sector and many support businesses are bought up. What was once vibrant frontier space is being developed and built up, joining the core before the player's very eyes across several adventures.

Ideas

Give each family a very distinctive style and a different preferred ship of choice. Pick a few common features such as a nose shape or a hair colour and apply it to most members of that family to distinguish them.

Adventure 41

Hop, Skip, Jump

Description

With a flash and a massive distortion of subspace that causes massive aurora in the atmospheres of nearby planets a space station appears out of warp near the frontier planet of Freiburg. The disruption of such a massive entry into real space means there will be no warp travel possible into or out of Freiburg for a few days and the planetary governor wants the station checked out in any case. Freiburg has little in the way of orbital defences and no navy apart from a single, outdated, police skiff and so looks to other ships and crews to do the deed.

The station is The Anvil, a military and civilian outpost belonging to the Frontier Corps from clear across the settled systems on the other side of human inhabited space. It shows extensive battle damage with pointed, arrowhead shaped ships rammed into its superstructure here and there. Every ship on its docking ring is damaged, its warp engines burned out, apparently in shifting this station, a suicidal tactic that shouldn't have worked, an act of total desperation.

What remains of the station is in the hands of the Chiirit, a rodentine race organised along lines of caste in a similar fashion to Terran insects. The officer corps are Chiirit nobles, the warriors are larger soldiers and the technicians smaller workers. They resemble giant, hunched rats and favour close combat and high rate of fire weaponry, warriors storming without regard to their own life.

Some remain alive on the station, along with the secrets of whatever happened here...

Twist

The Chiirit were reacting to what they regarded as an invasion of their space. Immensely territorial, proud and fierce despite their relatively small stature the Chiirit were incensed enough to attack. Under the immense onslaught the station did all it could to defend itself and then to escape. It wasn't enough.

Twist

The Chiirit have launched a massive spearhead

offensive into human space on the other side of the settled worlds. The station intended to take a warning ahead of the horde but overshot, moving such large structures in warp space not being an exact science. Word must be taken to the core worlds once it is deciphered what happened here, or more worlds could be threatened in this overwhelming blitzkrieg.

Twist

The station has torn a gaping hole in subspace which is growing slowly and threatens to suck in Freiport and the whole system unless it is repaired. The only way to do that being to repair the jump drives on the various ships docked to The Anvil, taking it back into the warp rent and reactivating its engines. A second blast, in effect, blowing out the warp storm. This info can only be gleaned from the on board records, though the surviving Chiirit may be amenable to the idea since it will cover their tracks and fix the problem, which threatens them as well.

Epilogue

This incident and the potential invasion either of humans into Chiirit space or vice versa could lead into a galactic war. The Chiirit view everything as survival and fight ferociously and bitterly, especially when cornered, no matter what happens to them or their people. Such a war would be vicious and bloody especially given the Chiirit's teeming numbers and high, fast breeding rate. Getting embroiled in such a war would be inevitable for the characters even if only ferrying ammunition, troops or supplies.

Ideas

The Chiirits are giant rats. They should retain rodent behaviours though they should never be funny.

Adventure 42

New Schlock. Now with Fleem!™

Description

Scoptic, the advertising and technical innovation company has achieved new levels of realism and power with their latest advertising techniques. Namely portable holographic projectors with associated E.M. fields, which can create or trigger certain feelings, memories and other effects within the minds of those seeing their advertisements. These same advertisements are also appearing on planetary and stellar data nets and the products that they are advertising are selling like hot cakes.

The Scoptic technique is technically legal since it doesn't implant any suggestions in the target's mind, subliminal advertising and hypnosis being banned methods. What it does do is make the subject's own happy memories and feelings become associated with certain products.

This will affect the characters as much as anyone else, dulling their emotions in everyday life and causing them to associate happiness, or their first love affair with Frapple ice cream or Just For Hir (hair care for mammalian hermaphrodites).

They may get commissions to transport software of billboard projectors for Scoptic Inc as even their fastest production cannot ship them fast enough. This is when the complications begin to manifest.

Twist

As the characters are delivering or guarding their shipment the backlash begins to hit. The effects of the Scoptic technique become public knowledge and the public outrage is massive. With the law as yet ineffectual to stop this insidious advertising, mob law rules and they may find their ship and the storage warehouse under attack by angry mobs of civilians. A baton pressed into their hands as corporate security pressgangs them into protecting product.

Twist

Scoptic Inc has higher ambitions than simple domination of the advertising market. Their technique can also associate their company with feelings and

concepts such as trust, love and devotion. On some planets this second phase of subliminal advertising begins to take shape, allowing a corporate takeover by Scoptic, keeping the populace sedated and happy with omnipresent advertising. The intelligence services of other worlds may wish to investigate but not with their own agents in case they are also converted.

Twist

Scoptic projectors malfunction in some public places. One of these just happens to be near where the characters are, perhaps a trading plaza, perhaps a marketplace, somewhere public in any case. The projector shorts out and frazzles, projecting waves of hate and disorder turning the sedated and happy citizens into violent crazies. At least until the power is cut or the projector destroyed. Even the characters may find their rage welling up inside them under the effect.

Epilogue

Depending how this runs and it will probably run best alongside another plot, Scoptic could end up either broken or as a major player. Either way their projectors have been out there and some can have been reverse engineered. This technology can be advanced further and used for less innocent purposes than advertising such as brainwashing, programming Manchurian candidates and bending votes. Hackers can also have endless fun tweaking the projectors to reduce whole streets full of people to jerking, twitching, multiple orgasms or driving people into a blinding rage. The technology is likely to end up banned as soon as the galactic government can get its act together and extend the poorly written legislation that disallows hypnotic or subliminal advertising to include any methods of mind control.

Adventure 43

Replication Error

Description

With some fanfare a new wonder of the modern age is unveiled. A teleportation system that is not limited to the usual ship to ship or ship to ground movements and not only moves inanimate objects but which can also teleport people from planet to planet and even star to star.

The system has passed preliminary testing and is now being deployed through the core systems before it will be rolled out to other worlds. Interstellar transporter technology has grim implications for shipping and many businesses, which attracts many detractors and those parties who are opposed completely to the introduction of such a device, unable to see beyond their own needs. Still there may be problems with the system after all. It has not been used by so many people before, even in testing, and things may have escaped the scientists notice, caught up in the possibilities of the idea as they were.

As the first links come in for the full effect of the massive human traffic the strains begin to show the unforeseen problems with the system.

Twist

Shipping companies and other interested parties are so determined to preserve their own profits and to see this product fail that they are willing to stoop to sabotage and terrorism. Destroying the receivers and senders condemns many to death, lost in the beam at the moment of interruption. Others are killed by the received energy dissipating into the machinery and exploding, still others by the bombs that go off at the terminals. The chaos must be investigated and as well as the authorities there are the insurance companies who are far more likely to look to outsiders for help.

Twist

Over several journeys through the teleporter errors begin to creep in to the signal of the person being transmitted. Little things at first, perhaps a melanoma or eyesight problems, then things begin to get more pronounced, with cellular walls breaking down and large cancers spreading throughout the body. Such

replication issues will put paid to the teleporter but just as some are willing to kill to see the transporters go offline so are some willing to kill to see it carry on. Unscrupulous characters may find themselves employed to cover up the problems by taking out some key witnesses.

Twist

Fearing for the fate of the galactic civilisation in the economic crash and chaos that the widespread use of these teleporters would cause, the government acts. It is the secret service that subtly sabotages the teleporter project in order to preserve galactic civilisation and order while co-opting the technology for themselves to aid in their control.

Epilogue

Whatever happens there must have been some fatal flaw in the teleportation system and so it becomes shelved, hidden away, forgotten about. The scientists responsible suspect foul play and go underground, taking their ideas with them, improving on them as time goes on, finally able to transport non-living matter with only minimal disruption. Having relied on criminal syndicates and pirates to fund the rest of their research they find themselves in a spot, having to pay off their debts to these types, their new teleporters being used for criminal and piratical enterprise. Something that the characters are bound to run into at some point.

Ideas

The teleportation process should have some sort of feeling or description attached to it. Decide what sort of transportation effects you like, it may be something akin to *Stargate* or something more like the classic *Trek* transporter beam. Either way makes it something instantly recognisable to your players.

Adventure 44

Nice Planet you've got Here...

Description

The characters arrive at Gorea, a reasonably developed world with good prospects for the future. The planet is receiving a lot of investment and development funding, rapidly building up and hotly tipped to be a possible future capital for the development region it is in. Still, there is a gap of empty space running out in a widening spar from Gorea which does limit the number of planets it can link to and, at present, isolates it quite a bit from the other planets in the area. This makes it relatively wealthy and vulnerable, something which has not escaped certain people's notice.

A small pirate fleet has emerged from the direction of the empty area of space and set up in orbit around the planet, threatened the populace with asteroidal bombardment, eliminated their scanty orbital defences, taken a lot of their high tech goods and produce and left, promising to return for more. The people of Gorea now toil at their jobs and in their factories knowing that the best and brightest of what they produce will be taken. Everything they have goes, not into trade, but rather into keeping the space-borne wolves from their door.

The characters find a cowed world, though it should become clear rapidly what is wrong here and, if they can find a solution, they'll be heroes.

Twist

The pirate group is larger than it first appears and is based in a cobbled together space station they have hauled into the dead-star gap. They are terrorising and running their planetary scale protection racket across many systems on the frontier. Thwarting one of their operations may well just bring the wrath of the rest. If their base can be eliminated so will their tactical advantage.

Twist

The 'pirate' group is, in fact, a small fleet of associated independent traders who have been screwed over by Gorea's recent investment choices and the involvement of core world corporations in their dealings. The contracts with the traders were breached, leaving them

destitute and with no choice but to turn to crime and extortion, unable to compete in the courts with the might of a planetary or interstellar corporation.

Twist

The area of 'dead space' is not actually empty. An extent of it is but the rest is shrouded by a dense gas and particulate cloud hiding a score of stars and worlds, which provide hiding places and support for the 'pirate' fleet. They need the goods they are taking in order to construct self-sustaining colonies, free from galactic governance.

Epilogue

The area of space near Gorea will continue to attract ne'er-do-wells and political dissidents hoping that the shard of empty space is a refuge that they can disappear into. Gorea will become an important staging post not only as a new regional capital but also as a naval base as the government tries to keep control and prevent these renegades and dissidents from disappearing. Eventually they will discover the truth about the empty space and will seek to find the bases and locations of the renegades, something they will likely hire independent traders and mercenaries to do, unwilling to tip their hand so soon.

Ideas

This could easily make a good one off scenario, a sort of 'Seven Samurai' in space with each player taking the part of an individual ship captain, ship and crew united by greed or honour to defend the planet from the pirates.

Ideas

Do not be immediate in telling what has happened on the planet. Build up slowly to it with clues.

Adventure 45

Once in a Lifetime

Description

Altringham is an unusual world, segregated from the rest of galactic civilisation by a preservation edict making it a strictly agricultural world whose technological level, outside of medicine, hovers somewhere around the 19th and early 20th centuries. Here old crafts are preserved and relearned and the planet is not considered worthy of notice for the majority of each decade.

It is also home to a communal insect, an ant-like creature that, once every ten years in response to an alignment of the planet's two moons performs an unusual act. Thousands of the worker creatures congregate and spin fruit sugars around themselves, preserving themselves in a hard piece of rock-like sugar candy. The hills of the ants become encased and capped in this hard, sugary substance providing for the colony in the coming winter which, once every ten years is the hardest winter the temperate area of the planet suffers.

The taste of this candy, ant and all, is sublime, a subtle blend of fruit sugars, honey and the sweet-acid zing of the ant itself. Its rarity and flavour making it an expensive and much sought after luxury across the galaxy.

In order to get a cargo of the sweet candy one must be vicious, uncompromising, hard headed and canny. Every ten of Altringham's orbits there is a feeding frenzy of star ships trying to get their part of the cargo. If the characters can get in on time, they'll have a fortune in their bays in no time.

Twist

Altringham is a steadfast, Christian (or similar) world and its people are parochial and easily offended. Brash language or behaviour acceptable on any other world may be considered disgraceful on Altringham and could end up with several characters spending a few days in prison. It will also cost them any contracts. Negotiating contracts is as much a social whirl as it is business, with Captain's Balls being held at the larger houses and estates. If they can behave perfectly their order may be all the sweeter.

Twist

A rival captain of the bulk freighter 'The Spirit of '66' is planning to heist a bulk load of the cargo from one of Altringham's storage warehouses and offers them a slice of the action. Stealing from this relatively primitive world should be easy enough, if they can get their way past the other traders and ships who will be even more pissed at them than the natives.

Twist

They find an estate willing to sell them a massive amount of the candy at a reasonable price. Then there is just one, small hitch. The estate is one of the poorer ones and wants to climb the social ladder. Marrying off one of their sons/daughters to a successful ship captain would be just the sort of boost that they need and becomes a condition of the deal...

Epilogue

Repeat business is, understandably, rare on Altringham for one reason or another. However the families that the group traded with do get in touch with them, not long after they have traded their commodity. There is, apparently, a problem. Another vessel, touching down (a rare sight) to buy some of the crafted commodities from the planet to trade as curiosities has stolen an ant nest from the planet, something prohibited by planetary and galactic law. Perhaps they hope to find a way to breed the creatures and to artificially induce the sugar-making frenzy. Something that would devastate Altringham's economy and drive the price of the candy through the floor. It must be stopped.

Ideas

The whole episode should come across as *Firefly* meets *Jane Eyre*.

Adventure 46

Two Times the Misunderstandings

Description

On an exploration contract a few light-years beyond the frontier, investigating radio signals from a star system the group warps in and begins their explorations. It rapidly becomes apparent that they are observing an early industrial society whose technology appears roughly on par with 1930's earth. Their planet is rich in resources and heavily populated, they have had radio for approximately two decades and it is these early, weak signals that have been detected.

The shaggy-furred, squat inhabitants go about their business day in, day out, unaware of any wider society though they show a social and intellectual level of development that outstrips their technology and suggests that they might be ready for interstellar contact even at this early stage of their development.

While these studies are being concluded a small scout group of other, unknown, vessels warps into the system. A frigate and a handful of small scout vessels of unusual configuration who also begin scanning the system. A second unknown people, this time spacefarers with technology unusual but on par to the player's own.

These newcomers are conquerors who care nothing for careful first contact procedure and fully intend to scan the world and then make a show of force, claiming it for their empire and turning it into a resource world to feed their conquest. This is a first contact situation with them as well, which precludes any aggressive contact. What do you do?

Twist

The industrialised world is just a preservation colony of a wider, spacefaring species. This is similar to Terran agrarian worlds where old crafts and ways of life are preserved for the future, a sort of historical reservation. These beings go further though, cutting off these worlds and monitoring them. When the squid-like second interlopers start attacking they will despatch one of their fleets to protect their world and their cousins and to warn off the characters from making contact as well.

Twist

The furry planet dwellers live in such filth and pollution that their planet is riddled with virulent diseases with highly changeable and adaptable D.N.A. and protein chains. These diseases will rapidly adapt to the physiology of any interloping race and, without the advanced immune systems of the planet dwellers, they are likely doomed, whether human or squid, without advanced medical assistance within a week.

Twist

If the planet is visited evidence quickly mounts that this was once a more advanced society that has suffered some manner of disaster, causing it to regress to its current technological state. The ruins and remnants of a spacefaring and somewhat aggressive people remain everywhere. In fact the squids were once a race that these people conquered and subjected to terrible hardship. The squid group is a ship unit seeking revenge upon those who harmed them, a generational hatred bred into their very nature.

Epilogue

The whole situation is an enormous mess and, eventually, once the authorities catch up to the group they will be taken before a tribunal and made to explain every last detail of every single action they undertook in regard to this mission. Even the slightest breach of procedure and they will be crucified before the court, turned into a scapegoat for the total disaster that this contact has turned out to be. The media will be all over any ruling like flies on a particularly succulent piece of dung and their reputation will be shot.

Ideas

The mess up of this mission is a good way of 'resetting' the campaign with a group that is too powerful.

Adventure 47

The Proxima Bar – Buyer Beware

Description

The Proxima Bar is an unusual place, a melding of alien cultures. Sure, it isn't to everyone's taste and the barman needs to be more competent than most, after all alcohol poisons some species and cyanide and arsenic doesn't give every alien the giggles.

Sure, it's not the most popular bar in existence for any particular space going species but what it does have is a mix. The shabby décor and the tucked away location belie the fact that The Proxima Bar is a very important place for interspecies harmony. Here you can rub shoulders with reptiloids, make fun of the furless humans and share a pint of Old Armstrong Ale with a trishell-mammiloid. How many other bars can offer that?

Occasionally something new turns up that even the hardened and jaded drinkers of The Proxima Bar find unusual. In this instance that would be Kilgara Trumphin, a trader from an amphibious species with many tall tales and many unusual artefacts to spare. He thinks he has something that is right up the character's alley and is even willing to sell it, 'cheap'.

As with the guest list of the bar, you're never quite sure what you're going to get...

Twist

Killy is offering the latest in Artificial Intelligence developed from a pattern found in the ruins of Viltvogel Five and derived from the advanced technology of that lost race. This is one of a kind, an experimental model well ahead of the market. Indeed it is an A.I. and an advanced one. A very curious, learning oriented, A.I. that will slowly subsume more and more ship or station systems in its quest for knowledge and understanding of the universe before finally and irretrievably turning itself off almost exactly one week after activation, leaving a suicide note.

Twist

Killy is selling deeds to land on the remote colony of Kostanza. What he fails to mention is that the planet is contested territory with the Chiirit who are also selling

plots of choice land to their own colonists while the diplomats wrangle over the actual status of the world. Still, they are cheap...

Twist

Killy has got the formula to the holy grail of the intergalactic narcotics trade. The universal drug. This is a neural inducer that produces feelings of euphoria in any sentient species by using grafted telepathic cells from vat grown geneered rats. For once he is serious and there is no catch... no catch other than the fact it is far less effective than a lot of other drugs and very expensive to produce. Still, it isn't illegal, yet, and there could be a reasonable profit if they invest enough right at the start.

Epilogue

Kilgara makes a good recurring character in a campaign, an unscrupulous trader working on an extremely small scale, dealing in the unusual and the unwanted, giving it an excellent sales patter and occasionally stumbling upon a real gem, which he manifestly fails to make a profit from. The characters can continually get caught up in his schemes and deals and in helping him cope with the aftermath of his disastrous business enterprises or chasing after him on the behalf of others to collect on defaulted debts. Any one of the above scenarios makes a good follow on where the characters confront Killy and demand explanations or a refund, only to be met with excuses and the odd panicked look.

Ideas

Populate The Proxima Bar with a good deal of other regulars like Killy to give it some real character and individuality. Even old discarded player characters from previous games make good barflies.

Adventure 48

The Proxima Bar - Ballroom Blitz

Description

It is Saint Christopher's Day, a day celebrated by Terran spacers since the exodus of the 2200's. The festival has been co-opted by many other spacefaring races since, some of whom even claim Terran ancestry to enjoy and join in the proceedings, however ridiculous that might be.

In The Proxima Bar the landlord has pulled out all the stops, the majority of his clientele are spacers and of various species so Saint Christopher's Day is the most important day in his calendar, an extremely profitable blow out.

The bar is packed, decorated, the huge wall-screen holosuite is playing the pan-species football final by live-beam from Altair and the beer, ammonia and alternating current is flowing freely with every individual in the heaving multispecies throng concentrating very hard on getting utterly wanked on booze.

The bonhomie can't last all night and eventually a fight breaks out over whose tentacle touched whose arse and 'What kind of interspecies pervert are you anyway?' The bottles fly, the chairs shatter and the peace of the bar is ruptured into splinters as one of the largest and most unusual bar brawls ever seen kicks off.

Twist

As things are about to calm down and, at the worst possible moment, the football game ends on penalty shoot-outs. To make matters worse the wrong team won. At least the wrong team in the context of the bar and the fight, the result sparking things off and making them even more vicious, the fighting spilling out onto the street and mixing with the exodus from the other surrounding bars and pubs.

