

SPACEMASTER: DATANET™

Issue #8

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Introduction

Welcome to the eighth issue of *Spacemaster Datanet*. The purpose here is to expand and improve your *Spacemaster* game, both by broadening the rules and by deepening the setting details, giving you a richer and more fulfilling game and game environment.

This time we have a lot of little tasty bits about life in space, and three articles on different aspects of the realities of outer space. We also deal with fear and influence attacks, such as those doled out by powerful psychics. We also continue to outline three campaign plots for those who'd like ideas in running a *Privateers* campaign. We'll see an NPC write up for T'clacktle, a xatosian psychic. Finally, we continue our exploration into black market technology.

Enjoy.

WARNING! All Items in this PDF should be considered optional and completely unofficial.

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1.0 FEAR AND INFLUENCE ATTACKS

“To him who is in fear, everything rustles.”
—Sophocles

This section provides guidelines on how to handle various situations in which a PC is subjected to “fear” or other types of influencing attacks.

1.1 ROLE PLAYING INFLUENCE ATTACKS

There are two ways to “role play” influence attacks. The type you use depends upon how many creative resources you have available when the situation comes up, and how well your players can separate character knowledge from their own.

SIMPLE PRESENTATION

This method should only be used if you trust your players to keep player knowledge separate from character knowledge. Basically, you simply pull a player aside or slip him a note and inform him that he has been influenced. You then rely upon him to roleplay the situation appropriately.

However, you have to remember that it is not an easy task for a player. For example, if a character has been “charmed” (via a psychic power), the player could

play his character as a friend to the NPC in question. However, when not directly involved with the NPC, the player would constantly have to struggle to not clue the other players into the fact that his character is under the psychic’s power.

INTENSE PRESENTATION

This method is a lot harder to present to the players, but produces much more realistic results. When a character has been influenced by an NPC (or situation), the GM must present things in such a way as to influence the player.

For example, if a character has just failed his Fear RR, do not simply inform the player that his character is afraid. Portray the situation in such a way as to frighten the player. It really helps if you know the fears of the player(s) involved, as you can build them into the descriptions. For example, if a psychic causes fear in a character and the party can only see its eyes, describe cold, picking at the flesh of the characters (maybe having everyone take a point of damage, just to enforce the effect). Describe whispers that are barely audible and yet somehow enticing. Describe the barely visible spiders scuttling just out of the light. In the end, you will have the *players* ready to run.

For other types of influences, you have to have intimate knowledge of the character’s background and goals. When an NPC charms a party member, have the NPC recount some childhood incident that connects them personally to the PC. This type of influence is harder to maintain (as player’s are usually very suspicious of NPCs). You may have to continually reinforce the influence with occasionally resurfacing memories.

1.2 MECHANICS OF INFLUENCE ATTACKS

All magical influence attacks should be handled through Resistance Rolls (non-psychic attacks should use the Static Maneuver Table in SM:P). To determine the exact effects of a successful influence attack (i.e. the victim failed his RR), you must know by how much the RR failed. Consult the most appropriate table below to find out the effects of the influence attack. The conditions generated by the charts below remain in effect until such a time as a new RR is called for. Note that some results indicate that another RR may be made.

Note: As the rules currently stand, there are no charm attacks in Spacemaster. There are many ways a GM could introduce them, however, including technology and drugs, so a Charm Attack chart is included here.



FEAR / AWE ATTACK CHART	
Fail by...	Result
01-10	Minor Failure: You may only operate at 75% activity (i.e., most actions will suffer a -25). You may attempt another RR in d10 rounds.
11-25	Mild Failure: You may only operate at 50% activity (i.e., most actions will suffer a -50). You may attempt another RR in d10 rounds (though this RR has a modification of -10).
26-50	Moderate Failure: You break and run from whatever caused the Fear RR. You will run for d10 rounds in a random direction (but always away from the source of the Fear RR). At the end of this time, you may approach the source again, but will suffer the same effects as the Mild Failure result above until a new RR is called for.
51 -100	Severe Failure: You are paralyzed with fear. You can perform no voluntary actions while in this state. Future RRs versus this specific attack have a modifier of -10 (until such a time as you make a successful RR versus this attack).
101+	Extreme Failure: You cannot handle it! Make another RR (versus the same attack that generated this one). If you fail this one, you suffer a heart attack. If you succeed, you simply pass out from the fright (and cannot be roused for 2d10 rounds). Future RRs against this specific attack have a modifier of -50 (until such a time as you make a successful RR versus this attack). Similar types of attacks have a modifier of -10 (until such a time as you make a successful RR versus any similar attack).

CHARM ATTACK CHART	
Fail by...	Result
01-10	Minor Failure: You believe the source of the attack is a friendly person from your past (though you may not have known the person personally; e.g., a friend of your father, etc.). You have no reason to believe this person would try to hurt you or your allies.
11-25	Mild Failure: You believe the source of the attack is a long, lost friend. Any attempts to disprove this are countered with ease. You and he revel in tales of old. You may make another RR in d10 days.
26-50	Moderate Failure: You believe the source of the attack is a long, lost best friend. You will defend him with any abilities that you possess and will side with him in any attempts to disprove his identity. You may make another RR in d10 days (but with a modification of -10).
51 -100	Severe Failure: You believe the source of the attack is your best friend. You are so excited to see him that you forget about your current companions. You will recount your deepest secrets to him. You may make another RR in d10 weeks.
101+	Extreme Failure: As Severe Failure, except you will automatically believe whatever he says. You may make another RR in d10 weeks (but with a modification of -10).



