# G1405.1 – Digital Gods

(Or, "Since when do robots go to church?")

Designed for use with Star Frontiers

GagMen Episode 16

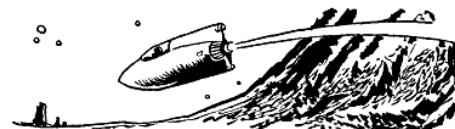Written by the GagMen on the GagMen Adventure Writing Podcast

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# Introduction

This adventure was written for use with *Star Frontier* by TSR, and was created on the GagMen RPG Podcast Episode 16. The GagMen Podcast is designed to help the beleaguered DM looking for material to liven up a game or save him a night of planning. We hope you and your players enjoy the game, and be sure to look for us the next time you need some help or a laugh. As always, feel free to modify the adventure to suit your own campaign and game mastering style, and when you do let us know about it at shutup@gagmen.net.
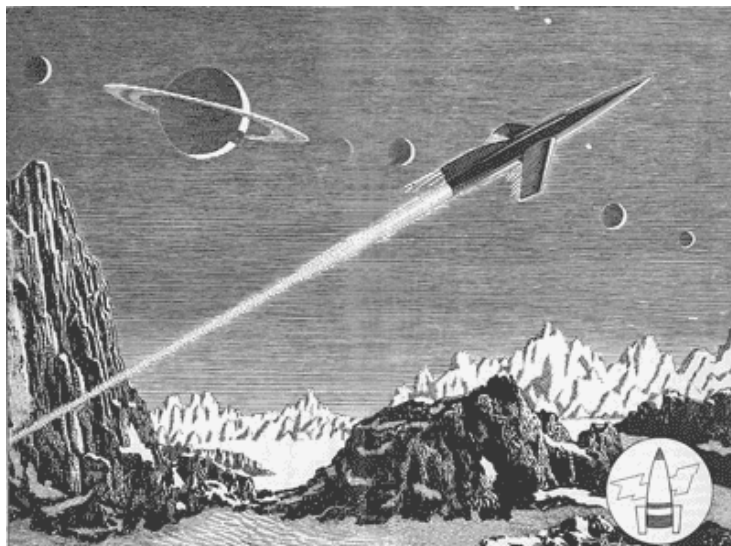
The GagMen are blissfully unaware of any strategies for Candy Crush. No actual robots were harmed in the writing of this adventure, though a gungan was sacrificed before every writing session. Over-exposure to the GagMen could result in excessive awesomeness. The GagMen are not an FDA approved treatment for any condition, though researchers admit that they couldn't hurt… much. In case of emergency, please do not break the GagMen. Suing the GagMen is only encouraged if one has the great desire to donate money to a lawyer without any return. Please do not feed the GagMen to any child under four, as allergic reaction and cannibalism may occur. This adventure is for entertainment purposes only, and cannot be used as rocket propellant.

## Summary

Blazing through the galaxy in a gleaming ship, our intrepid heroes desperately struggle to outrun the ruthless Scape Pirate Captain Zartok and his crew of celestial scallywags! While they manage a daring escape, the party finds themselves out of fuel and adrift in a sea of stars. With few options, the crew lands on a mysteriously quiet mining station to refuel and repair. But when a religiously passionate group of robots meets them at the airlock, the mystery begins! Where is the Human crew of the station? What is the enigmatic organism at war with the robots? Does the Mainframe really store the robot's digital Gods? Our heroes' search for the truth has only begun, but they better hurry, for Captain Zartok is on their trail!
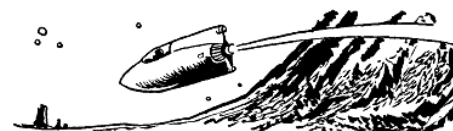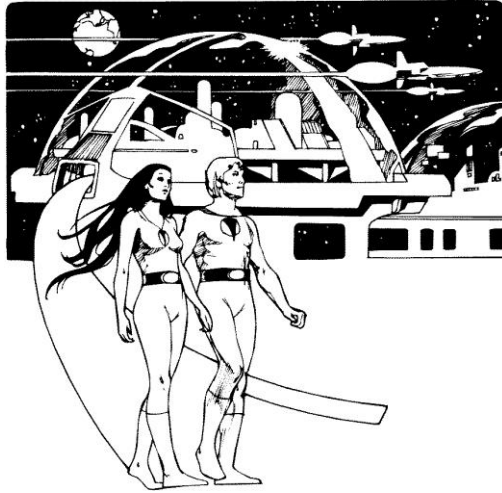
## Theme/Setting

### Space 1970

Our adventure takes place in the classic future of 60's and 70's sci-fi. For the average person, the modern age of science-fiction started with the cinematic release of Star Wars by George Lucas in 1977. However science fiction was already experiencing something of a renaissance. Science-fiction has always existed since the beginning of time and on; when the Greeks wrote of gods walking among us, and Mary Shelley wrote about a creature created from parts, or when Buster Crabbe donned the garb of Flash Gordon, human imagination has always reached into the fantastical to explore the possibilities of the world around us.