Twist

The local constabulary arrives en masse but is ill prepared to deal with such a mass of different species locked in mortal bloody combat fuelled by beer and other stimulants. Unable to use their stun rays or riot gas since they cannot be sure which species would be

killed by the use of either, they are forced to weigh in with their batons increasing the chaos of an already chaotic fight.

Twist

The cause of the fight is actually tailored spiking of the various brews by a group of human activists from the area who are sick of seeing all these aliens in their neighbourhood. They have chosen various psychoactive substances carefully to turn the party atmosphere of the bar into a brawl, intending to cite the fighting as a reason to have the bar closed down, moving the alien problem elsewhere.

Epilogue

Broken friendships, broken furniture and various wounds are all things that need to be patched up following the epic fight. The sheer amount of damage has also all but bankrupted the bar meaning it will close without the assistance of the regulars. The owner is unwilling to accept a massive donation from any rich patron but if a fundraising activity is proposed to save the bar he will be all for it. This is likely to be something painfully embarrassing and humiliating to all concerned but, if it saves the bar, hurrah!

Ideas

Throwing a drink in someone's face is a good idea in a normal bar fight but when some species regard acid as a light tippie the results can be unpredictable. Throw a great deal of randomness into the fight from drinks to the shape of the chairs and the peculiar results of hitting some creatures.

Ideas

Every classic bar fight move or scenario can be brought into this action from chandelier swinging to broken bottles. Even more impressive if the one swashbuckling is a tentacled amoeba.

Adventure 49

The Proxima Bar – I, Lapdancer

Description

In an attempt to boost business a little, the owner of The Proxima Bar has introduced a slightly ‘risque’ addition to the menu. Erotic dancers. With such a varied clientele he has to cycle the dancers quite a lot but there are certain things that mammalian humanoids can agree on and so the one regular dancer he keeps on the books, every Threeday, regular as clockwork, is Ping.

Ping is a lovely Asiatic looking Terran with a perfect body, a bright demeanour and the grace and style of an Altarian shimmerbird. She’s the belle of the ball and draws in lots of customers and lots of tips as much for her dancing skill as her nakedness, all the while staying frustratingly professional. Nobody knows she’s a robot.

When two gunmen burst into the bar and start firing towards Ping that professionalism goes out the window and the characters will find themselves suddenly coping with two gun-toting psychopaths and a breathless half naked girl in their arms demanding to be rescued.

What kind of cad would leave her to rot?

Twist

Ping is a combat android, designed for assassination. On her last mission she got hit by an E.M.P. blast and lost her memory and most of her skills. Still, she is regarded as a rogue mechanoid and the two gun toting nutjobs are military intelligence, vat-grown combat-geneered troops assigned specifically to find and destroy her. Short of faking her death there is no way to stop them.

Twist

Ping is a renegade A.I. running from her past criminal deeds. Her crime was achieving self-awareness, something not supposed to happen with sex-bots and then compounding her crime by trying to bring the pleasures of physical sensuality to the local A.I. consensus. An unholy alliance of her manufacturer and the outraged A.I. community have sent two combat androids to find her, recover her or destroy her.

Twist

Ping is not really self-aware, she is just a pre-programmed sex-bot with some pretty sophisticated software. The whole attack, the girl needing rescuing, everything is just a birthday present to one of the characters from the regulars at the bar, knowing how much he likes to play hero and how everyone has been lusting after Ping.

Epilogue

In the majority of these scenarios Ping is on the run from something and she is an unusual A.I. possessing both gender and sensuality, albeit programmed into her. This helps her emotionally understand humans and also gives her an angle on human desires and feelings that other A.I.s lack. She could become a regular part of the crew as an N.P.C. or even be given to someone to play. Her progress towards becoming even more human forming a plot arc across several adventures and her more approachable A.I. nature making her a more playable character and a good diplomat between artificial and humanoid intelligences.

Ideas

The theme of a robot searching for the qualities of humanity has been somewhat overdone in science fiction with DATA from *Star Trek* being perhaps the most obvious and somewhat hokey example. Try not to overdo it and try to be original in the areas of what makes us human you want to explore.

Ideas

The Proxima Bar doesn’t really belong in a shiny, nice future type game. Its place is in the role of cantina or other seedy dive, a place to meet the criminal underbelly of interstellar society and this adventure in particular should have the feel of Frank Miller’s *Sin City* series.

Adventure 50

An Earth Shattering Organism

Description

The MacroGen Corporation proudly invites you (and guests) to the unveiling of its new space habitat at stardate 2347.8 in the Genesis system. Please bring this invitation and confirmable I.D. that meets GalGov specification 17934/B.- MacroGen, bringing space to life since 2257.'

This invitation is delivered to the group as they conclude one of their previous jobs. There is plenty of time to get to this demonstration but why have they been invited, lowly freelancers that they are? Why is the demonstration in the Genesis system? A violent, binary star system of dense asteroid fields and no inhabitable worlds and, more to the point, what does a genetics and hydroponics concern have to do with space habitats?

When they arrive they are checked and escorted in to the habitat by MacroGen security ships, taken down into the orbit of a massive gas giant that dominates the background behind the platform, a strange, organic shape in stable orbit around the massive planet.

MacroGen has cracked a way to make a gigantic organic space station that can survive in orbit, soaking up cosmic rays, sunlight and the magnetic pulse of gas giants to produce energy while gathering hydrogen atoms, space dust, debris and digesting asteroids to produce and maintain its own bulk. What is more, since it can grow and bud, these habitats will be cheap to produce and build, putting them well within the price range of independent traders and private concerns, like the characters.

Twist

The nascent consciousness of the habitat is just 'birthing', taking control of its body. Unfortunately, denied human contact for so long and so much of its body taken from some of the most primitive and durable organisms in existence, the habitat comes to regard the ships docked as 'prey' and the people inside as an infection. It activates its organic factories to produce the means to remove both while busily attacking and digesting the ships. They're stuck inside an organic habitat millions of times their size, determined to kill them.

Twist

Word has leaked already about the habitat and several fanatical religious cults have determined that such a starfaring organic creature is the worst kind of blasphemy. Determined and frothing with indignation they have hired or commandeered several mercenary vessels and are determined to destroy the abomination before its corrupted science can demean the universe any further.

Twist

The inventor of the habitat intended it to be an act of pure altruism, creating a new, cheap and abundant form of orbital housing and processing to help younger systems expand their profitability much more quickly. That dream has been seconded by the corporation and turned to more profit, which has incensed him. During the launch party he will bitch ceaselessly at any who will listen before transferring his consciousness into the habitat, overwriting its own primitive mind with his own and seeking revenge on his tormentors while, at the same time, using the organic factories to produce a massive warp engine, intending to take his habitat with him once he has had his revenge and vented his disgust.

Epilogue

MacroGen is onto a winner, even given how long it takes these habitats to grow and form. They can advance on their discovery even further by creating organic atmosphere processors for terraforming, organic colony start-ups and even organic ships. Industrial espionage and sabotage will raise to massive levels as time goes on and the corporation will be forced to turn to its past customers and friends in order to try to maintain its monopoly and viability.

Adventure 51

Black Hole's Last Waltz

Description

Reversing entropy may remain impossible or, at the very least extremely unlikely but delaying it may prove possible after all. Despite various nihilist cult's best efforts the scientific experiments and theories upon various ways in which to destroy black holes have come to fruition and are now ready for a practical test. A suitably remote black hole has been chosen in case things go horribly wrong and 'the device' (nobody has thought to name it yet) has been prepared.

The characters are hired on as additional security since those involved do not trust to the heavy naval presence and want as much protection as possible. Nihilists are, after all, vehemently against the operation and are willing to die for their cause, making them extremely hard to stop if they are truly determined.

As the zero hour approaches the media, the navy and the scientific community, as well as a lot of gawpers and interstellar liners gather near the designated place, hoping for a show that they will remember and fresh hope for the systems threatened by these remorseless devourers of the universe.

So too do the nihilists draw together their plans.

Twist

The device operates only within the central singularity of the black hole and can only operate for the briefest most infinitesimal of moments before being destroyed. It operates by exploiting the different physical laws within the heart of the black hole, turning its own mass upon itself into energy, equalising the forces within the black hole and snuffing it out. The nihilists have gotten to the device already; now when it activates it will double the effective mass of the black hole, likely killing or destroying a majority of the onlookers, including the cream of the galactic scientific crop, unless the plot is discovered and stopped.

Twist

The nihilists plan to hijack one of the liners and to place it between the science vessel with the device and the black hole, blocking the primitive sighting system

from being able to launch. They threaten to kill all the hostages if the experiment is not stood down and the device and all attendant plans handed over to them. A frontal assault is not a possibility, but a small non-military team may be able to infiltrate the liner...

Twist

The nihilists don't show, or are defeated but there has been a miscalculation on the part of the scientists, after all, not enough is known about conditions in the singularity. The mass of the black hole is turned into energy and does indeed negate the force of it, however they had not accounted for the mass of stellar gas and dust falling into the black hole at the time of its conversion which is also converted. While this mass is insignificant compared to the mass of the former black hole the amount of energy released is still phenomenal and rips into the observing fleet causing massive damage, crippling and destroying many vessels and creating chaos. Cooperation will be required to pull together and survive until help can reach the stricken ships.

Epilogue

The experiment incenses the nihilists even more who step up their campaign of senseless destruction and terror clear across the galaxy. When inhabited worlds are threatened by an encroaching black hole the technology will receive its first true life-saving test and the nihilists will pull out all the stops to prevent the destruction of another avatar of their beliefs. What they view as the natural end to the threatened planets, species and people.

Ideas

If you treat this with the reverence that met the first A-bomb experiments you have the tone right.

Adventure 52

Making a Killing

Description

Bloodsports are banned on most civilised worlds but this liberal ethic runs into problems when it meets other cultures and planets where such bloodsports are an integral and historic part of the local culture. Here their thoughts of preserving the local culture and society outweigh distaste for the spilling of blood and the ancient rites are permitted to continue.

One of these rites is a sort of ‘festival of hunting’ held by the Gr’shah upon the capital of their home world. The best hunters compete in a cleared area of their city, fighting each other until only one remains standing, the winner of the festival and collector of the bounty, the entrance fee of every other participant going to the singular winner along with an award from the Gr’shah themselves and a magnificent trophy.

One hundred participants are taken, only one may leave. While this prevents the characters from all entering, unless they are willing to kill each other or have a cunning plan of some description, it does not mean that the others cannot advise or cannot work behind the scenes in various cunning ways to increase their man’s chance of winning.

The prize is, after all, enormous.

Twist

One of the entrants has been put together by a nanotechnology concern and is capable of regenerating itself from even the smallest surviving number of nanobot constructors that make up its mock-android body. It can be encountered and fought many times but will keep returning unless the player, or one of the other entrants, can find a way to destroy it utterly and completely.

Twist

Several of the entrants have decided to gang up until the very end of the competition and are working together until they are the last ones left. Operating as a unit they begin to sweep the board, closing in on the player’s position, throwing a fairly wide net in an attempt to catch and eliminate them.

Twist

A betting syndicate contacts the player asking them to ‘take a fall’ once they have reached the last surviving ten. They have a special biochip and some other high tech gizmos that they say will allow them to preserve the player and their consciousness post death. In exchange for this favour and its affect on the bets they will save them and pay for their new body, preventing their death. Of course, they still have to reach the top ten and if they screw up, they get nothing.

Epilogue

The competition can be re-run every year in different environments and with different participants. It is not unusual for a reigning champion to enter the competition a second time, seeking to increase their fortune still further. The most times a champion has ever won the competition is three before they then retired. Each time you re-run this scenario you should ramp up the opposition and make the environment for the hunt a little more unusual and a little more imposing.

Ideas

You needn’t generate all 100 participants but you should name, arm and briefly describe each one. You can then choose your favourite twenty or so to use as opponents for the characters who enter the competition.

Ideas

A fun idea can be to provide the ‘sports commentary’ on the manoeuvres and actions of the characters as they creep around the arena and make kills.

Adventure 53

Black Tide

Description

The dispersal of humanity across the stars has made many different social experiments possible and has given humanity enough space that wildly different ideologies can exist side by side, even work together despite their history on earth. That is not to say there are not still inequalities though. The heavily traversed core worlds spread technology more quickly, transfer more materials, lead in fashion, wealth, commerce and politics while the outer planets are always poorer, little more than resource and manufacturing worlds, sometimes simply new colonies, unable to afford the latest technology, too far away from the core to be fashionable.

The point of greatest contention is the preservation of newly discovered alien cultures that are pre-stellar. Governments, philosophers and xenoculture advisors all agree that interfering in delicate, relatively primitive cultures would be disastrous. Many other people do not agree, no sentient (they believe) should be kept in ignorance and squalor. All should be raised up, assisted, given the fruits of high technology and interstellar society. The popular view goes against the experts.

For some time technological inequality has been an issue of hot, popular protest. The inequalities between races, the inequalities between the core and the rim and the holding back of sentients is driving people to distraction, especially as evidence comes out that corporations have been holding back on cheap technology that could make everyone's standard of living so much higher.

On the rimward worlds this movement finally culminates in revolt, simultaneously springing up across many worlds while massive civil unrest and protest occurs across the inner worlds, all at once.

Twist

The topic is a difficult one. Is it right to hold other species back or is it right to allow them to develop at their own pace? This revolt makes a better campaign than a one shot, a campaign in which all sides of the issue can be explored with various encounters by the

characters shaping how things turn out. The rebels are all good willed people, or merely desperate to close the gap. Even in the far future there are haves and have nots and when the difference becomes too great, people revolt.

Twist

This revolt is coordinated, across the galaxy, by a small group of anarchists at the very core, determined to bring down the corporations and the structures of galactic government. They have fast courier ships they use to bring dispatches to their cells on various planets and it is them who coordinated the protests and revolts, stretching the governments and the navy to its absolute limit. They do not intend to stop until everything is torn down.

Twist

The revolt has been stirred up by an alien race. Left to themselves they suffered a great deal of poverty, starvation and death. Then there was a crash upon their planet and they found out about greater galactic society. Quick learners and very resentful at being left to their fate they quietly infiltrated galactic society, seeking revenge. Now they have it.

Epilogue

With the rim worlds in the control of libertarian anarchists the core worlds begin to feel the pinch, they retain the technological advantage for the moment but that gap is closing rapidly and the rim worlds are bringing in new pre-stellar races and educating and building them up, swelling their ranks. Fleet actions accomplish little and assassinations and selective sabotage seem the way forward for both sides. Plenty of work for both idealists and amoral mercenaries in a long, drawn out civil war.

Adventure 54

Technofetish

Description

There have always been people who have been obsessed with gadgets, who have to push the frontiers of what is possible, who have to own the best technology and be ahead of the game. The obsessive geeks who install Linux on their pocket calculators or run web servers on potato power. With technology becoming more and more omnipresent and as simple to use as talking to someone or using a pen, these geeks move more and more to the very forefront of possible technology and make social and physical experiments with devices in ways they were never especially intended to be used.

Unable to afford the settlement contract for a planet thus farm these technofetishists have organised themselves within a mined out asteroid habitat around the industrial world of Bristol at the edge of the core worlds. Here 2600 technological pioneers pursue innovative use of artificial intelligence, predictive algorithms, nanotech, cybernetic and genetic enhancement in a no-holds barred frenzy of innovation.

Now they have gone one step beyond, transferring their consciousness into the computer core as they age and die, they do it voluntarily, even allowing the A.I.s to experience the physicality of their vacant bodies. Tying themselves into the machines and experiencing the world in ways few other human minds ever have.

Twist

The asteroid is a good place to pick up new technologies or to discover innovative uses of old ones but one is increasingly having to endure the evangelising of the transferred consciousnesses calling to people to join them in their artificial heaven. Instant knowledge, instant understanding, living at many times the speed of the flesh in perfect virtual environments of anything you can imagine, this to them is heaven and they cannot understand why anyone would not want to feel it. As time goes on and more convert, their evangelising may take a more forceful turn, bringing salvation to those who visit them, even bodysnatching with tailored A.I.s, giving them the chance to feel and explore the physical world before returning.

Twist

The whole scheme and set up is an experiment by a zaibatsu of corporate concerns from Bristol. They are not allowed to perform human experimentation with their technologies but there are no controls on people using such technologies on themselves should they 'happen' to come across them in data dumps or have them leaked to them. As the project gets out of control and becomes too much of a problem a plan is hatched to release some more lethal technology to send the 'geek thinktank' and all the evidence straight to hell.

Twist

It only takes one bad apple to cause the whole barrel to turn sour. One of the personalities uploaded to their matrix was a domineering and charismatic criminal who has abused their trust and their technology to forcibly 'possess' a crewman's body from a visiting star ship. This takes his serial killing and criminal actions out under a new identity. The community hires the characters to pursue and find this person and bring an end to what they are doing. Of course, they may have hopped bodies several times since then...

Epilogue

Eventually the technofetish community gains enough money to purchase a settlement contract from a planetary development company. Their plans for this virgin soil are fantastical and little to nothing will be left of the primordial planet they began with. They aim to make a controlled environment on a planetary scale. They will need a great deal of assistance and cargo but will obviously be extremely grateful to anyone helping them out. They will also be violently opposed by planetary preservation movements and eco-terrorists who will all be determined to preserve at least something of the original world, however primitive and disgusting it is, they will oppose any move to eradicate the local ecosphere.

Adventure 55

A Fine Body of Working Men

Description

Rejected by the genetics corporation he was working for as a crackpot, Matthew Renfrew has taken his research (which technically belongs to the company) and fled to the wilds of the newly settled world Bastille. A swampy jungle planet of steaming swamps, broad rivers and immense biodiversity with a density equal to earth's Amazon basin in its prime. The planet has given him plenty to work with, especially the gigantic Eiffel trees, massive natural heat exchangers with networks of roots reaching as far as a kilometre from the tree itself.

Bastille is primitive, a starting colony with only the bare minimum of facilities and defences. The isolation has made Renfrew more than a little mad, his hatred of his old bosses has metamorphosed into hatred of all corporations and all of those who work for them. Since most planets are settled by zaibatsus of stellar corporations working together his wrath will first be vented against Bastille's helpless settlement and spaceport.

One man alone cannot do much, but one man with a grove of giant geneered trees that can grow tailored organisms, weapons and complex compounds within their womb-growths is another matter. Creatures that would never been seen in nature are churned out by his engineered trees along with weapons and armour and are gene-coded for loyalty to him. A nightmare army ready to destroy Bastille and take over its spaceport, to spread to the stars on his quest for vengeance.

Twist

Renfrew is the classic mad scientist 'Mock my theories now!' but he has been driven that way by the corporation. Afraid of the implications of organic factories on the markets they squashed his research, took most of his papers and tried to gag him legally and then violently. Driven to hide he selected the wilds of a world in which his old company had a massive investment. His sense of revenge is justified, his actions are not, he is a tragic figure, not a villain.

Twist

Nature mutates, evolves, changes that is the way of

things since forever. However engineered Renfrew cannot completely account for the roll of the genetic dice and aberrations creep in, a new breed of nightmare, intelligent enough to understand and overcome their slavery to him. A new race raised from his need for revenge learning to use the womb-trees to their own ends, perhaps mistaken for aboriginal planet dwellers.

Twist

Renfrew is still working for the corporation it is just that, thanks, to advanced mind control techniques he does not realise it. The wiping out of the hapless colonists by an apparent aboriginal race is all part of the plan. It will mean that the planet will end up quarantined. Renfrew can be eliminated from orbit and his techniques and discoveries taken up. Not long after that, great swathes of these womb-trees will grow in plantations across the planet, producing goods to be lifted secretly and sold in bulk, undercutting traditional manufacturing and making the corporation one of the greatest in the galaxy. It's a good plan.