SUGGESTION ATTACK CHART

Fail by...	Result
01-10	Minor Failure: You find the request odd, but have no reason to deny it. If queried later, you will wonder why you did not question it sooner.
11-25	Mild Failure: The request is nothing unusual. You will remember the request and the person who made it, but will have to be convinced that it was anything but normal.
26-50	Moderate Failure: You will perform the requested action, but will have no memory of performing it. You will remember the person who made the request, but you will not remember actually performing the task.
51 -100	Severe Failure: You will perform the requested action, but will have no recollection of doing it. In addition, you will not even remember why you did it!
101+	Extreme Failure: As Severe Failure, except you will perform the task and believe you are doing something else. You might even be tricked into performing an action contradictory to your nature this way.

2.0 LIFE IN SPACE

“Of course I think spacers are better than everyone else. Darwin’s been weeding out the stupid ones for generations . . .”
—Last in a long line of asteroid miners

There are few things in the universe less hospitable than outer space. The harsh void. The stellar radiation. The lack of gravity. Meteors. Asteroids.

It’s a testimony to the quality of our space programs that they haven’t lost more astronauts in our explorations.

Outer space is brutal. It’s unforgiving. Only the sharpest, the quickest, and the most cautious explorers survive.

This section is devoted to the problems of life in space. Many of the actual mechanics of these systems were described in prior *Datanets*.

Note: *This section may seem rules light. The purpose here is not to give hard and fast rules on all the subjects in this section (the important ones have already appeared in past Datanets, the others are better when narrated). The purpose here is to cover subjects most GMs don’t think about when running a lower tech sf game.*

2.1 VACUUM

Vacuum is one of the greatest dangers of space exploration. Every spacecraft is just centimeters, if not millimeters, away from the hard vacuum of space. The slightest accident, the most minor slip, and some poor fool will suck vacuum. It happens every day in a space faring society. It’s every spacer’s job to make sure they don’t become that poor fool.

2.1.1 EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION

This does not refer to the tendency of deep ocean sea life to burst when rising to seal level. It is a myth that this happens to human beings.

Explosive decompression occurs when a ship loses hull integrity. When that happens, the ship tends to “burst” blowing damaged hull or bulkheads into the vacuum of space. This, naturally, exposes anything on the other side to the hard vacuum of space.

Most ships are equipped with emergency life bubbles to save those trapped in these sections. In addition, ship sections should monitor for pressure. If a section is exposed to hard vacuum, emergency doors will fall and bulkheads seal, saving the atmosphere of the rest of the ship.

2.2 TEMPERATURE

Space has no temperature. The temperature of the background radiation, the echoes of the Big Bang, is 4°K. In interstellar space, the thin hydrogen will settle to this temperature.

Farther in-system, the heat of the system’s primary stellar body will heat a ship well beyond comfortable levels. At this proximity, dumping heat becomes the problem, because even farther out, beyond the deadly stellar radiation, it’s still difficult to dump heat into the thin stellar atmosphere. Vacuum is a tremendous insulator.

Therefore, a ship needs to be capable of both heating and cooling. It needs to be able to function in a wide range of temperature extremes, though as a general rule, only specially designed ships will be able to sun dive.

2.3 FREE FALL

In some campaigns, life in space will mean life in free fall. Because of this, many characters require a special skill from the Combat Maneuvers skill category. Alien Environments is the skill of operating in, you guessed it, an alien environment. This has many possible sub skills (requiring that a character develop each separately). One of the Alien Environments sub skills, the one most relevant to this section, is Zero G Maneuvers. The Alien Environments skill restricts all other combat skills. When in that alien environment, no skill may have more effective ranks than the player has spent in his Alien Environments skill (A GM may relax it in

certain situations, such as firing a gun while strapped securely into a chair).

Therefore, most characters will want to develop this skill if they want to spend any time in space. It is absolutely a requirement for those who expect to fight in free fall.

In addition, free fall presents many new challenges to those used to being gravity bound. Liquids collect into spheres or drops. Dust and debris can foul circuits. Simple tasks like bathing and waste evacuation become a chore.

For characters with skill in Zero G maneuvers, you shouldn't barrage them with skill checks to conduct the basic tasks of day-to-day living, but someone *without* the skill is another matter. Every day they are in free fall, have them make a Zero G Maneuver. This is a Routine difficulty, but the characters have the penalties appropriate to having no skill. If they produce a result less than a Failure, have something appropriately bad happen, such as fouling a control or shorting a system (maybe even a sewage back-pressure).

2.4 INTERSTELLAR DUST

In the depth of interstellar space, the mean density of matter is one hydrogen atom per cubic centimeter. This may not seem like a lot, but scientists estimate that there is more matter in the gulf between stars than all the stars and planets and black holes put together.

In addition to this hydrogen, interstellar space has the occasional dust particle. This doesn't seem like much, until you fly into one at .5 the speed of light.

At relativistic speeds these particles have so much energy that standard ship hulls no longer have the strength to deal with these impacts. Because of this, any ship traveling at this speed requires heavy screens, a Crysteel hull, or suitably thick steel.

2.5 RADIATION

Radiation is a problem in space, a problem compounded by the fact that proper shielding requires lead, and lead quickly puts spacecraft over their mass budget. Generally speaking, a craft can only afford one section in which the crew can hide during a solar flare.

Even in the safety of our magnetosphere (but outside of the atmosphere), a person will be dosed without about 35 REM in a year. Space is dangerous and cancer-breeding.