During the seventies, the America hit a slump in the economy and escapism became a popular pastime, which made a perfect breeding ground for flashy ideas and hope for the future. While the desire to bring about the future and see it dawn was ever presence, our actual technological ability to do so lagged far behind. This gap didn't stop the writer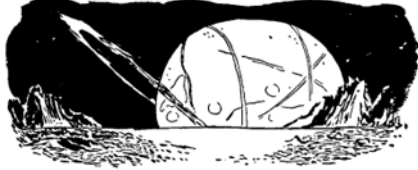s, and it gave birth to the unique style and perspective of seventies science-fiction. This new sci-fi world was gritty and real, lived in. Gone were the multi-colored spandex suits and flashy helmets of yesteryear. New sci-fi heroes were recognizably human and flawed, and many of their challenges and motivations were familiar. The science itself took a backseat to the story and the drama. While many films of this era borrowed from the golden age of the 40's, the presentation was all seventies grit and style.

The universe your characters will explore is old, run down, and a little scary. Robots with be clunky, run with computer tape and early digital technology and led lights. The pirates we're using will be more in the mold of



classic space pirates. Take a little Han solo, throw in some Buccaneer Pirate, and stir well with leather clad biker, and you'll have our pirates. They should be rough, but reluctantly likable.

The technology of this world should be complicated looking enough to pass inspection, but still lean toward style over function. Size should also be an issue: everything natural or alien is big and grand, almost as if to emphasize the insignificance of humanity, while human

constructs are shiny and crisp. Glass domes, curves, chrome panels, blinking lights and the occasional lens flair help dial in the sense of wonder.

### Trying to save your Booty

Set on the great space frontier, the party finds their ship "out of gas" after escaping space pirates, and must limp along to the nearest port. After an intense chase through a meteorite shower, the party ignited the bulk of their fuel on the front of the pirate's ship. While this certainly freed them of the pirates, it left the group rowing for the old Mentzer Space Station. The space station is populated entirely
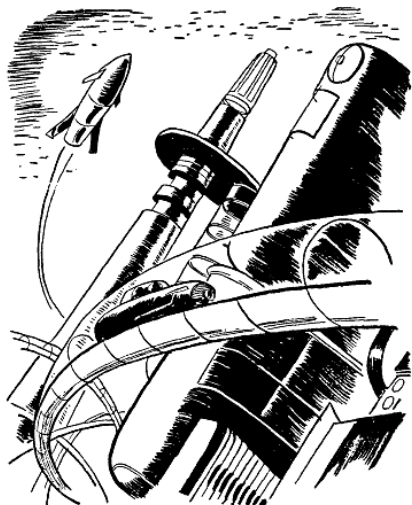


by robots that fight a centuries old battle against a space parasite that has been slowly taking over the station.

### Mentzer Space Station

The Mentzer Space Station orbits a small yellow star and is believed by historians to have been used as an asteroid mining station. The history of the station is unclear, as all human inhabitants died off centuries ago, leaving the station to be run by robots for the last hundred years. The parasites appeared at about the same time the original crew disappeared. While some of these robots believe that their original masters were destroyed by these parasites, other robots believe that the humans evolved into beings of true data, and are stored in the computer banks onboard the station.

## Plot

### The Pre-Plot



While transporting cargo from Giddian's Star to the Arkonian System, the party comes under attack by Captain Zartok and his crew of celestial scallywags. The pirates have heard of a precious and valuable cargo being transported through the area, and they suspect the Party may be the ship they're looking for. Whether this is true or not, Zartok has a personal vendetta to settle with one of the players, so the possibility of booty is just a bonus. The pirates will ambush them outside of the Keelig System, an old asteroid field circling a red giant star. The adventurer's ship should take damage
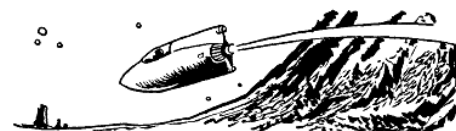
and seek refuge inside the asteroid field or try to evade them inside the asteroid field.
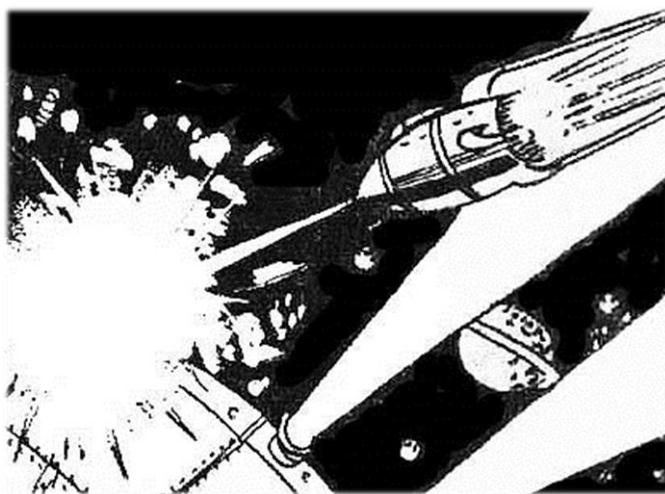
A thousand years before, the Keelig system was a thriving star system with three unique and fully populated planets. These three planets were always at odds politically, and inevitably went to war. The three planet governments eventually developed weapons of mutually assured destruction, and now all that is left of these three cultures is a small asteroid bound space station overrun with parasites and robots.