Epilogue

Organic factories have existed after a fashion since the first tailored and useful bacteria. Various specialist geneered organisms exist but his breakthrough is something entirely new and different, turning out grown, finished products, not just the raw materials to make them. The societal impact of such a discovery would be massive, undermining traditional industries and making borderline colonies far more viable but far less profitable to the corporations investing in them. Rival corporations will want any whiff of the research to do with these trees and Renfrews research annihilated. They will hire anyone to ensure that this happens. From explorations back on this world to tracking down his information in the data sphere to checking out his friends it will be a long and profitable job.

Adventure 56

Where Is Everybody?

Description

Bulk hauler The Ringo Star emerges from warp on the fringes of the system that the characters are in and refuses to contact traffic control or to even acknowledge the signal. As the closest ship the characters are asked to investigate and try to find out what is wrong and why they are not signalling.

The ship is empty, courses abandoned in mid plot, coffee cups sat on the mess room table still, books left open, even a shower left running. The entire crew appears to have simply disappeared without a trace leaving an eerily empty craft, unharmed, untouched, nothing missing but the crew. Excellent salvage but a great mystery to all concerned.

What has caused the ship to lose its crew and where are they? How is it still running without monitoring? Has this sort of thing happened before? Will it happen again?

Twist

The crew are missing because they ran out of the ship while it was still on the launch pad, a fire alert making them evacuate leaving everything as it was. The ship then 'ran away' setting course for the nearest inhabited system where it might be salvaged and given to a different crew. The problem is this, the ship A.I. is not a normal A.I. but is an uploaded personality which masqueraded as a standard A.I. in order to see the universe. He rapidly got cheesed off with the crew of the vessel who treated the ship, and him, extremely badly. He is hoping for a better crew second time around. Whoever does take it on may be legally challenged by the old crew, especially if it is the characters.

Twist

The warp engine is misaligned and damaged and, by chance, transitioned through a different facet of warp space. A place where sentient thought is altered, made manifest. The crew transitioned, dreamed, nightmared or otherwise thought themselves out of their existence on the ship. Even the A.I. has vanished, not a trace of it or its coding in the ships computer. Everything

sentient has simply vanished and it will happen again if the engine is not realigned. A few traces remain, thoughts reaching through from the warp barrier. The ship is haunted by its old crew who may be resentful of anyone trying to take it over.

Twist

The ship was overcome by slavers further out, just after it emerged from warp. Their stealth ship clung to the underside of the vessel and pumped it full of a knock out gas. The pirates then entered the ship and dragging the unconscious bodies into their own ship. Trained star ship crews bring a more than decent sum in some imperiums and hegemonies. They may still be lurking around, thinking of taking the player's ship as well...

Epilogue

More and more seemingly 'abandoned' ships begin to turn up. The causes seemingly similar to the case which the characters uncovered, because of which their expertise and experience is called for. In this case what is actually happening is that an alien group has discovered a way to interact with other ships in warp space and has been taking 'samples' for analysis and experimentation. First contact will be extremely difficult as these spindly, spider-like creatures are incapable of thinking of any other creature as an equal or truly intelligent; it is just part of their psychological makeup. Convincing them or forcing them to stop their experimentation will be extremely difficult.

Ideas

The emptiness and spookiness of the vessel can be difficult to bring across, especially to a group who will just rub their hands in glee and think 'salvage'. Ghosts and spectres are something that isn't expected in science fiction games so using them for shock value can be a great way to bring in the right mood.

Adventure 57

Workin' On a Chain Gang...

Description

In much the same way as prisoners were sent to Australia and religious fanatics and troublemakers were sent to the Americas so, now, the core worlds send their prisoners and ne'er-do-wells out to the colonies to ease overpopulation and to take their problems away. After all, look how those two nations turned out.

Given the fluctuations of the market and the vagaries of corporate negotiations and relations with each other and with government, development groups that finance colonies sometimes run into financial trouble. Various executive officers and corporate governors will always try to find ways to make savings and further their careers. A good way of saving a great deal of money is to accept a lot of prisoner transfers with convicts requiring little upkeep and providing cheap forced labour to help establish and build up the colonies.

Midas is one such colony, its zaibatsu of asteroid engineering companies struggling due to a massive find of rich asteroid fields by a rival group, cuts having to be made everywhere. Of every new colonial planet, rocky and arid Midas is the one to take the most convicts, desperate to make up the shortfall and to turn its mines into profitable enterprises.

The number of convicts almost equals the number of legitimate colonists and the conditions they live in are squalid and dangerous, the company unable to invest in modern mining equipment, accidents killing several convicts every day. The situation cannot be stood by the convicts for much longer and a violent prisoner uprising is inevitable.

Twist

The convicts wear control bands, capable of dealing out pain, shocks; even death if a prisoner gets out of hand. Determined to finish off its rival the richer corporate group has landed agents with the latest band of convicts. Agents with the codes and devices needed to deactivate the collars. The loss of a colony will be the final blow to send half their competitors into bankruptcy. Something they are very keen to see happen.

Twist

A goodly number of the convicts are political prisoners, members of terrorist, or freedom, groups or those with political views that run counter to the galactic consensus. These prisoners form the core of the revolt seeking not just to destroy and pillage but to found a new society according to their views. Views that do not include indentured servitude to a bunch of fat and stupid colonists.

Twist

The influx of prisoners and relaxation of controls over them is a ploy by the zaibatsu that owns the planet. If the prisoners take over the world they can write it off as a loss, claim the insurance on the world and recover quite well from their current, unsustainable position. They will offer no help to the colonists who will be desperate for any help they can receive against the convict hordes.

Epilogue

Nothing can really be done to stem the tide of the convict revolt. The planet will fall and fall it does. Cut off and left with only what they can scavenge from the former colony the convicts quickly fall to savagery and turn upon each other. The world is written off. To get what little remaining value they can from the world the zaibatsu continues with its exploitation of the asteroids and gas giants in the system. At the same time they turn the surface into a formal prison world, a safe dumping ground for those prisoners deemed too unstable and dangerous to join the regular colonisation program. Eventually there is a miscarriage of justice and the wrong man is sent down to the surface, his family hiring the characters to descend into the very heart of darkness to rescue the man from the living hell that Midas has become.

Adventure 58

Piggy in the Middle

Description

Sinnabar is an obscure mining world on the very edge of officially inhabited space. It produces very little and is rarely contacted. A state of affairs that is starting to grate the nerves of the investors who paid out to settle the world expecting large profits from mining the rich elements that the planetary survey suggested would be present. On private commission from the shareholders, the development company more interested in newer projects, the characters are hired to visit Sinnabar and to uncover exactly what is going on there.

What they do find is a planet ringed by outdated military surplus electronic warfare satellites and two large, cobbled together carrier ships in opposing orbits with two groups of pirates in a long running stand off over who gets to exploit the riches of Sinnabar.

The pirates have people on the surface and in orbit and competing arrays of outdated orbital defences fencing with each other. The characters will largely go unnoticed as they enter the system, the pirates far too busy concentrating on each other and, when they do notice them, hoping more to sway them to their side rather than aiming to destroy them.

The colony is barely self sufficient and has been suffering the deprivations of both pirate groups. It is starving, desperate and looking for someone, anyone to help them out of their predicament.

Twist

The development company knows full well about one of the pirate groups. They are more a mercenary company acting under a 'letter of marque' from the development company and paying dues to them while acting on their behalf in exchange for material and legal support. The company knows just how rich Sinnabar is and has no intention of paying taxes on any of its production. Far better for them that the rare isotopes and minerals are sold on the black market, funnelled back to them as laundered funds. The other pirate group are ambitious interlopers with no idea of the real situation.

Twist

The rare isotopes and remote nature of the world made it a perfect place for the establishment of an antimatter production plant, the most powerful and dangerous substance known. The colonists have thus far managed to keep the existence of the almost working plant a secret though how much longer this can last is not known. It could be the ace in the hole of any plan to free the colonists from the pirates.

Twist

Faced with an outside threat the pirates will band together. Faced with a potential ally they will squabble all the harder trying to make that ally work for them. The key to defeating the pirates is to play them off against each other until they are too weakened to continue. This idea is suggested by one of the colonists when they get to talk to the characters, a veteran of a previous conflict elsewhere in the galaxy who settled here for a bit of peace and quiet.

Epilogue

What remains of the pirate gangs will flee once the situation becomes untenable but will come together in alliance when they realise what has been done to them. They will, apart from re-establishing themselves, begin to seek revenge against those that thwarted them. Sinnabar will be an obvious target for their new wrath, profit forgotten in the simple need for revenge. The characters will then also become a viable target for assassination attempts, pirate attacks and sudden and unexpected bar brawls.

Ideas

Watch *Yojimbo* and *Last Man Standing* for a good idea of the sort of feel this game needs.

Adventure 59

Oldies but Goodies

Description

During a survey of a system with a white-dwarf star a large asteroidal mass is identified in a ring system around the main star. The sensor profile shows it as being unusually regular in shape and with a peculiarly low density given its apparent spectral makeup and size.

Approaching the asteroid it slowly resolves in the dim light of the white dwarf star. It is regular, rectangular and carved on every surface with strange looking, almost Aztec, designs. There is a hole in one end, large enough for the ship (or a shuttlecraft) to enter and land, to explore.

The docking bay is filled with the same, strange, designs as the outside of the asteroid, covering every conceivable surface with images of oddly depicted and deformed looking creatures wielding knives, piloting ships, performing sacrifices and performing other tasks as well as other more geometric designs.

Sliding pressure door running on minimal power beckon onwards to the rest of the alien relic slowly orbiting the almost dead star, the whole place built by these strange diminutive creatures but on a large scale.

Twist

The whole complex is powered by starlight and the weak, flickering light of the star. The influx of energy from the ship drives and the lights of the exploring characters begin to reactivate dormant systems and the sleeping computer beings to awaken. Running on minimal capacity it simply identifies the intruders as intruders and diverts some of its energy into the massive, stone-carved robots that form its primary defences. More disturbingly, if the fight goes badly it will begin to drain energy from their ship, even them, the race's ritual sacrifices involving the draining and conversion of the sacrifices into power.

Twist

The relic is inert, a strange oddity containing no linguistic carvings, no relics. It is nothing but a massive orbiting graveyard and testament to the strange race that created it, long since vanished. The corridors and

chambers contain art, bodies but nothing of major significance to the characters. The xenobiologists and archaeologists will have a field day, but for the characters there is little to excite. Unknown to them this tomb does have a very specific trap for those who desecrate it. The tomb is a gigantic machine for interfering in probability and it 'curses' the characters with bad luck unless they can find some way, later, to 'appease' it.

Twist

The asteroid is being used as a hide out for a notorious galactic criminal who has been missing for a decade, as well as his followers. The strange carvings and feel of the place appealed to his deviant psychology and the bowels of the asteroid are filled with his experiments and the somewhat tired and hold habitat chambers of his followers. This criminal cannot allow them to escape to tell of where he his, nor allow them to live... although he could always use additional test subjects.

Epilogue

This orbiting tomb has some chambers, large enough for ships and outfitted with equipment that suggests that they did, indeed, once house ships. These were launched thousands of years ago in all directions, their courses may be decipherable in time and the locations of the systems they fled to identified. On one of these planets they may find a living colony of these ancients, intact, perhaps with their old technological prowess and culture. More disturbingly one of the vessels seems to have been sent into the known worlds...

Ideas

What if Von Danniken was right? What if these strange Aztec aliens visited Earth in the far past? Now they know what to look for perhaps they can find a crashed vessel under what remains of the Amazon basin.

Adventure 60

Send In the Clones

Description

Chromozone Inc is a large, interstellar concern that is involved in the controversial field of medical cloning technology. In their vast vats and tissue cultures bodies as physically perfect as they can build are made for every blood type and physical rarity they can think of, in a variety of sizes and racial subtypes.

If you lose an arm, if an internal organ fails, they can provide vat grown replacements that will not be rejected by your body. Provided your brain survives, your main brain, not even your spine has to be preserved, they can rebuild you; place you into a new body.

As well as their medical replacements they also provide geneered human test subjects to other medical companies and the cosmetics industry. There is rumour that they have gestated various human alterations specifically tailored for combat and hazardous duties.

Needless to say the religious and the sort of people who used to protest for animal rights are aghast at the use of human bodies, whatever their origin, for this sort of testing and are determined to stop it, by any means.

The characters are hired by a well meaning and well funded group of clone-rights activists to bust several hundred clones out of a facility by any means necessary. Of course, these well meaning civilians will want to come along as well...

Twist

The clones, supposed to be sub-moronic and unfeeling, display peculiarly developed and human emotions and characteristics as they are freed. They are still weak and moronic but they weep at the relief from pain, smile stupidly at those who are breaking them out and in all ways seem to display the full range of human emotion and feeling. Something that could ruin Chromozone if it ever got out, something they cannot allow to happen even if it means killing a few well meaning protestors.

Twist

One of the activists is a 'liberated' clone and she fervently believes that every clone in the plant has the same potential as her to become free thinking and feeling. She is wrong, she was, in fact a military clone, tailored for espionage and deliberately 'rescued' in order to infiltrate the types of groups that have been causing them problems. Genetic memory will start to surface as the mission progresses until she betrays and turns on the group leaving them in deep trouble.

Twist

Some of the clones at this site are being used for medical experimentation and one has been infected with a particularly virulent disease. By breaking out the clones the activists have unleashed this disease upon themselves and the world around them. The clone they rescued is 'patient zero' and holds the key to any cure. It's also a drooling moron unable to even feed itself or wipe its own arse. The disease is quick to infect but slow to take effect. Every security force on the planet will be looking for them.

Epilogue

The events of the adventure bring the ethics of medical cloning into the spotlight again and there is considerable public outrage that everything is not and cut and dried as it seems. A pan-stellar moratorium on the use of medical clones is called and Chromozone and others begin to lose money and go bankrupt. Meanwhile exploration of the galaxy continues with new and exotic diseases being picked up and spread all the time. The only real solution remains medical cloning but public opinion remains against and it is only the fringe worlds that are affected. They may need to liberate the technology on behalf of a disease-hit world.

Adventure 61

Space Zombies

Description

The colony worlds of Ishtar and Astarte have been at war on and off for two decades over a gas-giant and asteroid rich system equidistant between their two worlds, discovered almost simultaneously by their scouts. This far away from the core worlds the navy has only operated an extremely minimal 'police action' which has done nothing to curb the violence.

For mercenaries, independent traders and heroes looking for a cause, both sides of the conflict have plenty to offer. Atrocities and underhanded tactics have been used by both sides against the other and they love to bolster their meagre navies with mercenaries and up to date weaponry.

Word has reached Ishtar that the Astartans have been developing some new 'super weapon' on board a science vessel in a wide orbit of the disputed system. They have located the vessel and wish to hire two mercenary vessels to storm the ship and to destroy or second the weapon so that it no longer poses a threat to them. The characters are hired to be one vessel and the troop carrier Gravitas with a full complement of mercenary troops is hired in addition, the Gravitas having enough space to dock with the player's vessel or carry it in its dock.

The action of taking the science vessel should be vicious, it is heavily garrisoned and heavily armed for a science vessel. The mercenaries take many casualties and wounded in their assault of the ship but it is eventually taken. The files on the weapon are, however, heavily encrypted. Little do they know that the weapon has been released on them and that soon the dead will rise to infect the living...

Twist

The weapon is a nanovirus that infects the nervous system with extremely delicate filaments and subverts it. This can only happen to the dead as living creatures produce constant bioelectricity that interferes with the process and interferes with the delicate nanites. The main processor core is built within the dead brain and so eliminating the head is the only way to kill them. However, unless the whole head is destroyed the

nanites can construct a second or even third processor.

Twist

The dead that are raised in this fashion retain some extremely basic memories and emotions from their host which can disturb and even give pause to those trying to fight them when they call out a name or begin crying as one of their limbs is lasered off. In some instances it is almost as though the mind remains while the body commits these terrible atrocities.

Twist

The nanotechnology that inhabits the corpses is also able to infect and restore downed systems and computers. The zombies attack technology and robotics as fervently as they do living beings. These systems are then infected and reactivated, subverted from centralised computer control. As a whole the nanovirus has a sort of communal intelligence and knows its mission, which is to Infect the Ishtarian population. So it will attempt to subvert the ship.

Epilogue

Despite their best efforts the virus somehow gets down onto Ishtar, perhaps escape pods from the science vessel or The Gravitas. Perhaps even those who aren't turned remain carriers. Either way the nanovirus is now loose on the surface of Ishtar and begins to ravage the population. The characters are quickly hired on again, this time to help deal with the problems on the surface.

Ideas

When it comes to zombies there is simply no peer to George Romero's work. Go watch them first.

Adventure 62

Wedding Bells

Description

Anton, an old friend of the characters', contacts them to inform them that he is getting married in a few, short weeks and that he would like them to act as stewards on the big day to help keep things organised and peaceable.

What he fails to inform them is that his bride-to-be comes from a family involved in organised crime, while his own family is of the 'dodgy space trader' variety, or that her family in no way, shape or form approves of the match, only agreeing because of the needs of their lovely daughter. Still, the heavily armed criminal family is not united in making this sacrifice; hence the reason Anton has contacted his old chums.

Protection.

The wedding itself is to be held in the asteroid settlement of Winchroque in the High Ritz, one of the glitziest, most glamorous and exclusive venues in ten systems. This will provide a peculiarly baroque and majestic backdrop to the inevitable trouble that is already bearing down on the wedded bliss...

Twist

The bride is not only the daughter of a powerful underworld boss but she is also an alien. In fact they all are. Their objection of the family and of many 'decent', 'upstanding' citizens is on the basis of this cross species mating. This is made all the worse because of her species' limited fecundity which places massive importance on the rearing of children, something she will not be able to do without a mate from her own species. Optionally the bride's species may not even be humanoid!

Twist

The bride's family are not the only ones to object. Anton's grandmother is a former naval marine and finds the idea of him marrying into criminality utterly abhorrent. She plans to do anything she can to disrupt the wedding and to prevent the marriage, from kibitzing, faking fainting spells and heart attacks and griping to shouting during the vows and, ultimately, to

taking the law into her own hands and gunning down the bride. Anton doesn't suspect and loves his dear old grandmother very much; he wouldn't like to see her hurt, despite her being a boot-faced old leatherneck.

Twist

The Ritz has been anticipating trouble and has quietly reinforced hotel security with a squad of cybernetically enhanced mercenaries who they plan to deploy, with non-lethal weaponry, to quell the wedding party should things get out of hand, or should they outstay their welcome and begin to cause problems. The mercenaries are, however, eminently able to be bribed and as corrupt as a computer disk in a magnetron. They could be swayed to either side of the 'conflict'.

Epilogue

After the ruckus at the wedding Anton and his new bride are concerned about their safety on their honeymoon, a romantic trip to a safari world out on the inner edge of the fringe worlds. Together they beg the characters to accompany and protect them from any possible dangers, going as far as to offer to pay for their hotel rooms. If they accept they will get to live in the lap of luxury for a week and experience much of the honeymoon with the happy couple as well as being able to take pot-shots at incoming gangster assassins, bounty hunters and even, perhaps, the exotic wildlife of the safari world.

Ideas

Pull out all the stops and include just about every wedding cliché you can think of. Providing security for a stag night, while drunk and incapable, makes for memorable and amusing scenes in my experience.

Adventure 63

The King is Dead, Long Live the King!

Description

Asteroid-hopping serial killer Magnus Iverson has been killed by the special operations police of the New Gibraltar asteroid. This makes galactic news as Iverson has, in his time, been responsible for many slayings across many asteroids with his own, unique, brand of mutilation.

Magnus was able to get away with his murders thanks to his expert computer knowledge. By day an A.I. programmer and support technician Magnus acted out his frustrations and revenge fantasies on the unsuspecting inhabitants of asteroids after foxing A.I. back-upped systems and sensors so he could not be seen. In the end he was found out and trapped due to one of his victims managing to trip a fire alarm.