This severely limits flight hours until one of two things happens. First of all, the effective radiation treatments might be invented (The GM will have to make a judgment call based on the tech level). On the other hand, ships might be made with shields to protect versus radiation.

2.6 SPACE SICKNESS

Once a character is thrown into zero G, it is not uncommon for their bodies to rebel. Nausea and vomiting are not uncommon at all.

Whenever a character enters free fall, have them make a resistance roll versus a level one poison attack. A failure means they're space sick. They can roll every day until the sickness passes. Space sick characters suffer a -10 penalty to all maneuvers.



3.0 REALITIES OF INTERSTELLAR SPACE

*Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Baring certain types of *ftl* travel, a great deal of time in *sf* games will be spent in interstellar space. The fact is, interstellar space is vast. It is so vast, in fact, that the odds of encountering anything there are pretty slim. But that's all right, there's very little there of interest in interstellar space to begin with.

3.1 DISTANCES

Interstellar distances are vast. They are so vast it's difficult for the human mind to get a grasp around them. For example:

The nearest star is Alpha Centauri (Proxima Centauri might be closer depending on when you read this, but since it orbits Alpha Centauri, Alpha is generally considered the nearest star). Alpha Centauri is 4.4 light years away.

That means that Alpha Centauri is 1,606 light days away (4.4×365). That translates to 38,544 light hours away ($1,606 \times 24$). Multiply that by 60 and it becomes 2,312,640 light minutes. Multiply that by 60 and it turns into 138,758,400 light seconds.

A light second is approximately 300,000 kilometers. That means that Alpha Centauri is approximately 41,627,520,000,000 kilometers away.

That's quite a distance, but is still hard to comprehend. So let's hypothesize a ship traveling at freeway speeds to our nearest neighbor (it's unlikely that we would be restricted by nuisances like gridlock and freeway construction). This vehicle will travel at 100 kilometers per hour.

This means that it would take 416,275,200,000 hours to get to Alpha Centauri ($41,627,520,000,000 / 100$). This equates to 17,344,800,000 days ($416,275,200,000 / 24$). Divide this by 365 days, and the travel time equates 47,520,000 years.

Quite a trip. Take this up to the speed of a jet, say 1,000 kilometers per hour, and this trip is still 4,752,000 years.

So space is vast. At higher speeds it does become possible to make it to another star in one's lifetime, but for all practical purposes, these distances allow three options.

Humanity can stay forever in the cradle of its birth. This means never leaving the solar system, never traveling to other stars, and never exploring brave new worlds.

Humanity can build slow boats. These ships might take generations to reach other worlds. This means that the ship must be completely self contained, capable of supporting life indefinitely.

Humanity can break the light barrier. Most campaigns will probably take this option. This allows humanity to spread out, colonize, and expand. Eventually, all of humanity's eggs will no longer be in one basket.

3.2 VACUUM VS. VOID

The void of space is not a true void. That doesn't matter much however, as its close enough to a true void that there is no practical difference.

The mean density of the interstellar void is about one hydrogen atom per cubic centimeter. That's one proton and one electron. Hardly any matter to speak of.

There are most likely other objects, rogue planets, comets, asteroids and such. The odds of encountering them, however, are pretty slim.

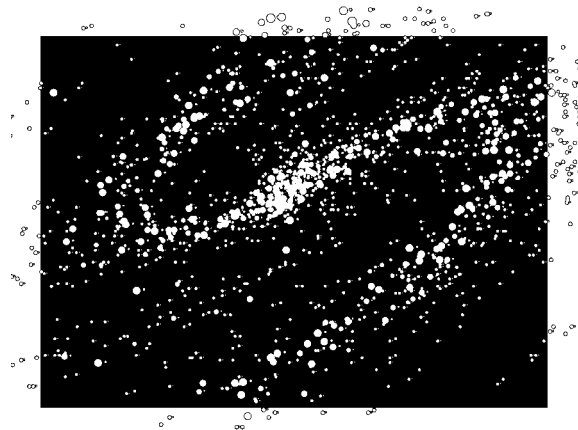
Picture a rock. A big rock. A rock with a volume of, say, one cubic kilometer. Set this rock loose in a volume of space equal to a cubic light year. What are the odds of hitting it?

A light year is 365 light days across. This equates to 8,760 light hours. Multiply this by 60 and get 525,600 light minutes. Multiply that by 60 for 31,536,000 light seconds. Again, a light second is approximately 300,000 kilometers. That means a light year is approximately 9,460,800,000,000 kilometers across. Cubing that results in a volume of space equal to 8.47×10 to the 38th power. This means that the odds of running into that rock is 1 in 8.47×10^{38} (that's 847 followed by 36 zeros).

And that's a big rock.

Therefore, space is vast, if not truly infinite, and all the matter within it is very finite. This adds up to being about as close to empty as man can imagine.

This might have seemed little more than an exercise in numbers, but it makes an important point. It's fun to envision scenes of ships racing through dangerously cluttered asteroid fields, but in reality, the asteroid field could be a million times denser than normal space and you still would have long odds to hit anything. If that's the kind of game you're playing, please, ignore the science, but if you're striving for accuracy, keep in mind the true emptiness of space.



4.0 ARTIFICIAL WORLDS

“That’s no moon . . .”

— *A Crazy Old Wizard*

As humanity expands into space, it is likely they will not find habitable worlds. Sometimes this will mean building places to inhabit. Sometimes it will mean traveling in ships which are worlds in and of themselves.

4.1 SPACE STATIONS

Many systems will have value that transcends their lack of habitable worlds. Mining rights, strategic defense, recon outposts. These may very well need to be built.

The most likely form will be that of a space station. A space station is a large, pressurized building.

A space station can be constructed with many purposes, and these purposes will influence their designs. Battlestations will bristle with weapons and screens. Research stations will be filled with labs and scientific equipment. Recon stations would be filled with sensor and surveillance equipment.

One of the main advantages in a space station is that they can be spun for gravity. This utilizes centrifugal effect to simulate gravity.

Space stations become possible as soon as space travel is possible. This makes them tech level 15 and up.

4.2 COLONY SHIPS

Space is vast, and even at a constant acceleration of 1 G, it would take decades to reach the nearest star. Because of this, colony ships in a *pre-ftl* society would need to be tiny worlds unto themselves.

It’s the sheer time involvement which causes such trouble. Unless the passengers are frozen, it is unlikely that the colony ship will be able to carry enough consumables to sustain the crew for such a long trip.

Therefore, colony ships would need to be fully enclosed ecospheres. This is necessary for two reasons. First of all, they must be able to support the crew. Second of all, it may be necessary to transfer this microcosm planetside when they arrive. It may be all that keeps them alive.

This microcosm must be absolutely complete. It must contain all the topsoil, insect, and bacteria necessary to perpetuate crops. Rotating crops will probably be necessary. This technology is tech level 17 or better (we are just starting to truly experiment with it).

4.3 TERRAFORMING

Terraforming is tricky business. The fewer raw materials on hand, the trickier it becomes. Terraforming, in its earliest forms, becomes possible about tech level 17.

Terraforming is a big subject. It is different for each world. To terraform a planet a battalion of scientists and an almost endless stream of resources are necessary. The science must be reinvented for each world on which it is used.

4.4 RINGWORLDS

This idea is owed to the *sf* writer Larry Niven. The ringworld is a less costly version of the Dyson sphere.

In essence it is a ring the size of the orbit of the Earth. It is a million miles wide and a thousand miles thick. It is spun at tremendous speeds to simulate gravity. This ring is so large that the Coriolis effect would be almost undetectable.

The inside of this ring is inhabited. With thousand mile high walls, very little air would spill over the edges. This is engineering on the grandest scale, the penultimate artificial world ever conceived (see 4.5 for the ultimate). It has nearly limitless land area and would be costly beyond human imaginings. It would require tech level 28 technology.

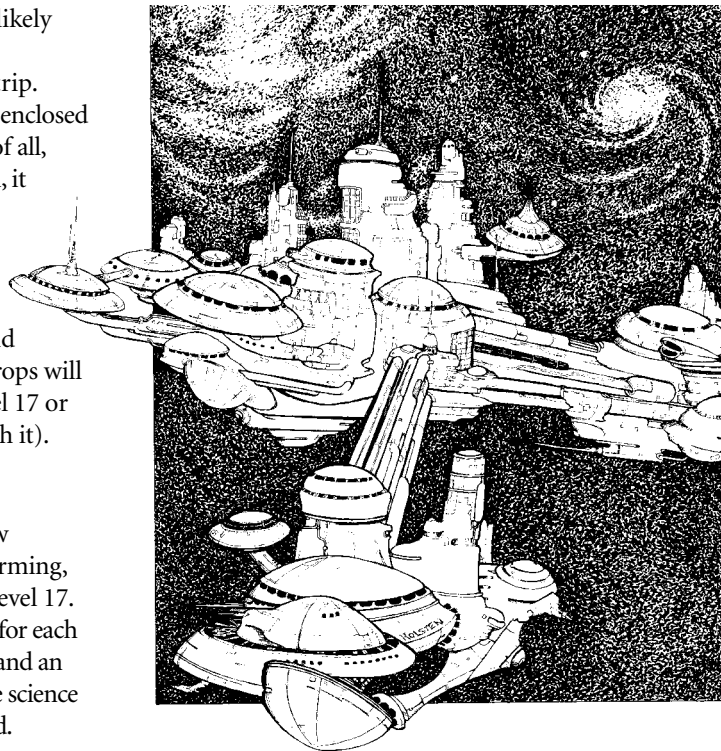
4.5 DYSON SPHERES

The Dyson sphere is the ultimate of all the grand construction projects. It is the greatest conservator of energy.

Dyson’s idea was this: Enclose the sun in a sphere with the diameter of Earth’s orbit. This allows for total harnessing of the sun’s power and provides more land than the human mind can imagine.

This is the ultimate of all space stations. It is a world of tremendous proportions and tremendous cost.

The primary problem with a Dyson sphere is gravity. Without some form of artificial gravity, it is impossible to convince life to cling to the sides of this sphere. This project is therefore impractical until zero fault technology becomes possible (which is okay since it’s a tech level 28 construct).



5.0 NPC: T'CLACKTLE

Age: 53
Eyes: Black.
Hair: None.
Build: Large.
Height: 356 cm.
Race/Sex: Xatosian.
Skin: Gray.
Demeanor: Quiet, unsettling.
Dress: Utility.
True Attitude: Curious.
Home: Stands the Wall.
Hits: 57.
Melee: -13.
Missile: -3.
AT(DB): 11 (30).
Shield: None.
MP: 71.
Lvl: 7.

Profession: Psychic. **Stats:** Ag-92(+9); Co-70 (-1); Me-90 (+9); Re-90(+8); SD-94(+17); Em-97(+3); In-77 (+1); Pr-99 (+9); Qu-91 (+10); St-75(+4). AP: 65.