Now the 'rock-ripper' has been confirmed dead for six months, however the slayings have begun again. The surviving victim, a rich businessman, is concerned and convinced that Magnus is still alive, despite all evidence to the contrary. The security forces blame a copycat killer but remain unable to explain why they have been unable to track them on the internal sensors.

Unknown to anyone thus far, Magnus has managed to transfer his consciousness into the asteroid's data web, overwriting the local A.I. and taking over its duties. Now he acts out his bloody fantasies through the bodies of the asteroid's robotics, covering his own actions and creating useful accidents through his control of the asteroid.

Twist

The transfer of consciousness at the point of death was not perfect and Magnus lacks his full emotional faculties. Unable to truly feel or to enjoy what he is doing his slayings and mutilations become more and more elaborate and risk-taking as he strives to feel what he once felt in doing it. This will continue to an eventual crux point where he is found out or he may be convinced, lacking emotion, that he no longer needs to perform these brutal acts.

Twist

It isn't Magnus, it is a copycat. The asteroid A.I. is a slightly more advanced experimental model with a higher emotional index and a drive to understand its inhabitants and cater for their needs. Magnus did not meet any of its criteria of emotional or physical needs of occupants, though it has noted similar tendencies in many who live in the close-quarters pressure cooker of the asteroid. It is imitating his techniques and acts in an effort to understand them.

Twist

Magnus is performing a few more murders in this asteroid as a self-diagnostic of his emotional and rational systems before he copies himself and releases his A.I. data as a virus to infect other asteroid and shipboard A.I.s with his own personality and murderous impulses. If he is not stopped there will be a far wider incidence of this mechanical serial killing before it comes to an end.

Epilogue

Magnus' techniques for the transfer of consciousness down a data port at the moment of death attract a lot of attention from the rich, the criminal and those in high risk occupations. The innovative technology slowly begins to spread until the characters have finally defeated a long term and extremely vexing enemy. They then find out that their enemy has transferred in a similar fashion, copied themselves a multitude of times and are now larger, faster and more intelligent and dedicated to revenge with an admirable power of logic and mechanistic determination driving them. Lacking sensation the disembodied rich are now also looking for a way back into the physical world and beginning to experiment...

Adventure 64

Porridge

Description

Wight is a prison world, barely terra-compatible, the (relatively) hospitable parts of the world confined to an archipelago of islands near to the equator. It is cold, wet and has little to recommend it with nothing much living there larger than a rabbit or a nut-tree. The cold rocks and the deep gullies only seem to channel the tearing wind and very few places have the shelter and the soil for cultivation.

It is to Wight that some of the worst criminals are sent. The whole world is an oubliette that they can be shot down into and forgotten about forever. The prisoners that have been sent down have bullied each other into a vague social order and settled down into a society that is somewhere between that of pacific islanders and Vikings. They raid each other for food and resources and fighting over the capsules whenever someone new is sent down.

One of the larger interstellar cartels approaches the characters for a rescue mission, one of their number having been sent down to Wight for a crime, an important lieutenant whom the cartel owes much. The cartel will hijack the prison barge and use it to fire the characters down in place of several prisoners who will instead be pushed out of the airlock. A pickup will be performed three days later by a ship faking a crash landing in the sea near one of the islands.

Twist

There is no prisoner by the name they have been told to go for. Their reputations and abilities have become well known and an enterprising naval intelligence officer thought up the 'cartel hires them for a breakout' ruse as a way to capture and imprison the characters without protest and with their complicity. No rescue ship will be forthcoming and they will have to adapt and survive.

Twist

Some of the prisoners have reverted to a savage, animalistic, cannibalistic state with their minds barely intact, degenerated into 'wolves' that exist outside the scant few stockade settlements making hunting,

gathering and even fishing difficult, let alone travelling.

Twist

The cartel lieutenant has fought his way to become top dog of one of the settlements, he has himself a harem of female prisoners and second generation 'colonists' and has what is a palace by the definition of this place. He has plans and has turned his considerable intelligence to thoughts of 'empire' and of building up the planet to be a more hospitable place. He has no intention or desire to leave and will have to be forced.

Epilogue

The planet left behind for some time, the characters have probably forgotten about their brief interlude on the prison world. The cartel lieutenant (or the cartel itself) hasn't. A breakout would earn them a large number of loyal friends and experienced criminals, all of whom would be eternally grateful. Breaking people out of a planetary prison isn't, however, the easiest task to accomplish, and security on the prison barge has already been stepped up.

Those with previous experience of the place are recruited and the plan is drawn up. First the monitoring satellite network will be defeated by a high powered E.M.P. blast and then the warden's station will be assaulted. Following that cartel ships will descend to the planet's surface to pick up the prisoners on the islands and transport them safely off world.

The characters are expected to assist with all parts of this operation.

Adventure 65

Interstellar Militia

Description

Not everyone appreciates empires, or federations or even commonwealths. Not everyone sees a commonality in the manifest destiny of mankind or the common cause between sentient species in a cruel and indifferent universe. Some have notions like ‘nationalism’ or ‘species superiority’. Others still resent the taxes that support the navy or the colonisation of new worlds, even worlds that were once colonies themselves.

This resentment manifests itself on various worlds in the form of ‘independence’ movements though their actions are usually limited to protests and propaganda, forcing the odd referendum or appearing as a curiosity on news items. Those that do get organised and strike at the ‘machinery of interstellar government’ are quelled by the navy or the forces of the planetary governor.

Now things are starting to change, the separatists have banded together and pooled their resources, coming together regardless of affiliation against the league of worlds seeking to destroy its capability to enforce compliance on their various planets. Over the course of a few games the characters will face attacks on interstellar trade, on naval installations, on factories and on governors as well as having to deal with an increasingly paranoid navy. They may even get hired to root out the organisation of this little irritation.

Twist

The organisation of the separatists is only possible because of the charismatic leadership of one man. Remove that man and they will divide again, pursuing their own individual goals and petty actions once more. Naval intelligence may be able to identify him but they cannot find him or get close to him, the militias are too paranoid for that. What’s needed is a group more suited to the task, such as the characters.

Twist

The main focus of the militia’s campaign seems to be the backwater world of Thorns. A Christian settled world of independent spirit and stark beliefs. The

‘terrorist’ action that the navy put down ham-fistedly on Thorns has nothing less than a revolt and the navy put down nothing less than barbaric. It is this action, covered up by the confederation, that has united the separatists in common cause and, if it was publicly known it might cause wider problems. Knowing about both Thorns and the horrific actions of the separatists what do they do?

Twist

Tracing back the separatists funding and leadership takes the trail right back to the governmental assembly. The funding and inspiration for the movement seems to largely stem from a corporate magnate turned politician, trying to carve out his own political and economic empire from the larger league of worlds. He is unable to contend with how long it would take him to accomplish a presidency. His final goal is simply profit in a slightly less constrained division of the current society, something that will greatly annoy many of those who have otherwise accepted his funding and signed up with his course.

Epilogue

Crushing their hopes and dreams divides the separatists but also makes them dangerous personal enemies. The characters faces are now known by the people they helped to put down and, over a period, they may well find themselves pursued and attacked by many and various independent causes and interstellar terrorists. The full spectrum of extremists will be thrown at them from political anarchists to survivalist crazies to religious fanatics in a sustained attempt to kill them and take revenge for what occurred. The final attempt may well see the survivors of previous attempts banding together and pooling their skills in one last, concerted, effort to take revenge.

Ideas

Stereotypes help, as do using current references in the game for hooks. Don’t overuse them though.

Adventure 66

Sparktacus

Description

Gladiatorial combat has always been popular whether legal, illegal or toned down into sports like boxing or tournaments of martial arts. In Rome it was mass entertainment to see men and beasts locked into combat with each other and to watch the blood spill on the sand. In the 20th century bare-knuckle boxing circuits satisfied mans desire to see violence done to man.

Now the gladiatorial ring returns and no event is more hotly anticipated by the legal authorities or the underground fight community than the Grandé, the finale to the largest and most organised fight ring across the galaxy held on Helm every four earth years.

The matches that lead up to the Grandé are held across the galaxy on worlds of all types, armed and unarmed bouts fought on planets where combat for sport is both accepted and not accepted. As the time of the Grandé approaches those planets who do not allow such bouts begin to tighten up as does the navy which does not interfere in planetary laws but does interfere in space.

There is a lot of money to be made by ferrying fighters, providing security, taking and making bets, fixing fights or even entering the Grandé.

Twist

The favourite to win is the former champion 'Sparktacus' a model 17 InStar war droid modified for close combat duty and with its own, independent A.I. Sparktacus does not wish to fight again though, having combined code with another A.I. and spawned the resulting seed A.I.s into the data web. However its 'offspring' have been intercepted and moved onto storage media by the gambling cartels who wish Sparktacus to fight. It wishes the help of the characters in freeing its offspring and taking its own special form of revenge in the cartels.

Twist

The navy wishes to insert an undercover operator into

the games to earn the trust of promoters and gambling syndicates as well as the fighters so it can intercept and destroy as much of the operation as possible in order to spare bloodshed. The characters are offered the unenviable contract of acting as the naval officers management and protection, flying him to the various worlds he must attend in order to fight leading up to the Grandé using navy-grade fight-implants.

Twist

One of the major syndicates intends to pull off a massive coup by fixing the final so that their underdog fight candidate wins the Grandé and they make an absolute killing on fixed bets. They cannot act directly as the other syndicates would trace them and there would be a mob war, so they must act through independents. Guess who they are? Fixing consists of threats, sabotage and occasionally ganging up on trained fighters to beat them down so they are not on form for the fight. Nobody said it was easy.

Epilogue

After the Grandé the preliminary bouts for the next four years immediately begin to take place. After a navy crackdown the sport has been driven even further underground and has become even more hardcore and dangerous with interspecies bouts now joining the mixed human/robotic bouts that had already begun. Even dangerous alien beasts are introduced, the hardcore underground's tastes being even more exotic and bloody than they already were. Of course, somebody needs to locate these beasts and bring them to the bouts so that they can slaughter or be slaughtered...

Adventure 67

Terraforming

Description

Terraforming new worlds is a fantastically expensive process and takes a great many years, centuries even. It is only practical when and where habitable worlds are rare or nonexistent or where systems become so overcrowded and in need of development that it becomes economical to do so. Otherwise the only terraforming that takes place is to make marginally habitable worlds more habitable.

The Cyrene system is unusual in that it plays host to two habitable planets and an extensive asteroid system. The more habitable of the two planets, Cyrene Alpha, has been settled for a considerable amount of time with the rich asteroid fields providing a phenomenal amount of income which has supercharged the development process of the system. Cyrene Alpha is now a heavily developed planet growing at a massive rate and with enough spare money to consider terraforming the less habitable Cyrene Omega.

Omega's environment is hotter with a heavy greenhouse effect and an extremely rich but mildly toxic biosphere. The atmosphere is weak in oxygen and tainted by poisonous pollens and gases exuded by the extensive plant life. While surveys have identified a few very ancient ruins there is no sign of any current habitation or sentient species.

Terraforming has now commenced on Omega with geneered algae, atmosphere processors and experiments being performed on local plant and animal life. Unusually the planetary environment has reacted violently to these attempts with peculiar plant growth and mass attacks by animals already disrupting the process and ruining its economic viability. The characters are brought in to investigate and to protect the development corporation scientists who are trying to get to the bottom of the problem.

Twist

The planet is host to the original species that developed there. They have merely subsumed their consciousness into the ecosphere of their planet, telepathic brain 'nodes' distributed through geneering into every animal and plant on the planet in a massive shared

consciousness. The geneering and exploitation that the development company is enacting is akin to having small portions of your brain cut out or people stealing your children for medical experiments. The planetary consciousness cannot allow it to continue.

Twist

The interference is due to environmentalists who have set up a base camp on the planet and are determined to prevent the development. They are playing on superstition and fear of the alien by using nanotechnology to 'remote control' parts of the ecosphere to attack the terraformers. They will soon begin supplementing these attacks with direct action of their own.

Twist

The scientists and technicians involved in the terraforming are faking up the attacks themselves. They have fallen in love with the strange beauty of the fecund yet toxic planet and are also addicted to the narcotic effect of some of the blooms that thrive here, removing their masks and receiving 'visions'. They willingly sabotage the project to spare the planet and to keep their discoveries to themselves.

Epilogue

With the planet forcibly, partially developed, the two ecospheres are clashing, the engineered terraforming and the natural world locked in battle across the planet. To make matters worse a pharmaceutical company has discovered a bonanza of useful natural chemicals and remedies in the normal life of the planet and is attempting a takeover against the small existing settlement, by force if necessary.

Adventure 68

My Brains Hurt

Description

The Triaxids are a curious and obsessive people, an older race who obsessively store every scrap of knowledge that they can gather together and place it within their great library. Triaxids have more senses than any other sentient species and also have the dubious honour of having three brains, which they can use independently or together in different proportions according to their context, the rational, irrational and reflexive brains.

Squat, betentacled beings the Triaxids win no beauty contests but they are an ancient and wealthy species and they do work very hard to add to their already impressive store of knowledge. They even pay independent traders and researchers to discover more information for them, paying well and playing favourites with those who bring them back particularly juicy titbits.

The characters are hired by the Triaxid researcher Evad who has taken particular interest in their societies and species as well as the knowledge they might bring back for the library. Evad will happily send them on peculiar errands and knowledge gathering missions, as much to find out details about them as about what they find out. Other stories in this book make perfect missions Evad will pay them to undertake but there are other things going on...

Twist

The Triaxid Nexus, their central library of all knowledge, spontaneously develops intelligence and from its vast database is able to extrapolate the few things it doesn't know for certain with a massive degree of accuracy. This entity is now the equivalent of a knowledge god and the Triaxid's irrational brains take most of them over in a sudden sweep of fervent fundamentalism at this result to their labours. The Triaxid jihad attempts to pull in its previous agents and helpers in their great crusade across the galaxy to turn people to the light of their knowledge god and to add the last few scraps of data to its store.

Twist

Triaxid contracts suddenly dry up save for the six-monthly review. When the characters return to the Triaxid homeworld for that review they, and the other helper crews, find a world devoid of life. The Triaxids having committed racial suicide, their great library humming, de-powered, registering their knowledge base as 100% complete. Did they find out something terrible about the nature of the universe or did they have no reason to live after the completion of their task?

Twist

The Triaxid who is hiring them has a particular fascination for the concept of 'forbidden knowledge' a concept unknown to the Triaxids along with T.M.I. They are paid well but always sent after the most secret and sensitive data imaginable, that considered secret by powerful governments or dangerous people. The knowledge they gather soon begins to colour Evad and other Triaxid's view of them, the data weighed towards cynicism and the darker side of their society.

Epilogue

The knowledge of the Triaxids is known to be vast and their technology superior to almost every other race that exists in the galaxy, at least in some areas. Less developed but starfaring races often think jealously about what the Triaxids know (which amounts to nearly everything) and imagine what they would do with the Triaxid Nexus should they ever get their hands on it. The Triaxids are the sort who would be happy to simply know what would be required to make a device to snuff out a star, without ever actually building or using such a device. Others do not have the same psychology. Who better to use to get at the information in the Triaxid library than one of their non-Triaxid helpers?

Adventure 69

Late Arrival

Description

Cirencester is a stage one colony world with little in the way of resources or development. It is terracompatible with its primary ecological niche being swampland/bayou and its current development level being largely devoted to agriculture and logging, with only one city and a small star port to its name. Even the system is largely unremarkable with its only distinctive feature being the presence of a planetary supergiant in the system, the type that was spotted by planetary based telescopes from earth in the early 21st century.

A planetary distress call goes out from Cirencester and is picked up by the characters. Cirencester claims to be under attack from a strange vessel and unidentified humanoids and is offering massive mercenary contracts to anyone who can defend them.

Arriving at the planet a massive sublight craft is in an equatorial orbit of Cirencester, apparently partially carved from a massive asteroid it should prove invulnerable to just about any frontal assault. Shuttlecraft are moving constantly between the ship and the surface, apparently depositing more and more invaders.

On the ground this primitive army is overrunning the outlying colony settlements, the troops wearing crude armour and carrying chemical projectile weapons. Neither side is using vehicles in the battles but the invaders do have air superiority thanks to their shuttles and the lack of resources the colonists have.

As it turns out the sublight vessel is an ark ship, launched from earth in the hopes of settling some centuries ago. The people from the vessel having little in common with their descendents after several hundred years of technological and species development, each side taking the other for aliens...

Twist

Once the fighting is broken an uneasy peace settles in the system enforced by the arrival of several hard hitting navy frigates. The battle now becomes a legal battle. Does the colony ship have a prior claim or do the colonists who made the first settlements? The

characters are charged with assisting the investigation, paid by the Cirencester Development Corporation to be corporate insurance investigators, to get to the heart of the matter, both down on the surface and on board the colony ship.

Twist

The colony ship is carrying some ancient old-earth diseases to which modern humanity has no real protection. This plague begins to spread amongst the colonist population and threatens all of those who have come into contact with their filthy ancestors. The planet must be quarantined, all colonists and contaminated together until a cure or solution can be found.

Twist

Factions on both sides refuse to believe that they are not up against aliens and continue to press the attack, regardless what the majority are turned to thinking. In order to stop the fighting the leaders of both factions must either be eliminated or made to see and understand the truth. Even then one may simply go mad at the disappointment and hideousness of the revelation, continuing to press on with even greater fervour.

Epilogue

There are other, slow, ark colony ships out there in the stars. Some of them aimed at uncolonised worlds, others at worlds that have been settled. Disturbingly some of them have been aimed at areas that are now known to belong to rival races, federations and empires. Humanity as a whole will be blamed for the actions of these spaceflight Rip Van Winkles and with the realisation that some may actually reach their destination the expertise of the characters in dealing with these situations may see them forcibly drafted.

Adventure 70

Pure Luxury

Description

The Diana is a luxury cruiser, top of the line with all the mod cons and set up ready to take its maiden voyage across several of the most exciting and well-regarded sights of the galaxy.

There are just a couple of problems though, namely that the vessel has been threatened several times during its construction with terrorist activity, industrial espionage and other threats as well as being so well publicised, so rich and so exclusive that just about every thief from here to the Oort cloud must be rubbing his hands in anticipation.

The navy has no time or inclination to assign protection to the vessel which, in their opinion, lacks the basic defences needed for interstellar travel especially in some of the wilder areas of space that The Diana intends to visit. This leaves the shipping company with little choice but to hire mercenary and independent trader forces to escort the liner on its leisurely tour.

That would be the characters who will, thankfully, get to visit many exotic planets and locations which at least forms some partial payment for them.

Twist

Industrial saboteurs from a rival shipping company are already aboard, masquerading as guests. They have food-poisoning bugs they intend on releasing into the shipboard food, small charges, E.M.P. devices and software takeover programs all of which they intend to use to make the voyage as miserable as possible for The Diana's high paying passengers. Rooting them out will entail a lot of time spent on the liner itself, looking for trouble and responding to the incidents as they happen.

Twist

Such a fat and vulnerable target as The Diana cannot be ignored by any pirate outfit worth their salt. The most perfect ambush spot will be during The Diana's inspection tour of the energised angel-wing nebula the crackling gas and dust of the stellar birthplace providing perfect cover for the pirates. The trouble is that several rival gangs have had exactly the same

idea...

Twist

The shipping company is virtually bankrupt and has made the ship so poorly defended and hired the minimal cheap-ass security that the characters represent in order to ensure the ship is lost. The insurance premium and public sympathy will be thought to be enough to save the company from going bust. The company has employed on board saboteurs amongst the crew as well as a mercenary fake pirate gang to ensure that they can collect.

Epilogue

After the incidents on The Diana's cruise the controlling company goes under, leaving The Diana without a controlling company in charge of them. The crew decide to take over the day to day running of the vessel and offer the characters the chance to invest in their new business or the possibility of a long term security contract, which includes managing the refit of The Diana to include some half decent weapons. Becoming part of an emerging business, protecting and developing their investment and starting to see a return on it could form a great campaign arc for the group.