Skill Bonuses: ArmH -2; ArmL -2; ArmM -2; ArtA -3; ArtP -11; AthB -12; AthE -7; AthG 4; AwarP 33 (Alert 37, SenAmb 36); AwarSch 28; AwarSen 18; ComMan 19; Comm 23 (Species Standard Spoken 6 Written 6, Xatosian Spoken 8 Written 4); Cra 18; DP 49; In 14; LorA 35 (CultL 53, Hist 50, Philosophy 62, Sociology 56); LorG 23 (RegL 41); LorT 2; MAST -2; MASw -2; OutA -3; OutE 3; SciAB 2; SciAE 2; SciAM 2; SciAS 17; SCon 43; SpecA 13; SpecD 0; SubA 11; SubM -5; SubS 11; TechGen 23; TechG -5; TechP 17; TechVeh 2; TechVoc 10; Urb -5; Weap1HE 3; Weap1HF -2; Weap1HM -2; Weap2HE 3; Weap2HF -2; Weap2HM -2; WeapMT -2; WeapS -2.

Powers: Directed Powers OB: 94 (Kinetic Bolt). **Psychic • Healing (18) 81:** (Bio-Reg 94, Bio-Reg (Reverse) 94, Cut Rep 99, Cut Rep (Self) 89, Cut Rep (Reverse) 89, Disruption 94, Organ Rep 99, Organ Rep (Self) 89, Organ Rep (Reverse) 89, Pain 94, Psychic Surgery 104, Psychic Surgery (Reverse) 94, Regen 109, Regen (Self) 89, Regen (Reverse) 94, Skel Rep 99, Skel Rep (Self) 108, Skel Rep (Reverse) 89, Stun Rel 113, Stun Rel (Self) 108, Stun Rel (Reverse) 103, Tissue Rep 99, Tissue Rep (Self) 89, Tissue Rep (Reverse) 89. **Psychic • Psychokinesis (18) 77:** Kin Bolt 96, Psycho Field 91, Psycho Shield 91, Psycho Wall 91, Telekinesis 96. **Psychic • Telepathy (31) 84:** Behavior Trig 158, Concealment 150, Confusion 158, Control 158, Detection 152, Empathy 152, Illusion 152, Memory Alteration 158, Mind Death 158, Mind Defense 163, Mind Shield 163, Mind Store 149, Mind Trap 147, Paralyze 161,

Probe 155, Sense Destruction 155, Sleep 161, Suggestion 149, Tele-R 167, Tele-S 173, Telethesia 149.

T'clacktle was born on Klackatackar, lost among the billions of other males just like him. He was unable to stand out among this hive or even among his brothers. Eventually, he realized that he would have to do something different if he was to make his mark.

He left Klackatackar and moved to Hassus. Then he joined the military. He could have joined the military on Klackatackar as well, but he felt that even there he would be lost. On Hassus, with its lower xatosian population, he became an instant star and rose through the ranks quickly. He became a military cop and while he didn't use his powers to investigate, they proved more than enough to subdue criminals.

When the war broke out, he moved into a combat unit, which served well until the second year, by which time he'd integrated so fully with the minds of his squad that they had become a new hive. When they were killed, leaving him the only survivor, he was shattered. For a year, he lay in a catatonic state, and when he finally crawled out with the help of a queen, the Marines gave him a medical discharge.

Since then he has rejoined the war effort as a privateer. He's withdrawn, now, afraid to lose another group. And so he drifts from crew to crew, never quite fitting in. He's still searching, he just doesn't know what he's searching for.



6.0 CAMPAIGN PLANS

The universe of the *Privateers* is a big place. Three issues ago, we outlined the beginning of three different campaign ideas for the *Privateers* universe. There you received guidance on tone, concept, and characters. You also read the first adventure for each of these campaigns, the one that sets the tone and nature of everything that will follow. Last issue, you saw the third adventure.

Below, we continue these three campaigns. Each of these campaigns has a different focus and a different feel. In this issue of the *Datanet*, we pick up where the last left off, perhaps after one or two follow-up adventures you ran while waiting for this issue to release. We also outline a fourth major adventure in broad strokes and give you several ideas for connecting to the next *Datanet*. Playing like that and filling in to your group's taste, you should be able to run a campaign with enough material for months or even years.

Each adventure below breaks down not by location, but by dramatic story points. We give you Setup, Complication, Twist, Reveal, Climax, and Falling Action. Run through these six points, and you'll have a narrative arc.

Setup is the beginning of the adventure, complete with background, inciting action, and instructions on how to get the PCs involved. In the complication, the adventure takes a painful turn, upping the threat and often widening the scope. In the twist, the story takes off in a new direction, shaking the character's perceptions of the issues involved. The reveal is the epiphany which shows the characters what's going on. The climax is the final dramatic confrontation. The falling actions deals with the implications of everything that's gone before.

One final note. These adventures begin act two of their overarching stories. As such, by the end of these adventures, the characters should be firmly on the road of their individual campaigns.

6.1 THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN

This is the most obvious type of campaign for a war setting, but the privateering concept of the *Privateers* universe allows for a new twist. In this campaign, the characters began as semi-free agents working for the military. While their missions and orders come down from on high, when they weren't marching to the orders of a general, they were free of the normal strictures of military service. All that recently changed.

This is the type of campaign shown in the official *Privateers* fiction.

Note: *This adventure has an unusual structure. It's essentially an extended battle scene. You could run this as a short, one session affair. If you want it to last longer, you need to keep an eye on pacing and structure. Running four sessions of one battle*

would just be exhausting. Instead, run it as a series of battles, with lulls and moments of respite. Give the characters time to react and catch their breath as the fight ebbs and flows. You might want to watch some movies that depict extended battles for inspiration, such as We Were Soldiers.

FOURTH ADVENTURE: BACK IN THE FIRE

Setup: For the past weeks, the characters have served as guards for the artifact pieces. For some time, the artifacts haven't caused any major issues with the research staff. Some think this is a coincidence. Others think that the artifact pieces are simply done trying to manipulate those around them. The final group thinks that it's only the player characters that keep the danger at bay. Pressure mounts to release the characters to their former duties, but in the end, they are simply too important where they are.

However, danger mounts in the space around the base. A probe from Jeronan forces bites deeply into ISC space and soon the research base itself is threatened. A small fleet flies into the system, but it isn't small enough to ensure victory. The base's defense forces rise into space. The party must follow them, should they want to survive.

The skies above the base are already thick with enemy ships. The characters roar into battle, and it seems that this will be a straightforward fight, albeit a difficult one.

Complication: The battle is difficult, and the party realizes that they have a trial ahead of them. Then, in the middle of the fight, the party finds their ship teleported to the edge of the battle, throwing their tactics into disarray. The characters are just getting back into things when they find themselves teleported again. The defenders fall into a bit of a disarray with this sudden change in the battle line and the characters find themselves up against fresh opponents. They get back into the thick of things and just when they start to regain the upper hand, it happens again.

You must use a deft hand in portraying this, and it takes a sense of your table to determine when to move to the next section. The issue here is the pattern of these teleports are the reveal before the climax. If the players make sense of it too early, it will mess with your dramatic arc. Once the players start throwing around the artifact pieces as a possible cause, move to the next section.

Twist: Suddenly the base control contacts the party's ship in a panic, demanding their status. There will probably be a moment or two of confusion as the characters assume this is about the teleporting, but it isn't. Control reports that both times they lost sight of the party on their scopes there was a reactor surge on the ship (they think they just lost sight of the ship for a time, not that it actually teleported). Now they see a slow, angry build of energy and they fear the ship has a damaged power plant or engines. Nothing comes up on the ship's damage control computers, and so they haven't

noticed it (they don't often scan themselves in the middle of combat). If they sweep the ship now, though, they find an energy spike, and it's coming from the engine room, but not the engines or the reactor.

When they investigate they find the two artifact pieces in a locker, humming angrily. If the party pays attention to such things, they seem to be reacting to the violence of the battle, surging and ebbing with the tides of the fighting. But that's not the real issue. The real issue is those pieces are supposed to be back on the base. In fact, the base sensors show that they are still there. If someone on the base investigates personally, however, they find the pieces gone.

Reveal: The battle continues, and at this point, the base orders the characters to return the artifact pieces immediately . . . they are far too valuable to risk in combat. The party might try, but the things are going completely nuts now, teleporting the entire ship over and over again. It's easy to lose track of direction in the middle of the space battle, so while it's easy to see they keep being transported to space near the edge, they only now see the real pattern. The artifact pieces are trying to move them in a single *direction*.

Climax: There's nothing for it. Every attempt to move back toward the planet causes the artifact to teleport them again. If they fight in the area where they keep appearing, they can at least have continuity of battle. As the defense fleet crumbles, the remaining attacking ships fall on them and now it's a huge battle against overwhelming odds. In fact, the battle seems to be unwinnable, but the artifact pieces burn with energy now . . . they seem to be roaring out of control. This begins to have side effects on the ship which aid it in battle. Maybe the guns raise a mark for no reason. Maybe the shields double in effectiveness. Tailor the effects

to the ship, but they should be just enough to make the battle winnable. All the while, the artifact pieces let out an angry shriek that strains the psyche of everyone on board, building and building until the last shot is fired in anger.

Then, silence.

Falling Action: The Artifact Pieces aren't all powerful. With the end of the battle they fall completely dormant. The characters are able to fly back to the base and lock the things up again, but by now it should be obvious . . . the pieces want something. The technology of them is so beyond anything the ISC has seen, it's hard to tell if they are machine intelligence or some kind of psychic residue, but they have a desire and so far, it hasn't been fulfilled.

The brass will study the Artifact Pieces while repairing the ship. Reinforcements arrive. Things go back to normal. But everyone is sure of something. They don't have enough data to know *where* the pieces were trying to lead the party. But their destiny lies out there, toward Jeronan space.

Follow Up Adventures: In the aftermath of the battle, the party might just end up waiting around (for instance, if you wish to move straight into the adventure outline in *Datanet 9*). Or they might find any number of adventures in their base. Maybe a half-crazed psychic tries to mentally contact the artifact, and its alien power plus his own madness combine in a terror that turns him into a psychic monster. Perhaps the thing begins to whisper into the characters' minds when they sleep, feeding on their own fears and making living nightmares. People in the know refuse to admit that the ISC has found artifacts in the past, but they all seem convinced that the artifact isn't itself malevolent; it's just reacting badly to the evils in the people it contacts. Other dreams could be more sedate, with characters going out into the universe, living interesting lives under alien suns, in bodies they

can never quite remember. If you use these ideas, try to make the Artifact Pieces look like tools, neither good nor evil . . . just immensely powerful contraptions that the Seven Races can't understand.