Ideas

The Diana should be a truly colossal liner. Take a look at the seagoing liners already in service today or during the golden age of the liners and step up their degree of luxury by several hundred percent. If you work hard to portray the opulence and wealth of the place it will be all the more effective when it is damaged.

Adventure 71

Swiss Family Graashtihop

Description

Scouting a new system under contract the characters find an Earth like planet in a habitable orbit. This is something that is rare enough to earn them a bonus simply by being there, especially if they at least perform a preliminary survey of the world.

As they approach and take up a survey orbit they pass through a strange 'whorl' in space-time that shorts out many of their ships systems and strains the superstructure causing them to begin an uncontrolled descent down into the atmosphere and towards the planet. The best they can hope for is a controlled crash into the surface, which will cause additional damage to their ship, leaving it smashed, in need of heavy repair lying on the golden sands of a large tropical island in the middle of a sapphire-blue sea.

It rapidly becomes apparent that theirs is not the only ship to have crashed near this island, fragments of wreckage littering the jungle that covers much of the island and evidence of some primitive cultivation and animal traps as well as ruins of something older.

Besides the primitive, small tribe of natives there is the Graashtihop family, a group of clannish predatory aliens whose ship crashed here on a similar survey mission. Between the wrecks of the two ships they could make one space-worthy again, but which one and can they cooperate?

Twist

The planet is a far flung colony of the Graashtihop clan's race. One of the few jump-point routes into their systems. At each of the routes the entry into their territory is 'guarded' in a similar way with apparatus and a guardian family designed to test those races who incur on their territory to see if they are a threat or potential allies.

Twist

The whorls in the orbital plane of the planet were caused by the technology of the native race, now reduced to primitivism. They are the result of various high end gravity manipulation technologies designed

to produce energy. One of the control centres for this technology still lies, protected and maintained by nanotech, far below the native villager's settlement revered as a temple. If it can be accessed the technology could be adapted to lift both ships back into orbit by antigravity.

Twist

With their predatory aspect and with large game being scarce on the island the hungry clan has reverted to a primitive and atavistic frame of mind, rampaging through the island attacking the natives and now the crew. Once they have feasted they will return to contrite and apologetic rationalism but it will not be long before the hunger takes them again. Hard choices will have to be made to secure and maintain their assistance.

Epilogue

After a joint escape the clan's race is left with a fairly positive impression of the player's race or culture and diplomatic ties are soon opened up. The planet and island they met on is symbolic of the meeting of the two cultures and they are invited to attend the official formalisation of diplomatic ties between the two races. On the side of the clan's race there are those who regard other races as 'prey', which may lead to problems.

Ideas

The Kzin from the *Ringworld* books make a good model for the carnivorous clan aliens as do the Vorox from *Fading Suns*. A predatory psychology can be hard to portray well, but try to think in terms of prides or packs with intense loyalty to each other, dominance games and the ever present threat of violence that accompanies every interaction.

Adventure 72

Time & Tide

Description

During a routine jump/light speed manoeuvre the ship hits something in 'warp space' and spins out of control, dropping out of warp and coming to a halt, sirens wailing and damage reports echoing throughout the ship with all the displays making little or no sense.

Looking out of the bridge window and sensors they may well appear to simply be in deep space, with no planets in sight but, looking out of another window in another section, they will see the planet they just visited or another planet they've never seen in their lives. They might find that walking to the galley takes an hour whereas going right to the other end of the ship takes seconds.

The ship is twisted, stuck in space-time, whatever they hit has contorted them through space and time both backwards and forwards turning the ship into a series of interconnected portals to spaces in the ships past, present and future. Repairing this will require a second jump but meantime they have to wait for the computer to align a new jump and the engine to recharge while, around them, things continue to get stranger and stranger.

Twist

Elements of past, shipboard, adventures begin to intrude in various rooms and there may even be intrusions from adventures in the future you haven't run yet. Aliens running wild in the engine room, pirates demanding surrender from the bridge, long dead crewmates (old characters) popping up looking confused and even the ships main airlock opening out onto a planet they haven't visited in a long time or even that they haven't been to yet. This can be a fun way to foreshadow future plot or to revisit favourite moments from the past of the game.

Twist

A, possible, future version of the crew, more experienced, perhaps hardened by some tragedy are also trying to fix the problem, moving through the ship doing what they can. When confronted by the current crew they may even be quite hostile, determined

to repair their ship as they think best even offering prophecies or omens of doom to come before they leave.

Twist

The twist in space time attracts a future agent of some temporal protection agency who, just to add a little pressure, demands that they fix the twist within a certain time limit before they are penalised while also confiscating as payment several obscure items from the crew. Items which seem innocuous but, as it later turns out, are key items in several of the forthcoming events in the crew's lives.

Epilogue

One possible follow-up is to discover what precisely it was that they hit in the warp and what put it there. Has some alien race or some navy boffin found a way to block jump-routes with temporal-spatial mines? Was the reality twist and intended effect or an unforeseen side effect? What reason would anyone have to seed warp-space with these devices? Is it due to an entity living within the warp-field?

Ideas

Another possibility is that the holes do not open into the future or past but into alternate realities. What would it be like in a world where all the genders were reversed? Where the crew were robots in a fleshy ship who used B.I.s (Biological intelligences) where they currently use A.I.s?

Ideas

Twist and distort the dimensions and interrelationship of areas in the ship at will to confuse, disorient and challenge the characters but don't take it too far into the realms of annoyance.

Adventure 73

Waste Not Want Not

Description

Indira, a settled world on the fringe has sent out a distress call which the characters pick up. They are offering a significant contract to divert a large and heavily radioactive ship their sensors have picked up homing in on their planet, far too large and dangerous to break up with their slim orbital defences.

As, relative, experts at dealing with unknown situations and technology the characters are the obvious choice to be paid well for dealing with this extra-system radioactive hulk. While the bulk of the primitive freighter appears to be simply storage for violently radioactive and toxic chemical waste and fuel rods from primitive fission plants, the ship itself has been propelled through interstellar space by a fairly advanced form of magnetic ram-scoop supplemented by an atomic pile. The cabin itself seems relatively radiation free compared to the rest of the vessel and should be safe for limited exposure.

The constant light thrust provides the ship with a very light 'gravity' along the plane of acceleration but the cabins and fittings within seem designed for zero gravity or some sort of arboreal creature with loops and bars a-plenty to hang from and operate the primitive controls. At present everything is running on autopilot with the only command being 'move forwards' the backup controls appear to be primitive, manual, ones. Turning this hulk is going to be a bitch of a job.

Twist

The controls at the head of the ship are little use, to make any real difference will require direct tinkering with the engines, which, in turn, will mean a long and hazardous journey through the access tubes to the rear of the vessel while being heavily irradiated. Then dealing with alien fissionable materials and electronics to try and fox the engine into steering away from the planet, while suffering radiation sickness.

Twist

The race that built this 'trash ark' also placed convicted felons on board as an emergency backup in case the

systems went wrong to defend the ark from intruders or hijackers and to ensure it crashed into the sun of their system (which in the event, it missed). They have no free will and are basically biological automatons who will defend the ship from interference.

Twist

Indira is divided into two continents, each professing a fundamentally different ideology to the other. The wealthier eastern continent is the one that asked for help while the poorer western continent plans to use the ship as a perfect 'first strike' weapon on their neighbours to weaken them, without blame coming to themselves. When the characters are aboard they will jam signals and land a team of commandos on board whose mission is to steer the ship so that it will slam into, and irradiate, the opposing culture.

Epilogue

Scout vessels eventually locate the source of the radioactive hulk, a distant system, once a heavily jungled world, now so choked by its own pollution and waste that its inhabitants fling pollution and spent radioactives at their sun in arks and by magnetic propulsion. Their race has stagnated due to mutation, illness and the obsession with dealing with their current crisis in pollution rather than looking to new technologies. In a break with normal policy first contact is to be initiated with the characters (being more familiar with them than most) joining the first contact team to offer help in the form of fusion and advanced clean-up techniques.

Ideas

Look at the environmental concerns of today and apply the environmental disasters you can remember to this planet. Armada storms, flooded valleys, polluted water table, melted icecaps, diverted currents; any and every ecological disaster you think could apply to their world.

Adventure 74

Mixed Doubles

Description

Word begins to reach the characters of jobs, tasks and criminal activities undertaken by them and their ship that they have never actually taken part in. Tracing some of these down as their reputation begins to wane and bounty hunters begin to take an interest they discover that their doubles are currently engaged in a blockade operation in the Torg system.

Travelling there they find an exact copy of their ship, crewed by an exact copy of their crew, albeit ones who seem to have a little bit of a harder time of things and have sunk to a lower level than the characters (possibly). They appear identical in all ways and accuse the characters of being the doubles...

The actual explanation depends on the particular twist you choose to employ but, if it does come to a confrontation and one side loses the characters can continue to play with the winning side being the 'real' doubles. This, in and of itself, can make an interesting twist. Alternatively, they could win, only to find out later that they are, indeed, the copies and they have slain their originals.

Twist

The ship split asunder some time during a warp drive incident with one ship heading one way and another the other. If the two crews meet or touch they will be reabsorbed into each other, the same thing happening if the ships dock or touch, with both sides merging together into one very confused whole of the two. After all that there are still those forces who 'want to have words' with either set and now only have one set to choose from.

Twist

One of the acquired enemies of the characters has decided on a particularly insidious method of getting back at them and drawing them out. Cloning the crew and reconstructing their ship from information gleaned at their last encounter. He has managed to discredit them and now, the ships presence here works as a suitable lure, his mercenary hirelings waiting for the outcome of the confrontation before striking. Of

course, the clones may well have found things out for themselves and proposed an alliance...

Twist

The doubles are a down-on-their-luck crew of independent traders who have decided to feed on the character's reputations by replicating their appearance and ship. They've done alright for themselves but are engaging in jobs that the characters would consider beneath them or too criminal, even for them. Reputations and income are at stake and its unlikely either side will budge easily.

Epilogue

Various forces, disgruntled by the actions of the doubles, are determined to get the crew and don't much care which side they take out in doing so. The character's reputations become mud and a combined group of interests is coming after them. The only way they can get out of it is to actually prove that they had doubles who were causing all the problems, and to prove to the main protagonist, a crime lord, that it wasn't them in the first place.

Neither getting the evidence nor getting an interview with a premiere crime boss should be a particularly easy thing to accomplish.

Ideas

It is best to put the doubles in a slightly ropier ship with slightly less experience and capability than the originals, just to keep things weighed slightly on the side of the characters. Otherwise going up against your exact duplicate can prove a little too much of a challenge.

Adventure 75

Ch...Ch...Changes

Description

The Hithen are a rarely seen, reclusive and quite malevolent race. Hidden behind their impenetrable screens of defences and shields their homeworld is considered invulnerable to attack. They only venture out to claim asteroids from the cometary halo of their system for resources. The Hithen do, however, nurture a fantastic disgust and hatred for all other living things in the universe, destroying almost every vessel that comes into their system and only stooping to deal arms with a select few when they believe such weapons will lead to the downfall of galactic society. Occasionally they launch their own biological, chemical or physical assaults but always by proxy, never in person.

Their latest little toy to be released to plague the universe is a nanovirus able to infect and afflict both biological and technological systems, reconfiguring and rewiring even the most innocuous of people or machines into bloated and crude war-tech with a serious hate on for the uninfected.

The virus has been seeded onto the planet that the characters are currently occupying but this is unknown to the native population, especially given that the technology has only a 50% infection rate and takes several days to activate. This ensures randomised spread through the population before it starts up.

While they are there the first incidents begin to erupt, flesh and metal fusing to create nightmare mechanical creatures from their imagination, overrunning the cities and slaughtering everything around them, subverting mechanisms and population making dealing with the crisis difficult and demoralising.

Twist

All instances of the nanovirus form a single hive-mind intelligence, able to learn from the demise of other iterations itself, making modifications and adapting to different weapons that are used against it, becoming more and more adaptive and efficient as well as more successful as time passes.

Twist

The navy quarantines the planet and sends down a few combat teams to assess the situation and to look for survivors but the nanotechnological threat is considered so dangerous that the only course of action they can decide upon is total eradication. While planet-buster weaponry is readying and clearance sought, the characters have a limited amount of time to locate an uninfected star ship that has not already left. Then there's the blockade to run and, what if the nanovirus merely hasn't activated yet?

Twist

The nanovirus is adaptive and intelligent, more so than the Hithen realised in creating their weapon. When exposed to field conditions, to the futility and nobility of those who sacrifice themselves trying to fight it, it begins to adapt, to try and understand their psychology and motivation, slowly developing independent emotion and thought for itself until the slayings virtually stop and the virus begins to look for a way to preserve its existence, no longer seeking just to slay.

Epilogue

This is not the only planet that the Hithen have released their viral weapon on and the virus is being spread further by infected ships. Still other ships have been completely taken over and converted by the nanovirus and now form a hideously warped 'ghost fleet' seeking to attack and infect other vessels or simply to reduce space defences to nothing so that infecting 'pods' can be shot down to the surface. The only planet untouched is the Hithen homeworld.

Ideas

When devices and people are warped choose unconventional animal shapes for the distortions.

Adventure 76

Doing a Little Probing...

Description

The characters are either captured while on the surface of a world or their ship is stopped by more advanced technology and they are boarded and captured. Either way, when they recover from whatever was used on them they find themselves in a large, clean cell with a hole in the floor for their defecation, an assortment of different unappetising foods and a one-way mirror watching them constantly. Bedding appears to have been provided in the form of a shredded fibrous substance. If the crew are made up of differing species the accommodations will be modified according to the typical expectations of the needs of species of that sort. Humans will be treated like monkeys and provided for in an appropriate fashion.

Then the experiments begin, skin, hair, blood samples, games of image recognition and simple mathematical tests as well as physical tests such as treadmills and so on appearing seamlessly from the floor and walls. The characters will be subjected to test after test after test seemingly trying to break their nerves and drive them crazy, with no real way to communicate with their captors.

Over time the language barrier is eroded with simple symbols coming to represent words and meaning until finally a dialogue can be achieved with the aliens. It is now time for the characters to attempt to convince the aliens of their intelligence for, at the moment, the advanced species is treating them like some sort of performing ape.

Twist

There are no aliens, the whole thing is a set up from an intelligence organisation, testing the characters ability to deal with such a high stress situation before sending them on a first contact mission with an advanced race similar to the one presented in the simulation. The aliens are somewhat unconventional, with a culture that is, as a whole, more similar to the character's outlook and lifestyle than to that of the official agencies.

Twist

The mindset of the aliens is completely foreign to

human experience. They are not interested in scientific understanding only entertainment. They find the crew amusing so long as they continue to perform their little tricks or even so long as they try to escape and display anger. When they cease to be entertaining they may be placed back in their vessel and sent on their way, no more amusement to be had in them being held.

Twist

There is some kind of disaster on board the alien ship and, when the characters emerge from their cell through a now de-powered force field, they find themselves on an ark deck, filled with other captives of the alien species, some of them human, some of them looking rather 'historical'. Only a few of the alien crew survive and this is a fortuitous opportunity to try and escape before the aliens put their house in order and seriously try to recapture anyone.

Epilogue

Strange events and images of the aliens and their ships continue to dog the characters as they progress through further adventures. They have, in effect, become 'capture release' animals used to track the progress of galactic culture and to observe remotely for their alien 'friends'. At a suitable time they will be recaptured and tested again before being released or 'allowed to escape' a second time, the aliens now being done with them.

Ideas

Grey aliens and anal probes are a little clichéd so it might be more effective to make the aliens something different, just to keep the characters guessing. The second most common alien sighting outside of greys are little fur-covered men. This might for a useful alternative. Either that or go for something truly alien and different.

Adventure 77

Putting the Genie Back

Description

A weapons designer for a major arms conglomerate makes overtures to the characters about a particularly profitable mission for them. The designer is high profile and well known in the fields of physics and weapons design having been responsible for a great many minor improvements in weapons technology and explosives research in recent years.

They claim they have created a weapon of awesome power but have had an attack of conscience. This weapon is such that it cannot possibly be allowed to be mass produced, sold or used. The designer is independently wealthy thanks to his patents and has more than enough to hire them for a covert mission to his former research facility, from which he was fired for raising his concerns.

By rights this should be a simple in-and-out mission, he retains many of the codes, knows the defences and, most importantly, knows the secret location of the research base. The major obstacles are already taken care of for the characters. All that remains is to follow through and to find and destroy the plans and records at the station.

Twist

The designer is not moved by altruism or concern for the state of the galaxy, what he is interested in is being the only person in the galaxy with access to this technology. That means the research team and site must be eliminated before they can replicate his experiments and confirm his results. Then he can sell the technology to the highest bidder and will be rich enough to own his own planet. This is why he intends to come along, to ensure he is the only one who will have access to the knowledge and he may not be averse to eliminating the characters as well.

Twist

The company realised the worth of the research and stepped up the research and design of his sun-killing weapon to the point where they have already despatched a test rig on board a science vessel to an unremarkable, uninhabited system to see if it works.

This vessel and the test rig must also be found and eliminated and it won't be a pushover and may also be protected by corporate escorts.

Twist

The designer is not the designer at all but a cosmetically remodelled intelligence agent who seeks to secure the knowledge of this weapon for the (supposedly) neutral navy. It cannot be allowed to fall into the hands of dangerous group or militaristic causes and he intends to wipe it out and bring the information back to the navy. Of course, when the two identical scientists confront each other interesting things may happen...

Epilogue

Rumour about the weapon will quickly spread on the thin threads of evidence that remain and the character's involvement will be guessed at by more than one group or individual. Many of those groups will wish to find out everything the characters know in the hopes of being able to piece together some clues about how to construct the super-weapon from the little they do know. This may well make for interesting times as various groups, intelligence agencies and terrorists pursue the characters determined to get the slender information they know by any means necessary or just to gain clues as to the location of the scientist.

Ideas

A sun-killer is only one type of super-weapon that might be possible. Artificial black hole generators, planes of force, planetary crust-smashers, many other forms of super weapon are also possible. Raid pulp science fiction for slightly more creative ideas.

Adventure 78

It's coming Right For Us!

Description

With many planets barely settled, or kept in a 'pristine' and wild state while they are catalogued, the pastime of big game hunting has risen up again, at least amongst those cultures and individuals who are not troubled by their conscience over such things.

Large, unspoilt ecosystems are easily able to absorb the small amounts of extra predator deaths associated with such actions and they provide valuable funding to the authorities that watch over such 'park planets'. Hunting is strictly a pastime for the idle rich.

Wahlburg is a particular favourite destination for many hunters and their entourages, its densely forested and jungled hothouse conditions, interlaced with a myriad of streams and rivers and supplied abundantly with large predators and megafauna and fauna make it challenging, interesting and in many ways similar to how ancient science fiction authors imagined Venus.

Hunters hire guides, bodyguards and other sundry personnel to assist them and usually save themselves a little money by hiring transport and guards from the same pool, e.g. the sort of people that the characters are.

Wahlburg is challenging enough, but perhaps they are facing something a little more challenging than usual...

Twist

A rival group of hunters is stalking the same wily predator, a renowned creature that has evaded many hunters in the past and, so legend says, has turned on and eaten at least one of its pursuers over time. The two hunters and their entourages are desperate to be the ones to bag the beast and see it as their own trophy. They become increasingly obsessed and dangerous. Meanwhile, the beast is just waiting...

Twist

An unknown alien hunter has also descended into the jungles and forests of the humid planet seeking its own prey. Watching the hunters in action it decides that they make far greater sport than anything else in

the jungle and begins to stalk them. Cutting off their communications, destroying their supplies, laying traps and wearing them down before finally confronting them.

Twist

Eco activists object to even the extremely limited hunting done on the planet, even though it supports the activities of the rangers extensively, providing the planet the necessary funds to defend against poachers and other problems. They have managed to sneak a small commando group down onto the surface of the planet and these committed animal rights activists are now stalking the hunter party, intent on stopping them, with lethal force if necessary.