On a more mundane vein, things could revolve around politics. The base commander could be suddenly removed, or demoted, or even blackmailed. There aren't many people in the know about the Artifact Pieces, but those who are become *very* anxious to hitch their stars to this project. In fact, getting a really despicable person in charge of things during this interim might have satisfying fallout down the road.



6.2 THE PRIVATEER CAMPAIGN

The Privateer Campaign is the default of the setting. Here, the characters have a ship, say a small freighter or stripped out gunship. The government approves their license and installs a mark 10 laser cannon on their ship. They then press out into the universe to attack Jeronan shipping and help the war effort.

FOURTH ADVENTURE: CRISES POINT

Setup: The characters have had some time to rebuild bridges with Llewelyn. If necessary, he got them some cakewalk jobs and by now they should be feeling fairly warm and fuzzy where he's concerned. So when he comes to them with a new mission, they should be interested. If not, he offers enough money to *make* them interested. Presumably, he's only made it out of a few of the recent scrapes due to aid from the characters.

The mission is as simple as it is dangerous. They and three other privateer groups will hit a waystation orbiting a nearby sun. It's a Jeronan supply outpost, placed in a lifeless system because ISC ships don't recon lifeless systems without reason. Llewelyn only knows about this one because a friend of his in the DSA picked up a quantum comm signal originating from the station. According to SigInt, the place holds munitions supplies. Better yet, it holds captured ISC munitions supplies. This means that anything the privateers steal is already compatible with the tech in their own ships.

The mission: hit the place, steal heavy lifters to move the gear, and load up. Waystations like this should have a good guard, but not so good as to make the characters' job impossible. And what's a pirate king without a tussle now and then.

Complication: They know nothing of codes necessary to enter this station, so they just burn straight in. During their insystem transit, the base spots them and sends several threatening transmissions. This is to be expected and Llewelyn tells the ships to keep formation and be ready for dug-in security forces. He has a plan.

His plan is simple. After defeating the station's defense ships, the privateers scream in under full power, doing everything they can to get the attention of the station personnel. At the same time the characters and the other crews launch in breaching pods with high levels of passive EW. They manage to hit the station and latch on without drawing attention. The autocutters pierce the hull and the ships drop the characters into a maintenance bay. Llewelyn's guesses based on inbound scans were correct. He got them right where the heavy lifters are stored.

The party goes forward in heavy lifters, heading for the main supply bay. The other ships form a defensive line on the party's flanks and rear. The party must shoot their way into the bay, gather anything that looks deadly and expensive, and cart it back here, where they will load it on several cargo breachers. He's only sad they couldn't cut straight into the main supply bay.

As the party moves a long, they run into a few security forces . . . nothing difficult, just enough to get them used to the look of the uniforms. Then they come across an entire squad heading out of the armories. They're regular imperial troops by their dress. When the fight is over, the characters should realize that there's more than just security forces here. A little investigation or interrogations reveals the truth. This is also a waypoint for the Jeronan soldiers. There are *hundreds* of regular troops here.

And they are all active.

Twist: Things heat up and the characters push into more organized resistance. Still, they manage to reach the supply bay without too much trouble. For all the fury of these Jeronans, Llewelyn's plan is good and he's perfectly positioned the lines between the party and the bulk of the station defenders.

It's then the left flank collapses.

Actually, it doesn't just collapse, it vanishes completely.

The characters have one load of gear, but as they push out, they hit heavy, building resistance. They can't worry any more about getting out rich. Now it's just a battle to get out.

Reveal: The characters fight through line after line of Jeronan troops until they recognize a figure in their midst. It's one of the Privateer captains, leading Jeronan troops. They soon realize that the man was a psychic spy, his old personality dead. If they don't get it themselves, a party psychic might notice a difference in the man's mind.

The implications are clear. Maybe the Jeronans didn't know about this raid, but they know about Llewelyn and they planted spies near him, in an attempt to stop him from succeeding. But for now, the party needs to live to fight another day.

Climax: The climax comes as the characters crash into the maintenance bay. Here Llewelyn and the remaining crew fight a holding battle as they wait for the party. They could have escaped on their own, but they didn't, and now they have something of an exit landing zone cleared and waiting.

This battle is brutal and deadly. Equipment explodes, people die, and in the end, the party should be on its last legs as they climb into the breaching pods and close the door.

Then release, venting that part of the station to space.

Falling Action: The characters escape. They're loot isn't tremendous, but their cut is decent and their ship should get some nice upgrades. Llewelyn is worried. Now that one of his captains has turned on him, he doesn't know who to trust. He expresses as much to the party, as he's relatively certain if one of them were a spy, they could have ended that whole operation.

Llewelyn will do some solo missions over the next bit and give the party intelligence of other locales he can't hit. Still, he's become more withdrawn. Suspicious. Paranoid.

Follow Up Adventures: The solo missions mentioned above make for good follow ups. During this time, play up Llewelyn's slow degeneration into darkness. Don't make him mad, but show how these events wear at him.

6.3 THE CRIMINAL CAMPAIGN

In the criminal campaign, we head off into different territory. While most games in the *Privateers* universe involve the war (it's the biggest source of conflict, after all), there's still many other things going on in a nation the size of the ISC.

FOURTH ADVENTURE: FACTORY HEIST

Setup: Much has happened since the characters last took on the mafia. The use of the new drug has grown through the city, and it's so addictive that the death rate hasn't hurt sales at all. Things become worse in the bad parts of the cities. Crime soars out of control, but not in the way that makes things easier for the characters. It's *dangerous* out there now.