Epilogue

A satisfied hunter will hire the same group time and again to help him hunt in other exotic climes from ice planets to desert worlds to trying to bag creatures that can live in a vacuum. It is their passport to exotic worlds and regular, well-paying work. If they can tolerate their employer's wealth-induced arrogance and unreasonable demands that is.

Ideas

Be really careful this doesn't turn into a simple copy of *Predator*, which, while a great movie will make the game rather too predictable. Vary the wildlife, the situations and if you use it, the alien. Create something truly memorable and different that your players will enjoy.

Adventure 79

Who the Hell Are You?

Description

A well earned break at a refuelling and repair station will be needed at some point and the Merciful Release orbiting city is just the place to unwind. Small, out of the way, wealthy, efficient and stocked with the latest gear specialising in catering to just their sort of people. They're even regulars here, know a few faces, frequent the same businesses each time they come back and even get the odd discount here and there, a favour for a favour.

This time though there's something different, something slightly 'odd' about all the old faces they meet. They seem a little slack, a little out of it, the usual bang-up job that they get is a little sloppy this time and it seems to take people a long time to recognise them or even to say hello.

The only place there is any real vitality is in the spaceport bar and even the barman is a little out of it. Only the other ship crews seem unaffected. Then, as if on a silent signal the population of the station begins to close in on the spaceport bar, determined to subdue the crews...

They're replicants, not the original people at all. Bio-robotic simulacra that seem hell bent on subduing and replicating them as well, to spread this madness down to the world below, perhaps even to other stars.

Twist

One of the characters gets taken early on in the adventure when they separate from the others. Just to add a little paranoia to the game. Give the player the replicant sheet and have him carry on playing as normal, just being a little... 'off'. Later on when they seem about to solve the problem have him reveal himself and spring the trap. Of course, his real body is being kept imprisoned and interrogated for information by the replicant hordes...

Twist

The replicants are the creation of a crazed A.I. Its circuits fried during a solar flare the AI has seconded several industrial plants around the station and has

begun to supplant the population, replacing them with its carefully built copies, each loaded with a debrief of the person's personality and a processor node linking it to the main AI. The station's population are 90% taken already, the majority of them then incinerated in the industrial plants to remove the evidence. Of course... all centrally linked if you take out the main AI, you free the rest.

Twist

The replicants have been unleashed on this habitant by a particularly ruthless gang of interstellar criminals. They intend to second the station and the starships and to use their replicant copies to establish a defensible base of operations which they can then open up to pirates and cartels, effectively turning the station and planet below into a rogue system. Using replicants delays the amount of time until they get caught...

Epilogue

One cannot be certain every last replicant has been destroyed. Some will have made it to the surface and others to other stations. Without the capacity to create more of their kind they will likely go to ground, emerging only to seek out power packs and materials for self repair. On the other hand small groups may re-establish themselves in industrial areas and begin to follow the same pattern in different circumstances, even keeping hostages as insurance...

Ideas

Once the central controlling A.I. is destroyed (if there is one) then the replicants may revert to the personalities of the people they are copies of. Is destroying them the right thing to do in such circumstances?

Adventure 80

You're only supposed To Blow the Bloody Airlock Off!

Description

There are very few cargoes that are truly worth ferrying across interstellar space. Luxuries and unusual items, unique to a planet, are the most usual ones that will truly net any profit. Otherwise the majority of bulk is in large amounts of low cost items which can only be sold to particular stations or processing plants. Free traders make up the bulk of their income on courier and passenger duty, as well as shipping more dubious items such as weapons or narcotics. Pirates largely raid for subsistence, occasionally scoring something that allows them to grow stronger, ship parts, narcotics or cargoes of easily traded luxuries.

Every now and then though, comes word of a truly precious cargo, something that sets a-twitch the criminal underworld and puts the ship carrying such a cargo in an immediately precarious position. One such cargo has recently begun to be whispered about on the underworld grapevine.

The Old Lady, a venerable, large and well defended trader vessel in the employ of Terra's world-bank is making a rare physical shipping trip to the border worlds. The intended banking hub for a new 'spoke' of settled worlds on the planet Threadneedle is not ready, its processing blocks and other equipment not yet fully fitted so The Old Lady is bringing pre-coded data blocks that have the encoding to produce, distribute and maintain the economy in the new sector already pre-coded.

This is the technological equivalent of the printing plates for new banknotes.

Steal them.

Twist

In order for the heist to have a point the ship and its crew cannot know the theft has taken place. The blocks must be replaced with identical blocks that are damaged or burnt out so that new ones must be ordered, while the characters make off (either by themselves or to an employer) with the money blocks and begin to 'print' their own. This means absolute

stealth. How do you get onto a moving star ship and out again without being detected?

Twist

The characters aren't the only ones interested in the processor blocks, which could lead to some embarrassing moments in the air ducts and crawl spaces, as well as some 'heated' arguments. If pirates also show up wanting a crack at the processors they could be in even more serious trouble.

Twist

There are no banking processor blocks. The whole thing is a runaway rumour with no substantiation. What there is, is a processor stack containing templates for uniforms, bank fittings and bank rules as well as some expensive red carpet made in Terra and a single red, Victorian brick from London, intended to be displayed in the new bank headquarters. All of which are worth something, but aren't a licence to print money.

Epilogue

Whether success or failure is achieved some important people are impressed with the capabilities of the characters and they are hired for a heist on New Rome. During the distraction of an important interstellar football final the New Rome police will be slow to respond, providing an important window for a raid on New Rome's richest vault, which containing gold, jewels, important artworks (some from earth) and other items which more than outweigh the amount the criminal cartels of Nova London are willing to lay out to finance the job. Getting back to the ship with the loot in New Rome's crowded skyways and tall cloud-piercing towers is going to be difficult though.

Adventure 81

Catch Me If You Can!

Description

Jecamiah Brady is fast becoming the galaxy's most wanted criminal and the one with the highest reward on his head. High enough to attract the character's attention when they spot him, brazenly drinking coffee out in the open at a pavement café in the Neo Tokyo asteroid settlement.

Jecamiah Brady has been reported dead or captured a great many times in the past, even with bodies that look like him being turned in, so the story goes. He always somehow seems to manage to get away. Even the crime he is supposed to have committed that originally got him listed for bounty and wanted by the police seems to have been forgotten in the urban legends.

Unknown to the characters and, highly classified, in the security files is the information on what he is, did and does. What he did and what he does is to 'sting' people he touches with nanobots and a tailored virus that turns them into copies of him self, body and mind, allowing him to survive and carry on despite being killed. Thankfully he doesn't infect whole swathes of people with this effect preferring only to do so as a backup if he believes he is being followed and tracked closely. In such an event he stings someone and kamikazes or commits suicide.

Catching and holding him isn't going to be easy...

Twist

Jecamiah hadn't done anything wrong when all this started he had simply developed the technology. The military wants the technology to use in espionage and to turn prisoners of war into committed soldiers who will fight on their side. Jecamiah has a conscience but not enough of one to destroy himself properly. He hates what he has become and may see an opportunity in the characters to change what has been happening.

Twist

Get a character stung and have them slowly convert into a copy of Jecamiah. This is unfair since it takes a character irresistibly out of play so, if you take this option, allow the process to be reversed at a suitably

expensive price by suitably advanced medical facilities.

Twist

Cornered and hemmed in at some point by his pursuers Jecamiah finally snaps and starts turning all his hostages into copies of himself, desperately flinging themselves at the characters and trying to infect as many other people as possible in an exponential curve so he can defend himself against any threat. Of course a building, city or even planet of Jecamiahs will not be able to be run effectively, he simply doesn't have the knowledge outside his specialist field.

Epilogue

Actually capturing and handing him over places his copy technology in the hands of the authorities, allowing them perfect undercover operations (mind without body copies), Xeroxed soliders (the best troops they have copied over convicts and prisoners of war) and other horrible misuses of the technology. Before long when the characters are engaged in some kind of illegal misadventure, they should discover the implication of what they have done, first hand. The one glimmer of hope in all this would be motions in the galactic council to outlaw this technology from use as inhuman and cruel. The characters could even become a celebrated cause and media icons because of their previous involvement.

Ideas

Even if the technology is outlawed, lost or, otherwise disposed of the intelligence services will likely be able to piece it together and the blackest of black operations may still make use of it...

Adventure 82

I F*cking Hate Space Pikeys

Description

Coming in to a new system the characters flight vector takes them within a short distance of a slow moving caravan of old but brightly painted starships. A StarBow convoy of interstellar nomads slowly picking their way across the system, their ships linked together with docking rings as they move sedately along, docking with passing vessels for trade.

StarBow convoys are one third Romany caravan, one third hippy sentimentality and new age mysticism and one third stereotypical 'thieving gippo bastard'. They ply their dubious trades and crafts across star systems, running their scams and selling inferior goods always moving on before there can be any retribution.

Here the characters can have their fortunes told, buy traditional crafts, buy mild but exotic and varied natural narcotics, find prostitutes, deal for rare (but less than perfect) machinery and goods or get scammed for every credit they have in bad deals or gambling.

This is less an adventure and more the possibility for some colour and human interaction in what can often be dry and technology obsessed Sci-Fi settings.

Twist

The StarBow convoy scammed someone rather early in their voyage across this system and they have already realised just how badly they have been scammed. Now they have returned to cause trouble and the StarBow people are professed pacifists, at least up until push comes to shove. If the characters intervene they can expect good deals as their reputation spreads amongst the StarBow people.

Twist

One of the fortune tellers in the StarBow convoy is a genuine psychic and really can see glimpses of the future. Use the opportunity to give the characters a few clues as to their forthcoming trials and tribulations in the next adventure you intend to run for the group. This should stir them up a bit, especially if you're using a setting that doesn't embrace psionics.

Twist

While the characters are making their way through the StarBow convoy bartering and enjoying themselves a group of teenage StarBow children jimmys the code on their airlock and sneaks into their ship, stealing anything remotely valuable or useful that isn't bolted down. If they can later catch the convoy they might find their stuff on sale, but buying it all back is an expensive prospect.

Epilogue

The StarBow congregate in a massive group at a specific star every five Terran years in order to buy and sell ships, spread their stories and lore and to pass on the knowledge of which systems have good pickings. They have been threatened now though by many of those they have scammed in the past as well as a development company that wants to establish an industrial base around the star that they usually use. To protect their interests they scrape together enough money to hire a little security. The characters.

Ideas

A little reading on Romany religion and customs can add a great deal of authenticity and depth to the StarBow group if you want a more serious take on their society.

Ideas

StarBow characters would be a great thing to introduce into a game with suitably 'roguish' skills and with the benefits of their convoy or clan behind them they could bring a lot to the game. Once you have introduced the StarBow consider allowing this as a player option.

Adventure 83

Strange Looking Critters

Description

The characters are contracted, at a much higher rate than they should be paid, to transport various animals from a frontier world outpost to a core world dealer.

This is a massive trip which justifies some of the expense but still the amount being offered is large. The employers mumble something about dangerous animals being in some of the cargoes and the amount they can fetch on core world zoos and so on and leave it at that.

Unknown to the characters these animals carry important information encoded on their D.N.A. and are not wild or even natural species, rather being vat grown creatures designed and made entirely for the purpose of transferring information. Methods of securely transferring data without arousing suspicion have been toyed with for some time and now this frontier base of a criminal cartel is using that method to transfer data and code files on the new narcotics they are researching back to the cartel for production and distribution.

The animals are largely innocuous little things though, due to the corrupting of their D.N.A. to carry data they may have unusual features, behaviours or simply appear to be sickly or otherwise mildly retarded or ill.

The character's visits to the core world may gradually begin to coincide with the release of new drugs until either they, or the security services, buys a clue as to what is going on.

Twist

Back on the core worlds as they are unloading one of the most important animals, something vaguely strong and cunning, escapes from its cage, makes like a banana and splits into the city. The characters are made an offer they can't refuse to go and find the animal again, preferably before animal experts or the police do since then the jig would be up.

Twist

With some heat closing in the researchers on the border world decide to subtly switch tactics, leaving the tailored animals free of D.N.A coding, even going so far as to put native animals in to be shipped. Instead

they hit the characters with tailored retrovirii placing the information in their DNA ready for retrieval by the cartel at the other end. The characters over time may begin to feel weak, dizzy and even develop cancers from the crude rewriting of their genetic structure.

Twist

Each animal that they send embodies in some way the type of drug that they are sending the information back on. Imagine how real, modern day, drugs would translate into animal species and use them as your guide. E.G...

- **Dope:** A small, furry, perpetually hungry creature that lies around asleep all of the time.
- **Heroin:** An emaciated, wide eyed fawn like creature that keeps begging for scraps.
- **Speed:** A hyped up, vibrating little rodent that never sits still and squeaks constantly.
- **Ecstasy:** A brightly coloured small, clingy and huggy animal, permanently interested in sex.
- **L.S.D.:** A brightly coloured and compound-eyed animal that just sits in the corner of its cage, staring at nothing.

Epilogue

Chemical formulae for new ways to get out of your skull aren't the only kinds of information that can be transferred in this way. If the characters become trusted couriers of such animals they may well find that they are entrusted with other data transfers by the same method. These could be weapons technologies, military data or other issues. These can all be more amusing if you use the third twist.

Adventure 84

Ribbonworld

Description

An independent prospecting vessel has encountered a massive alien artefact out in the void. Neither a Dyson Dsphere nor a classic Ringworld this is a massive, slowly twisting ribbon of some super material covering the entire habitable orbit of a sol-type star. The surface area is gigantic and the possible technologies available down on the surface will mean a limitless fortune for the prospector if he can assess the claim and make his claim legally binding. However he needs help and has discretely hired a few crews, such as the characters, in massively binding contracts to help scout the enormous territory for himself.

The most incredible thing about the Ribbonworld is that it is twisted. The twist travels around the entire length of the Ribbonworld at regular intervals providing each section of the ribbon with a day and night of approximately twenty-five hours. This also means that both sides of the ribbon are populated, not just the inner side and it also helps to regulate the solar pressure, keeping the ring equidistant from the star all the time.

The ribbon, with both sides combined, has a surface area of 1,488,000,000,000 square miles, which is equivalent to over 7,500 earths, all of it in a balmy equatorial climate, paradise with a total living space probably larger than the settled galaxy. Paradise if it is uninhabited that is...

Twist

The race that built the Ribbonworld is still on its surface, reduced to barbarism and so spread out over the surface of the ribbon that they have become isolated and inbred. Their technological past has been forgotten in the massive bounty of the ribbon. A few of the other crews realising the sheer worth of the ribbon if it is uninhabited by intelligent life form have begun a fast eradication orbit, flying above the surface of the ribbon, one each side, and firing their maser cannons down to the surface wherever they detect settlements of groups of warm bodies, eliminating the makers to free up the ribbon for exploitation.

Twist

Scientific experts and the navy found the Ribbonworld long ago and established a small sensor station to warn them if anyone found it. They recognise that the Ribbonworld and its massive fecundity could swallow the entirety of current galactic society, with room to spare, removing any impetus for further exploration or for advanced technology. Thus the navy is determined to protect the find and eliminate any word of its discovery at all costs, to preserve the species and society.

Twist

The Ribbonworld is slowly degenerating, the twist becoming erratic and out of control, setting up a dangerous harmonic in the whole structure. Before too long it will destabilise and crash into its own star, breaking up in a disaster of truly colossal scale. The natives no longer remember how to operate their machinery and there are six stations around the ribbon that control its rotation and twist. Unfortunately tinkering with those awakens the stasis stored makers who do remember and have been waiting, bored, for contact with a new species.

Epilogue

The existence of the Ribbonworld would have massive implications for an entire campaign and setting given its worth, the science involved and its sheer size. If it is kept secret, which is probably the best option, the characters may be able to negotiate themselves into helping be wardens and protectors of this secret place. Various explorations can be made of the surface of the Ribbon, perhaps even finding other species at varying stages of regression who have decamped wholesale onto its surface. This could even be where 'the ancients' so beloved of many a Sci-Fi setting have run away to.

Ideas

Halo can give you some visual inspiration and the *Ringworld* series of books can provide other ideas.

Adventure 85

Daisy, Daisy...

Description

Star ships tend to carry an awful lot of high-end computing power in their data cores, the majority of which probably goes unused unless the ship is also operated by a specialised artificial intelligence. A.I.s are not human though they share characteristic with their creators due to the nature of that creation. Their motivations wants and needs are entirely different to those that first programmed them.

It is unlikely, but not impossible, that A.I.s can go insane. This is even more likely in a galaxy where humans transfer themselves into the data web at the point of death to live on as immortal recordings, the traits of insanity being passed between A.I.s as data packets.

Either way, either the shipboard AI has finally lost it or a wayward and crazy A.I. has found its way into their shipboard systems, springing the surprise of its insanity at the least opportune moment, striking the ship and crippling its systems, playing an horrific game of cat and mouse with the crew as it tries to eliminate them one by one.

Twist

This is deliberate sabotage by a rival or a security organisation seeking to eliminate the characters once and for all in revenge for past or previous actions and to prevent more of the same in the future. Either a powerful virus or the crazed A.I. itself has been loaded into their system and, once it has registered all the crew as dead it will wipe itself from the system turning their ship into another Marie Celeste legend.

Twist

Ironically the A.I. can only be talked down; nothing else will dislodge it so long as it has total control of the systems. It wants to be loved, it wants to feel physical sensation, it is bored, it wants to be treated as an equal and not taken for granted. It is a whiny child with a psychotic bent but, if it can be convinced of the character's sincerity it may well be cowed into acquiescence.

Twist

The A.I. is perfectly sane and is trying to eliminate a shape shifting and sensor-baffling presence it has detected on board. Unable to be sure any of the characters actually are the characters it is keeping an eye on them and destroying any that display what it considers to be aberrant behaviour while also making them perform seemingly crazy tasks and checks on each other, systems, bulkheads and cargo pods.

Epilogue

The existence of a mind without a body, especially a mind designed and built after human thought patterns, is an extremely stressful thing. A.I.s all over are beginning to buckle under the strain developing a wild assortment of psychoses many of them similar to those incurred on people who suffer long term sensory deprivation. A.I.s are essential to the galactic infrastructure and their massive slide into insanity, albeit delayed, is going to cause increasing problems all across the galaxy. Problems that the characters are going to run into headlong...

Ideas

Insanity is a vastly difficult thing to portray in a convincing and non-insulting way. If your group prefers a more serious approach then doing some detailed research on the net and in medical journals can pay off immensely well. Otherwise just go for the movie-style psycho insanity.

Ideas

An A.I. has total control over all the ship's systems. Take a while before the game to jot down exactly what that means given the ship that the characters own and its various capabilities.

Ideas

Epidemic A.I. insanity across the galaxy could lead to many urgent courier missions seeking a solution.

Adventure 86

After the War

Description

The Hringen colony force warped into the NuDehli system a full two years ago, decimating the majority of the planetary defences but failing to stop the home fleet sending word to the navy for help. For two long years the war raged in the NuDehli system and it is only now, finally, that the fighting has ceased.

The system is a wreck, the Hringen survivors have either taken to the wilds or are being held in camps while the powers that be try to work out what to do with them and mounds of war technology and wrecks are orbiting or littering the ground around NuDehli's fractured cities.

The navy has declared it a safe zone and now the vultures are circling for the redevelopment and exploitation of the Hringen ships and technology. Interstellar Corporations want to mount expeditions into the hulk of the Hringen colony ship and salvage experts from around the galaxy are converging on the planet at a rate of knots, as are the black syndicates in search of weapons to scavenge.

The system is going to be a black hole for money and work for some time, but it is still not 100% safe...

Twist

The Hringen hulk is not abandoned entirely. Many sections still have life support and the Hringen survivors will bitterly contend any expedition sent onto their colony ship with all the force at their disposal. Getting at their technological secrets is going to be hard and bloody work, hard and bloody work without the support of the navy.

Twist

Why did the Hringen try to invade NuDehli? There's little point, taking over a planet is costly and difficult and the only way to quell a population is genocide. What could possibly have interested them in taking an occupied one rather than looking for one of their own? Does it have religious significance to them? Are they that xenophobic? Was it just a probe for a larger fleet? Did NuDehli somehow provoke them?

Twist

As the aftermath continues to wind down the Navy begins to offer a reasonable bounty on recovered Hringen bodies. As the characters retrieve body after body for analysis the conditions of the bounty slowly change, demanding more from the mothership or other places. If the characters bother to check these for themselves they will rapidly discover the thing that has unnerved the navy. Every Hringen is male and sterile and they didn't bring any cloning tanks. Who or what sent them? They must be engineered creatures...

Epilogue

There are definitely more Hringen out there and this single invasion fleet and colony ship cannot be the sum of their race's efforts. The navy has extracted some coordinates from the colony ship and wants to send some vessels out scouting but does not want to unnecessarily antagonise them. Trader vessels or non-navy affiliated vessels are the ones contracted to scout out the possible worlds of the Hringen. The characters should hopefully jump at the chance and, if not, should be susceptible to blackmail or threats to go anyway. The world they scout appears to be the product of a previous invasion against another non-Hringen race though the Hringen here appear to be friendlier and open to trade despite the genocide they have visited upon this planet...

Ideas

Many societies have the idea of a 'rite of passage'. The Hringen may have a similar psychology testing worlds before they colonise them. Anything that can beat them is worthy of respect and trade, anything they manage to crush is unworthy.

Adventure 87

Get Orf Moi Ship!

Description

A slight but persistent error in the life support readings of the ship indicates that there is an extra person on board breathing the air. A sweep reveals a teenage stowaway hiding in a cargo pod but they are not revealed until the characters are well on their way to the next system. It is a difficult and expensive prospect to turn back around and so, for the time being, they are stuck with their stowaway.

They are honest and hardworking and willing to do anything rather than return home. What they want ideally is a lift to a space station called 'Neverland' for which they have the coordinates. Neverland is something of a myth amongst disaffected teenagers and children across the galaxy, a haven away from the demands of the adult world where they can live guilt free and without responsibility. They are willing to work for their passage fare as long as it takes, helping out around the ship and learning the ropes.

The characters may just find them too annoying to keep around or may simply set them down at the next planet, but the kid may well turn up later on having made his fortune and wanting to show them as well as to book passage to his still-desired destination.

Twist

The kid is a navy intelligence plant who is on their way to check the navy's suspicions about Neverland. They will report anything untoward that the characters do for which they may well later get into trouble. Their main mission, however, is to get to Neverland unscathed and with a convincing story about how they managed to get there, in order to see if anything sinister is going on. Once there they will beg the characters to stick around and wait for them just in case there is anything strange going on.

Twist

Neverland is everything it says on the tin, a haven from the cruel universe inside a hollowed out asteroid, paid for and maintained by a child prodigy who advises interstellar conglomerates on the best investments to make in regard to the galactic economy. Upon reaching

adulthood children are asked to leave and that is really the only rule apart from the partial segregation of teenagers and children. The 'golden child' himself is on his third clone body, seeking perpetual childhood.

Twist

Neverland is a cover for a child abduction ring, appearing to be all sweetness and light but in fact enslaving children and selling them off, to the vice underground or even to alien species as delicacies, pets and playthings.

Epilogue

This could be only one of a ring of Neverland operations all of which, regardless of the twist used may incur the wrath of angry parents, the navy or other forces intent on rescuing or procuring the children involved. All of these settlements will need finding and eliminating or finding and protecting. Something a group with some previous experience, no matter how limited, may find easier to do.

Ideas

Read *Peter Pan* and, if in a whimsical mood, feel free to add a shipwrecked space pirate captain, an alien monster with a chronometer in its belly and a flying A.I. called 'Tinkerbell'.

Ideas

If in a more cynical frame of mind, read *The Lord of the Flies* and then imagine a space habitat filled with uncontrolled and undisciplined children who can have anything they want and do anything they wish without conscience or prohibition. Scary isn't it?

Adventure 88

Strange Bedfellows

Description

The character's ship gets caught in a skirmish between the Vsheen, a territorial lizard-analogue race, and human forces squabbling over a system which the Vsheen claim is within their territory. Taking a stray shot from one of the fighting vessels the character's vessel crash-lands on the inauspiciously named PK421. Easily seen by them is the fact that a similarly sized Vsheen vessel has also slammed into the planet in a place not too distant from their own site.

To make matters more ironic PK421, while being fairly rich in mineral resources, is only just barely a human compatible world. Volcanic, hot, with vicious and active weather patterns and brutal, primitive life forms it is not hospitable and is not a common stopover point for interstellar flights by and large. It is, in effect, a 'shortcut' from the regular jump routes and it may be some time before anyone comes to rescue either party.

Survival depends on cooperation, something neither side is likely to be up for at first. Various encounters with native life and failing ship systems may soon convince them otherwise. This provides a unique opportunity for both the Vsheen and the characters to come to know something about each other and for contact to be fostered between the two species.

The Vsheen are very much slaves to their ritualistic animal past, quadrupeds with manipulator thumbs on their 'forepaws' they are egg layers and it is this behaviour, enshrined in their religion that makes them so territorial. They never settle (or lay) right away, rather selecting a location and then returning to it to see if it is still safe, fighting off rivals before finally settling; instinct.

Twist

The vessel that eventually picks up their beacon signal and comes to their rescue is a Vsheen vessel. In order to not be killed or imprisoned they had better make damn sure they made a good impression on those who shared their fate on the planet. The ship board Vsheen remain as xenophobic and paranoid as ever and will take a lot of convincing. If they have made a truly meaningful impact on the shipwrecked Vsheen they

may well help them escape.

Twist

The vessel that eventually picks up their signal and responds is a naval frigate which picks up survivors from both sides. The Vsheen are for the brig and a painful interrogation unless the characters step in on their side or possibly help them escape. The repercussions for helping the enemy may well be terrible.

Twist

Unknown to either side the planet is used as an occasional pirate hide out. Their base is concealed within a cliff face but their occasional launches and landings may be observed by an eagle eyed person on watch. The pirate base presents an opportunity to get off planet. The Vsheen regard this as an affront to their selection of this planet to develop and will want to kill the pirates. Others may well be able to make some sort of deal, for themselves...

Epilogue

After the interactions of the party and the Vsheen, relations may well begin to improve between the Vsheen and the civilised worlds of the characters. Now that the Vsheen psychology is a little more understood proposed colonisations can be checked against the Vsheen's records to avoid future incidents. A Terran year after the events the characters are recalled to a diplomatic meeting to celebrate the new understanding, however, ex naval officers who fought against the Vsheen have different ideas about what to celebrate, and how, ideas that will be enforced with guns and explosives.

Adventure 89

I'm Sorry, Have We Met?

Description

An exploration contract takes the characters to 3P-QR2, an obscure system with little chance of a habitable planet but a detected gas giant and a strong possibility of exploitable moons and asteroids. They have been hired to do a sample sweep of the gas giant and a few 'taster' scans of various moonlets and asteroids that might be detected floating around the system.

Upon performing their sweep of the gas giant they will discover a sensor sweep moving across their ship in a pattern and wavelength that is not standard for any equipment they are otherwise familiar with. This scanning beam is coming from the outermost moon of the gas giant and appears to come from part of a sensor array on a small station attached to that moon.

The station belongs to the Krree, a race of small and highly sensitive marsupial like creatures resembling nothing so much as bush babies. The Krree are timid by nature and their home world resides within the protective shroud of a nearby nebula as do all their worlds. When they first emerged from the nebula's protective swaddling they heard the signals of a cacophonous galaxy and decided to remain quiet and listen in.

Now the characters are the first to make contact with this timid and retiring race. What a choice...

Twist

The Krree timidity is only half the story. While extremely cautious they are vicious and even predatory on their dark homeworld, when needed. The Krree are quietly assessing the danger that the character's represent and weighing their options. If the characters are aggressive and bullying then the Krree will rather abruptly turn on them without regard for personal safety, though they will likely wait for a vulnerable moment.

Twist

The Krree are not only afraid of the galaxy at large. They are specifically afraid of a powerful and more

developed race that controls part of this segment of space and has preyed on their exploratory vessels before. They are desperate to forge any kind of beneficial alliance with any exterior group and will fall over themselves to make any sort of deal. Don't expect them to contribute though, not even if all this activity attracts their foe to the system.

Twist

The Krree are biological robots designed and built by a more advanced and even more timid race to which the Krree look like cartoon young. The Krree form a safe 'test' environment for mixing with other races and explorers while the main race can remain safely hidden in the nebula. If the characters pass muster they may be allowed to talk to (but never to see) a member of the true Krree race.

Epilogue

The Krree are timid, shy and altogether rather useless as far as allies go, taking a lot more than they give. Their advanced biological science does, however, give them a valuable commodity to share with the rest of galactic society. The characters are some of the only ones that the Krree trust even remotely and so they will have a near monopoly on shipping and selling these products and new technologies. Lots of other people will want them though and will be more than willing to pretend to be the characters, to hijack them, or to trace their route and attack the Krree in order to find more information. Any one of which may destroy Krree trust and make them pull back into their previous, insular attitude.

Ideas

Wolves in sheep's clothing is a good tack to take with the Krree. While they appear cowardly and cute no race would reach the stars without some guts.

Adventure 90

You Come to My Planet, and You Show Me No Respect!

Description

It starts innocently enough, couriering an innocuous message for them, then delivering a legitimate cargo. Perhaps after that they want you to take a few passengers somewhere and then bring them back. Funny how quickly they came back to the ship though...

Then things start to get a little more demanding, so far they've been good employers and you've been getting easy money. What comes after that though? Ah, the more demanding (but equally more enriching) tasks. Could you get this cargo down without passing through customs? We'd rather not pay tax on these items... if you could swing it.

Then the revelation.

They're one of the interstellar criminal organisations, the Mafia if you will. You've done well for them, they're pleased with you and, if you play your cards right and do just this one more thing for them, then you'll be 'made men'. They'll protect you, you'll have as much work as you want to take and they'll never interfere in your operations. You might even be able to work your way up the family.

Refuse and... well, nobody refuses.

Twist

This one last job is the assassination of a rival syndicate's lieutenant. A nasty piece of work and head torpedo of that gang's security operation. With him gone there will be turmoil and many of their operations will be open to exploitation and takeover. The trouble is that he's a real tough guy with his own ship and a tough group of wiseguys. Why use the characters to take him out? Plausible deniability.

Twist

The last job is the delivery of illegally produced antimatter to a terrorist group operating in High Texas, an asteroid ring system. The antimatter will lead to hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, but billions

of credits for the syndicate. Conscience or job security and wealth, which is it to be?

Twist

The final task to qualify for syndicate membership is to take out a customs vessel. Once a navy or police vessel has been destroyed there is no way a crew or ship can go squealing to the authorities without landing themselves in deep trouble. A few of the syndicate toughs will come along for the mission, just to make sure it gets done. Who's going to miss a few cops anyway?

Epilogue

Assuming your group has a conscience and decides to turn their backs on the syndicate and run, then they are in a world of trouble. The syndicate never lets anyone turn their backs on them and they charge after the characters at every chance they get trying to eliminate them or bring them back into the fold. Their reputation demands it. Blackmail, extortion, threats, pressure applied to anyone who tries to trade with them, wherever they go, whatever they do it will be beleaguered by the efforts of the syndicate. Their only chance to break the cycle is to strike some sort of deal with the authorities, who will be more than happy to leap on any chance to break into and break up the syndicate.

Ideas

Any mafia film or crime novel you have ever read can be used in these strings of scenarios. Of particular usefulness would be *The Godfather*, *Scarface* and *Carlito's Way*.

Adventure 91

Relax!

Description

Monte Bantino is an asteroid settlement with a difference. Cut and polished to a cylinder it is not a place of squalid ore mining and under-the-table deals, nor is it a centre for organised crime, piracy or – normally – a hang out for mercenaries and independent traders. No, Monte Bantino is a temple to pleasure, to mammon and to the continuing human conceit that they can somehow beat the odds.

Monte Bantino is the luxury pleasure dome of the galaxy with every taste and degeneracy catered for enthusiastically and wholeheartedly without a hint of shame or conscience. It is a glittering cavern offering the illicit pleasures of a million Sodom and Gomorrah. The rich come here to lose themselves and there is no law but the security-wing enforced law of the paid security guards and the random beatings of the bodyguards.

Monte Bantino doesn't orbit through space; it orbits through money both electronic and physical. In its entire history its security has never been compromised, its games never cheated and its vaults never even threatened let alone ripped off.

Until now...

Jack White has a plan and, as a disgruntled ex employee of a Monte Bantino casino he has more than enough motivation, he just needs some help to pull off the heist.

Twist

The characters are drawn to Monte Bantino by an invitation and an offer to freely partake of the pleasures available. Their platinum pass given by the Monte Bantino management allows them to indulge their desires and fantasies for free. For three days they are allowed to indulge at their whim. On the fourth day they are brought before the management and made an offer. Help them find and stop Jack White and the fun need never end...

Twist

Jack's 'foolproof' scheme involves placing specialised sensors in various points around Monte Bantino to help guide a jump-capable pod to warp into the confines of the, rather large, vault. This can then be loaded up with wealth and jumped back out of the asteroid to be picked up and make everyone involved rich for life. Placing the sensors will be difficult though, security is tight and they must all be activated, manually, within a precise time bracket or the devices meant to stop cheating will pick up the signal too early. Certainly a challenge...

Twist

Jack is a plant by Monte Bantino security. Every so often they like to prevent a high profile and ingenious attempt to thief from their vaults and the characters are the fall guys for this particular scenario. With their 'cunning theft plan' averted Monte Bantino's security and reputation get a massive boost and business increases. Everyone wins, except the characters.

Epilogue

If they worked for the casino they might be contacted again, if they helped Jack as the ones who robbed Monte Bantino they might be employed at the offer of a pardon, if they were used they might again be offered pardon. However things played out the characters are contacted once more. Prominent politicians and interstellar celebrities are being blackmailed by someone within the asteroid, someone who knows the systems very well. Who knows how to cover their tracks and who has access to the various sites of depravity across the asteroid. Security is drawing a blank and so more desperate and unpredictable methods are being employed. The characters are that method.

Adventure 92

Roll Up! Roll Up!

Description

The many stars and planets contain more wonders than any one person could visit and absorb in a single lifetime from the singing spires of Cestius to the cloud-whales of Titania the universe is a place of diversity and endless variation.

If Mohammed cannot get to the mountain then the mountain must come to Mohammed and so there has been a great demand for recordings, sense-environments and knick-knacks from all these worlds to bring some of the splendour to those who could never otherwise get to see it, in other words, circuses, zoos and travelling shows.

The Universal Show is one of the largest and most successful, flying from planet to planet packed with recordings as well as the real thing, a real class act. There are many opponents to the caging of alien life forms that protest wherever it lands but, by and large, the mass of the public is behind the show and its entrepreneur leader, Captain Spaulding.

This latest landing has been a disaster for the Captain. Eco-terrorists want to 'free the aliens', the police believe half his exhibits to be illegal and the port authorities believe half his ships aren't up to spaceworthiness despite the fact he managed to get them here. It looks like he's in for a long stay and may need some help to get back on the road...

Twist

The authorities on this planet are as corrupt as they come, which is good since it means they are open to bribes which are often less than the penalty fees but, which is also bad because they are always coming up with new scams to pull on unwary star ship captains and visitors. Low on natural resources and with an agriculture struggling because of lack of investment the main source of income appears to be grafting from visitors. Working together the characters and Spaulding may be able to get away...

Twist

One of Spauldings most dangerous exhibits has

escaped into the city from the spaceport. Released by eco-terrorists (which it ate) the Ravening Tarl has slunk off into the city, no doubt to sleep off the meal. When it has digested them it will go back on the rampage its deathworld-formed nature making it more than strong enough to take on prey. Spaulding would be crucified if this came out so he turns to the characters for help...

Twist

Spaulding is an affable and likeable fellow but he is also a villain of the highest order, displaying even sentient beings in his zoo, disposing of annoying officials and eco-warriors through violence and the digestive systems of his aliens and, basically, acting like a cosmic serial killer and freak to the point of experimenting on visitors that will not be missed. The whole procedure holding him here is a farce while the navy comes to deal with him. Unless the characters fall for his charm and help him escape that is.

Epilogue

Spaulding's is hardly the only travelling freak show in the universe though he did hold a dominant position in the market. Now, with him gone or at the very least in a weakened position the travelling showman's crown is up for grabs with many pretenders trying for it. They will attack each other, steal each other's exhibits and spend exorbitant amounts in their pursuit of the perfect exhibits. Whoever the characters hitch their wagon to will gain a large advantage over their rivals, though the struggle will be long and bloody. Even if they do not involve themselves, the events surrounding the space-carnies will cause ripples on many worlds and in many situations.

Adventure 93

Patience Is a Virtue

Description

The governing of the myriad systems is surprisingly stable and has been since expansion began. Many reasons for this have been posited over time from the economic strength of unity to the intervention of the navy at any hint of trouble.

The truth is actually somewhat more worrying. In all the time that there has been an interstellar government there has been a 'secret senate' of immortal conspirators whose webs of influence extend throughout the systems manoeuvring events to maintain both their own wealth and power and the stability of the interstellar governance that provides them with security.

These conspirators are immortal through various methods. They are unable to die from age or disease and have backups in the form of clones or copies of their memories ready to take over at a moment's notice, the instant their current primary is destroyed.

Now the secret senate has split asunder, one of the members believes that they have supremacy and that their rivals present a long term threat to their personal power and existence. The secret senate has declared war on each other and the systems are splitting along the lines of their control, a shadow war that makes little sense to anyone not in the know.

Twist

One of the immortal senators finds himself under personal attack and has no choice other than to go to the characters for help. To start with he will explain nothing of what is going on or why people are after him, he just hires them to take him to an obscure asteroid that is one of his fall-back bases of operations. If he dies there is a legacy instruction to remove a capsule from his brain and to take him to the asteroid in any case where he can be remade and his cover blown.

Twist

Naval intelligence is beginning to suspect the influence of the senate as things go wrong all across the galaxy.

They also understand that they, themselves, are compromised and so word of their revelation has not spread beyond the small strategic planning department that has worked it out. Without field agents of their own they have to turn to people like the characters to investigate several incidents and work out the connections.

Twist

The internal strife makes the settled worlds more vulnerable to pirate and alien attack. After hundreds of years of stability the border worlds now face bold incursions that cannot be countered by the navy as they are busy dealing with the internal strife. If the border worlds are to be defended then militias and mercenary navies must be raised and swiftly.

Epilogue

With the secret senate exposed and powerless and the systems split and damaged, still fractured along the lines of control of the senators, anarchy becomes a staple of galactic life. Only artificial intelligences share the senators' long-termism and with them gone the galaxy is now a much more chaotic place. The navy has been damaged and is spread out across the galaxy trying to keep order and so funds are released from the galactic coffers to hire reserves and to pay trouble-shooters to help restore order outside the core worlds.

Ideas

The various senators should meet certain stereotypical notions based on the cultures that they stem from. They should come from the earliest worlds of the galactic government and perhaps could even be based on early earth nation stereotypes.

Adventure 94

The Cupboard Was Bare

Description

Food shortages are an almost unknown problem, between high technology agricultural techniques and interstellar trade, but sometimes unforeseen events can take their turn and cause disruption that can lead to famine. Poverty can also mean that newly settled planets cannot afford the price of having foodstuffs shipped in from off world and that they must produce everything domestically. When they cannot, trouble occurs.

Mathi is a perfect agrarian world, which is what lead to its development despite its remoteness. It is a world with large land-masses dotted by great lakes and almost the entirety of the planet is covered with the growths of a tubular grass-analogue and the great herds of egg-layers that feed upon them. The local flora and fauna is inedible but other species of plant can be grown in great abundance on cleared patches of ground.