As this adventure begins, things go from bad to worse. Begin with the characters on a simple job, say breaking into an office building to do a little corporate espionage. In the middle of this job, a war breaks out in the lobby, calling in not only the police but putting the PCs in danger as well. The war is a spill over from a high speed fight between two gangs, both strung out on the drug, who crashed their vehicles here and have taken up combat positions inside. The characters will need to either sneak or fight their way out. It should be clear now that this drug problem has to be stopped.

Complication: The characters are approached by the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (a descendent of the modern FBI, with the same basic duties). They present the characters with evidence of their crimes (maybe caused by fallout from the shootout). They offer the PCs a choice. They will give the PCs immunity (from the crimes they know about) if the PCs will break into the factory suspected of making the drug and come out with proof the BCI can use as evidence. The immunity is post-dated, so the BCI will actually "catch" the characters the day after breaking into the factory and therefore obtain the evidence in a legal fashion. It's shady, but the agents look harried and the news shows keep getting worse, so the characters should believe the agents are on the up and up.

Note: *They aren't. In fact, they aren't BCI Agents. Do nothing to let the players know. This is actually a hook into the next adventure.*

Twist: The characters break into the factory to get information. The place seems to be moving a lot of equipment around. It isn't currently producing, but there are crates of the drug at the loading docks. The characters break through security and likely snatch samples and computer files. But something is wrong about all the activity here.

Reveal: They are about ready to leave when they see a truck come. The factory workers load both drugs and *equipment* onto the truck. They aren't shipping away the drug, they are shipping away the entire factory. If the party wants to stop this, they'll have to do more than steal evidence. There will be no trace of these drugs here in the morning.

Climax: The characters can rig the factory for a fire or an explosion using the chemicals there on the scene. They should probably be discovered, leading to a big shoot out, or their escape should be very complex and tense, depending on the tastes of the players and what they find climactic. In the end, the factory should be all but destroyed.

Falling Action: the BCI agents are very pleased with how things turned out. They hold on to the immunities, however, obviously to have a hold over the characters in the future. However, in the coming days, the drug problem becomes worse, not better. The destruction of the factory didn't even put a dent in the operation.

Follow Up Adventures: Fill the intervening time with quiet jobs while building the tension of the drug problem. If the characters decide to take matters into their own hands, let them get some victories against the drug trade and let them see progress, but don't give them the opportunity for that big hit they need to shut things down.

7.0 BLACK MARKET TECH

The following data is hot off the most carefully concealed black market site. It is classified FOUO (For Office Use Only).

ASSAULT CRAFT

You can't buy these through a legal venue? Then I'm your man, Kiddie.

BREACHING POD

Crew: 1

Cargo: 30 Kiloliters (10 tons)

Mass: 247.2 Tons

Hits: 272

CAT: XI

Vacuum Power Rating: 142 (0)

DB: 110

Armor Belt: 10

Defensive Screens: 50

Evade Program: 50

2 Decoys

Rating 3 PD, 3 Attacks

EW: 25/25

Cost: \$7,522,859

Top Speed: 19.03 G's

Translight Capability: None

Atmospheric Capability: Full

Armament: Not standard

Features: Basic Sensor Suite

Microfrequency Comm Rig

Tightbeam Comm Rig

Breaching Couple

Commentary: The breaching pod is a high-speed troop transport. It attaches to the side of a ship or station, where the couple cuts through, connecting the interior of the pod with the interior of the ship. This takes about one minute for CAT XI, two for XII, three for XIII, etc. The breaching pod seats 24.

STEALTH BREACHING POD

Crew: 1
Cargo: 30 Kiloliters (10 tons)
Mass: 247.2 Tons
Hits: 272
CAT: XI
Vacuum Power Rating: 142 (0)
DB: 110
Armor Belt: 10
Defensive Screens: 50
Evade Program: 50
2 Decoys
Rating 3 PD, 3 Attacks

EW: 75/25

Cost: \$8,022,859

Top Speed: 19.03 G's

Translight Capability: None

Atmospheric Capability: Full

Armament: Not standard

Features: Basic Sensor Suite

Microfrequency Comm Rig

Tightbeam Comm Rig

Breaching Couple

Commentary: This is a stealth version of the breaching pod, meant to elude enemy sensors when there isn't a tremendous space battle to confuse matters.

CARGO BREACHING POD

Crew: 1
Cargo: 309 Kiloliters (103 tons)
Mass: 247.2 Tons
Hits: 272
CAT: XI
Vacuum Power Rating: 142 (0)
DB: 110
Armor Belt: 10
Defensive Screens: 50
Evade Program: 50
2 Decoys
Rating 3 PD, 3 Attacks

EW: 75/25

Cost: \$8,010,354

Top Speed: 19.03 G's

Translight Capability: None

Atmospheric Capability: Full

Armament: Not standard

Features: Basic Sensor Suite

Microfrequency Comm Rig

Tightbeam Comm Rig

Breaching Couple

Commentary: This is a cargo version of the stealth breaching pod. The seats have been swapped out for cargo.

HEAVY LIFTERS

HEAVY LIFTER

You got something big you wanna move? This is it. Halfway between a fork lift and a suit of armor, this baby really gets the job done. Hell, I don't even need to charge you extra, 'cause it's perfectly legal. It's pricey, though. You might wanna buy an actual fork lift.

We sell those too.

Game Mechanics: *The Heavy Lifter looks like powered armor but protects like combat armor. Those inside cannot move faster than 15 meters/round. With gyros, actuators and stabilizers, it allows the person inside to lift up to 5 tons.*

Base Cost: 1 Million.