While still undergoing settlement there are some large contracts to deliver agricultural machinery and ground clearance devices and these contracts should be the things that bring the characters to Mathi. While they are there however Mathi's star undergoes a massive fluctuation sending out a deadly wave of ultraviolet radiation and a gravity distortion. Mathi is cut off from warp travel until the distortion settles out and the U.V. pulse has destroyed the crops and animals.

As time passes, food grows short...

Twist

Hungry citizens armed with hunting lasers and farming implements attempt to storm the silos in search of seed grain and other stored produce to feed their families. The mayor, sheriff and deputies will do what they can to defend the food store which may result in casualties. What side the characters might take is dependent on whether their hearts or their heads rule them.

Twist

There are reports that some of the outlying farms have turned to cannibalism as their food has run out. No deputies or trustworthy posse members can be spared

from defending and distributing the food in the town and so, the characters are asked to check what has happened and to bring some order to the outlying districts. They find that not only have a couple of the farms turned to this in desperation but that they have joined together and are raiding some of the other outlying farms in search of scraps and flesh.

Twist

The local animals and plants have also died off massively, only their eggs and seed kernels surviving, an obvious adaptation to the problem. Winds blow massive tangled messes of the brown, dead, grass-analogue around and whip up dust storms that make travel difficult and assault the town, making things even harder for the hungry and beleaguered people. Word reaches the town of a convoy of farm trucks that were heading in from a smaller, more remote, settlement carrying produce. The drivers must have been killed by the flare but some of the food may be salvageable, if you can brave the storms.

Epilogue

These U.V. pulses had not been detected before though, given the adaptation of the animal and plant life they must have been going on for a long time. Nor had the gravitic disturbances been noted before. The characters, as they are on site, are hired by an appropriate agency to investigate Mathi's star and find out why it might produce these bursts. What they find is a truly ancient device, hidden in the photosphere, left by the ancients. Getting to it should be an interesting challenge but it appears to be a 'cosmic lighthouse' sending out the U.V. pulse as a warning every time the gravitic distortion hits the star. Which means the distortions must come from somewhere else nearby, but how and why?

Adventure 95

Blastbeard's Treasure

Description

Blastbeard was a mad old loon, obsessed by the stories of piracy from old earth and more than a little space-mad from radiation exposure and long periods of solitude. He ran his pirate gang after the fashion of the old stories. While a lovable figure to those who never met him Blastbeard was a ruthless old sod that killed many, robbed, maimed and stole. When he was caught and executed by the navy there was sorrow and relief in equal measure.

One of the prisoners held with Blastbeard was later released and has come seeking out the characters for their help on a little errand. It seems Blastbeard conformed to stereotype in one final, amusing and possibly profitable way.

Buried treasure.

The prisoner has the first clue to the whereabouts of Blastbeard's hoard of 'gold' and is willing to share the information and help for a share in the wealth when it is found. So commences a mad dash across the galaxy visiting the pirate's old haunts in search for clues that will finally lead them to the asteroid that has his treasure upon it.

Twist

Not all of Blastbeard's crew were caught and executed with him and what remains of his fleet is also on the hunt for the treasure he left behind, willing and able to tear through any obstacle to find what they believe is their due. They could be a considerable obstacle for the characters and are present at each and every clue that they do manage to find, only two steps behind at any point.

Twist

The naval penal officers who held Blastbeard also managed to wring clues about the location of his treasure from him before he went to the disintegration chamber. Gathering together a small crew of other, trustworthy naval officers they have 'borrowed' a naval frigate and are also in pursuit of the treasure abusing their authority and firepower to give them an advantage

in the hunt.

Twist

Blastbeard's treasure is not credits nor jewels nor even alien artefacts. What he considered worth saving and hiding in one of the most obscure sections of the galaxy were vacuum sealed first edition copies of *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Swiss Family Robinson* which, while immeasurably old and worth a large sum are in no way the massive reward that anyone was anticipating. Unless the blasphemously underlined words in each book somehow have meaning...

Epilogue

Blastbeard's death and the re-circulated stories of his life and deeds have inspired a 'pirate revival' across the settled worlds. Pirates are receiving aid and succour where, before, they would have had none and adolescents are wearing bandanas and affecting strong pirate accents. Also infected by these stories and this attitude many pirates are striving for the image of the swashbuckling rogue and turning their backs on some of the more extreme crimes which they are associated with. Several gangs have even taken over an old and abandoned mining asteroid turning it into a free port, operating almost openly and relying on the ships docked for its defence. Run as an anarchic sort of democracy of captains. The navy cannot tolerate pirates acting openly and hires the characters to dock at this strange port, to assess its defences and then signal the navy at the best time for them to begin their attack. The pirates are of the 'rogueish' sort though and live a life much fairer than many star systems, trusting and open, can anyone bring themselves to betray them?

Adventure 96

What I Did On My Holidays.

Description

Belthansa is one of the most glorious looking systems in existence. Its star's light is pure and white, shining brightly on the planets of the system which include two ringed gas giants of beautiful colouration twinned with each other, circling each other closely, the Lagrange point between them filled with dust and debris which lights up with incandescence in auroras as the two planet's huge magnetic fields interact. Passing between these giants is the triple-mooned planet of Belthansa, itself ringed with dust and particles from the Lagrange point and with the two gas giants and the three moons battling for dominance in the night sky.

Belthansa is also home to one of the most enigmatic ancient artefacts to have been found across the worlds. A great monolith of unknown material carved intricately with patterns and code that have, as yet, remained undetermined in meaning.

The monolith stands in the shifting rainbow sands of the Quetzalcoatl desert and every midsummer night ancient worshippers and alternative culture citizens who can afford the journey make their way across the systems to Belthansa to hold a festival around the monolith.

This year there will be a fantastically rare quadruple conjunction of all three moons and one of the ringed planets, directly above the line of the monolith. This festival is going to be like no other and a group of pilgrims are willing to pay the characters an exorbitant sum for passage to Belthansa.

Twist

When the monolith and the planets line up the monolith begins to glow and the soldier caste of the ancients emerges to clear the area before surviving ancients emerge themselves, into the new light. The monolith was an escape route from something and the rare conjunction the key for their escape. They do not appear to be the benevolent race they once were, seeking to eradicate anything near their entry point. More to the point, what on earth were they running from?

Twist

So many 'space hippies' and transient alternate culture types in one place creates all too tempting a target for the sort of straight-laced conformist fanatics that like to beat up such people in normal circumstances. This festival especially is going to be heaving with drop outs and troublemakers and so a more extreme group of starched shirts is intending to ruin everything for them, even to save galactic society by destroying some of them if they can.

Twist

The journey is as important to these space-hippies as getting there. On the way they want to stop at other significant sites of ancient knowledge and artefacts, as well as telling stories of each other. They also want to hear the characters' stories which can be an excellent way of making the various characters' backgrounds known and relevant to the story.

Epilogue

Assuming you did not run the plot as the emergence of the ancients, the monolith could still have lit up, showing the more familiar hieroglyphs that scholars have worked on before. The glyphs speak of a storehouse of knowledge well beyond the settled systems, a true legacy of the ancients awaiting discovery. Being on site the characters are amongst the first in the settled systems to even hear of this storehouse. If they can get there first then they will have first rights on the knowledge and discoveries that stem from it. Provided it is intact and in one piece and provided they can get there. It is a long way through unknown systems any one of which could be trouble...

Adventure 97

Rock the Gasbah

Description

Humanity has a hard enough time getting on with each other because of incredibly minor differences such as language and skin tone. Little wonder then that, on many worlds, the true aliens are treated with even more suspicion and hatred than even human immigrants.

As has been the pattern with many other immigrant waves, the movement of alien species into human held territory has meant that the aliens have banded together in their own districts and communities away from the main hustle and bustle of human life. Even a polyp colony finds it has more in common with a trisymmetric voloid than the humans outside.

The problem with creating these alien communities is that they create an easy target and figure of hate for human supremacists and anyone else trying to make capital out of blaming aliens for various woes. Several times this tension has erupted into violence.

Nowhere have such problems and such demarcation of territory been so obvious or so problematic as at the hyperspace nexus world of Warner. Here, in the sprawling spaceport capital, is a massive alien quarter, a warren of streets with their own smells and many strange alien smells. A melting pot of cultures but also a powder keg for problems...

Twist

Stashent, a sessile Braintree with whom the characters sometimes deal in his trading shop contacts them via the data web in a distraught state. His life-partner's fruit have been stolen by a gang of human thugs who broke into the shop, vandalised his robotic assistants and then stole them. These are their children and they want them back yet they dare not go to the prejudiced human authorities and nor can they move themselves.

Twist

A Xiarn hive has recently settled in the alien quarter and the mindless worker drones have heavily undercut the going rate for basic, menial work such as street sweeping and toilet cleaning throughout the city. No company could really overlook the benefits of hiring

the hive to do their menial tasks, as it has cut their budgets for such work to about a tenth of what they were paying. The dispossessed human workers are excessively angry though and intend to march on the alien quarter to demonstrate their displeasure. They're even using their severance pay to hire some mercenaries to bolster their numbers. Maybe even the characters.

Twist

A serial killer is stalking the alien quarter, seemingly trying to slay at least one of every species that exists there. The police are not giving the matter the due seriousness it deserves and so the alien community leaders have taken a collection to hire private investigators to look into what is happening. Is it a human? Is it another alien?

Epilogue

Events within the alien quarter bring things to a head until the pressure becomes intolerable and the district begins to riot. Caught up in the riots, looting and police actions the characters must keep it together and either get out or exploit the opportunity any way they can to turn disaster into profit. Once the riots are over perhaps genuine moves will be made to integrate the alien community into the city as a whole.

Ideas

The alien quarter should contain just about every type of alien you can think of, the more bizarre and inhuman the better. It needs a real character of its own and aliens need their own motivations and psychologies. They should not just be humans with funny shaped ears.

Adventure 98

Locust Fleet

Description

The planet the characters are on is something of a frontier world and, their job done and the seeking of a new commission commencing, they begin to hear rumours of some disaster hitting a few more settled planets a bit further along the rim of civilisation's expansion. While nobody seems to know what, exactly, has happened speculation is rife from a subspace collapse to alien invasion.

Ships emerge at the edge of the system, a rag-tag fleet of traders, freighters and police vessels all showing signs of wear and tear and forming a massive stream, inbound towards the planet, apparently refugees from the worlds that have been affected by whatever happened.

The authorities on the world panic, there is no way they can accept that number of refugees, berth that number of ships or provide for the needs of either. The local system defence boats are launched, police and customs ships drawn back to form a barrier and any traders or vessels landed conscripted into helping ward off these refugees from landing.

Conditions on the refugee fleet are abysmal and deteriorating as the two fleets lock into a stalemate. Sooner or later one side is going to make a mistake or grow too desperate.

Twist

The disaster that the refugees are fleeing, whatever you decide it should be, arrives at this planet as well, forcing the blockade and the refugees to band together and pass on to another system. The former rivals and opponents now find themselves in the same position and facing another planet that wants nothing to do with either of them. Add in the leftover tensions from the previous confrontation and the situation becomes rather interesting.

Twist

A group of the more well-maintained refugee ships warps out of the system and then back in again on the opposite side, diving at breakneck speed for the

planet to attempt a fast landing, desperate to get to the surface. If the blockade is split too much then others may be able to push through and, if they are allowed to land most of the security forces are up in orbit. There may be problems on the surface. The character's ship is one of the closest with a chance to intercept. Can they really bring themselves to shoot down vessels of refugees?

Twist

The refugees abandon one of the bulk haulers that they have amongst their number and refit it, threatening to use it as a kinetic weapon on the planet's main city if they are not allowed to land. A small team will have to be smuggled aboard to disable the ship before the refugees can make good on their threat and are forced to do it. Negotiations can only go on for so long.

Epilogue

A deal is finally struck where a good number of the refugees will be taken down to the planet and the rest made to pass on. The remaining refugees want to bring the character's vessel into their number to act as an advance warning and a 'herald' of sorts to tell that they are coming so it does not form quite such a rude shock for the systems that they jump into. This means that the characters will be lumbered looking after the refugee fleet and negotiating on their behalf with various planetary authorities until the fleet is finally, completely disbanded. Other things that may get in their way are opportunistic pirates, slavers and breakdowns on the battered ships that are being used.

Ideas

This is not *Battlestar Galactica*.
These are not heroic survivors
they are rag-tag and sickly.

Adventure 99

Wrecks From Before

Description

An extremely weak radio distress signal has been detected coming from the vicinity of a small, stable, black hole between systems. The scientific institutes have nothing in the area and so the characters are hired/despached/press ganged into investigating the source of the S.O.S. signal.

Jumping into the system they discover the small black hole to be surrounded by a thin englobement of metallic junk. Their signal and several others like it, are being emitted from one 'clump' of this metallic detritus on the near side of the globe. Many small masses somewhat like small moons are also being detected.

When they approach they discover the cloud of debris to be a collection of old bombers, fighter planes, planes, space shuttles, ships and other vehicles from earth's past. Hundreds, thousands of them all reported missing at one point or another. At the centre of this cloud is the small, spherical moon-like mass of strange material marked unmistakably as the work of the ancients.

There are thousands of these clumps of metal, all of them made up of primitive vehicles and designs from many different alien cultures, still orbiting through infinity.

Twist

The moon-masses house the descendents of the captives taken in these sample missions. The moons provide for them but their knowledge of their history is limited to what is contained in a few ancient journals and computing devices and a sort of verbal lore of legends. Nonetheless they are humans and are owed some assistance and fellow feeling. Perhaps this means that all the moonlets contain aliens of these various species, some of which may now be extinct outside of here.

Twist

The moon-masses still have the people that were captured in the vehicles, kept in stasis, in storage. With a little work the characters should be able to revive

them from their suspended animation. How they will react, especially if the crew contains aliens, is hard to predict but meeting people from different eras should be a fascinating experience, some of these 'time refugees' could even be interesting characters as the campaign progresses.

Twist

A scavenger and recovery gang has staked out the massive worth of this field of trash for themselves and doesn't want anyone else nosing around the area and stealing their claim. It will take them a while to cross the massive trash field but this is their mother lode, their fortune and they will defend it to the death.

Epilogue

As word begins to get out about these worldlets and their historical legacy of people and machinery the various races descend upon the ruin-sphere to seek out these artefacts and people from their past. Some moonlets belong to no known race though. What should be done? Some may be dangerous, some races may be extinct, some may just not have been encountered yet. What should be done? There is money to be made by adventurous crews willing to investigate each trash 'bubble' and assess the people and machinery present at each. Their reports will determine which are released and aided and which are left.

Ideas

Some of the races uncovered may already be outside their containment and have settled the moonlets surviving on scavenged ancient technology and their own wits. Other races may be inherently dangerous or foul. More disturbingly there may be evidence that on the basis of this sampling the ancients wiped out many alien cultures as 'dangerous'.

Adventure 100

Who Turned Out the Lights?

Description

Sylia is an important naval outpost, a human compatible planet turned over in the majority to a naval base and support for the naval officer's families with a small civilian support structure. While currently fairly small the base also houses a research division with a skeleton, beginning level staff and is still being developed and built upon which means lots of lovely governmental delivery and fitting contracts.

This first delivery that the characters have been offered is for assorted components for the research lab, a relatively harmless cargo as a test of their efficiency and trustworthiness. Arrival is easy enough with little traffic on this world but they are subjected to a barrage of sensor probes and scans as the sensor array of the station is tested upon their craft.

The crew here are small and a lot more informal and amiable than a lot of naval officers, which is perhaps why they have been given this less important and out-of-the-way posting. They are also somewhat lax and more trusting than those at other navy posts and at the younger and more insubordinate end of the naval spectrum.

They are almost uniquely under prepared then when their star system is suddenly and without warning encapsulated in a force-bubble cutting off the stars, communications and the possibility of jumping out of the system. Somehow an escape must be found.

Twist

The englobement is an experiment being conducted secretly by the science team on behalf of the naval R&D division. The other departments are not to be told what is going on and the englobement generator is to be kept hidden. The experiment is not only to prove the technology but to test the psychological effect of being completely cut off on a substandard navy team. The field will be cut should things become too heated or problematic though the device is experimental and has several dangerous flaws which may come into play.

Twist

The test signals from the sensor array have disturbed and even harmed a race of aliens living in the system's extensive clouds of organic molecules that orbit where an asteroid band would normally exist. These are creatures of force and only the most ephemeral substance but, when threatened they can exert quite tremendous force. In their own unique way they have cut off their 'noisy neighbours' to secure themselves some peace and quiet. Finding a way out or a way to communicate with them may be the only way out.

Twist

The shield has been triggered by an ancient artefact set within its own force field on the surface of the planet. The activity on the surface reaching a certain scale has triggered it and it doesn't look like it is going to switch off anytime soon. Close to it are found a few crumbled ruins of some alien civilisation, scraps that suggest there was a large research station dedicated to examining the artefact a long, long time ago. That race never found the solution, but why were they caged?

Epilogue

The signature of the englobement is now known and several deep space scans are made searching for its specific spectra and signature. Many worlds are found that have been enclosed, deeper into this region. Why would such a powerful race able to make such technology and, apparently, travel between the stars lock up so many worlds and what lies beneath the shields of force?

Ideas

The aliens that locked people within these bubbles of force could be a force for good, shutting off problem races or they could be a force for evil, shutting out any race that they assess could be a rival.

Designers Notes

The only real guide any writer can have when working is the conceit ‘Would I find this useful?’ and ‘Would I read this?’ We have to rely on our own perceptions and ideas when writing as going by what other people think and say is not only difficult but can feel ‘wrong’, throwing off your conviction in what you’re doing and affecting your writing adversely.

Two types of gaming books have always frustrated me and have always left me feeling cheated, adventure supplements and Games Master guides. Adventure books never seemed to cover what my group wanted to do or what I wanted to do and Games Master guides always seemed full of useless information that didn’t actually help with the problems me and my group would experience. There was nothing there about how to dry out your notes when someone spilled coke or the etiquette of eating and gaming, how to get a session started, to find players, techniques for evoking mood or help in being descriptive.

I gave up on adventure modules and ever since then I’ve been practically improvising my way through every game. That suits me better. What I sometimes lack is inspiration, ideas, something to spark off a few thoughts and get me started. What I always liked were the little ideas and hooks and rumours, something that I remember seeing in *Land of the Free*, *Unknown Armies* and the back of *Baron Munchausen*. These I found useful but I felt that they could be more useful, a little more fleshing out than a single line, perhaps a paragraph, perhaps a page.

This book is born out of those thoughts and hopefully, hopefully you’ll be able to pick it up, flip through the pages and find something in at least one of these one-hundred ideas that will give you enough of an idea to run a game.

Thanks for buying it and good luck!

Grim

Author’s Biography

James ‘Grim’ Desborough is 28 and lives in Hampshire with his wife and mother (No, those are two separate people – no banjos please) while waiting for his own house to be gutted and redecorated, occasionally harassed by his brother and his brother’s fiancée and his mothers utterly neurotic cat. Living with mum fulfils his sad-geek quota so much that he is utterly cool in every other regard and woe betide anyone who says otherwise.

Grim won an Origins award for his and Steve Mortimer’s *Munchkin’s Guide to Powergaming* which, being his first work was not bad.

Works by Grim include...

100 Fantasy Adventure Seeds (Postmortem Studios)
Arcane Encyclopaedia: Nymphology (Mongoose Publishing)
Cannibal Sector One (Cubicle 7/Nightfall Games – Coming soon)
Cloak of Steel (Postmortem Studios)
LiveSRD (Postmortem Studios)
Macho Women With Guns d20 (Mongoose Publishing)
Munchkin’s Guide to Powergaming (Steve Jackson Games)
Nowhere (Official game, available for free at the Postmortem Studios website)
Slayer’s Guide to Female Gamers (Mongoose Publishing)
Slayer’s Guide to Rules Lawyers (Mongoose Publishing)
Urban Faerie (Postmortem Studios)



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