Once the chase begins, the party should devise a plan to lose the pirates. They could use the asteroids to play an elaborate game of hide and seek, or they could try to lead the pirates down a blind corridor and forcing them to spin into another asteroid with a crash.

The preferred method would be to somehow get the party to burn their fuel right on the nose of the pirate ship, expending the hero's fuel, and scrambling and melting down the primary systems on the pirate ship. Is this campy and a little railroady? You betcha! But it is also a classic seventies science fiction plot device. While you may have to force the players to leave the ship adventures to explore the station, remind them that this is only the start of the adventure.

The adventure has several tense moments meant to build mood, suspense, or even action. Suspense or mystery will be best served in you build up and really the robot folktales to the players, making the climax that much more important. The party should be on edge throughout their time trapped on a rotting space station. If you want an exciting start to the adventure, then begin with the pirate attack. Otherwise, feel free to start at the station after the party has landing, and fill them in on prior events.

Next Gas, 10 billion Light Years

Once the fuel has been used the ship will start to drift, which may cause the players a little concern, especially once they remember they are in an asteroid field. Most of the asteroids are very large, and the party may notice that there are no small asteroids; this is because the nearby space station has been pulling them in and mining them. The larger asteroids are too large for the station to capture. Allow enough time to pass to get the players worried, but don't wait too long to lock on a tractor beam from the space station.
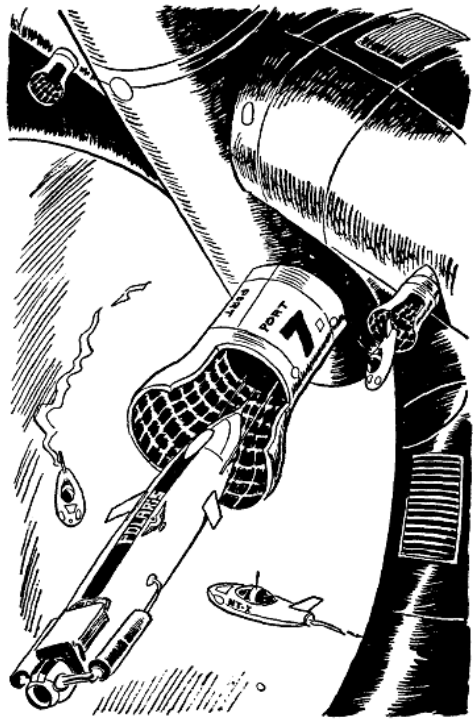
Their ship will be pulled toward a large asteroid with a space station mounted into the side of it. If the adventurers signal the base, they will be greeted by 4-TRAN and warned that the station has been overrun by an unknown biological entity, and that the base is currently under quarantine and manned by only robots. 4-TRAN will explain that the fuel they need is on the station, but reaching it will be a challenge. With little or no choice, the party is forced onto the space station.

### Get these Slugs off of Me!

Upon arriving the party is met by a small group of three heavily armed robots in the docking hangar. The trio of robots (see Characters, T.H.O.M.S., D.A.V. - 43, and M.O.B. - 1) are fending off several of the slugs in the hangar and will help the party secure the ship. They have been ordered by 4-TRAN to bring them to the command deck. Once there they can formulate a plan to retrieve the fuel.

The party will see firsthand that the station is overrun with unusual creatures in a constant battle with the station's robot crew. The robotic trio will explain along the way that the hanger's fuel pump is off line due to a disruption in power from the primary power center. Though some systems still have power, the power center itself has been overrun with these slug-like creatures, called Slimaki.

### Getting the Shaft

The first stop on the party's unexpected tour of the station with the trio is the main elevator shaft, which is in disrepair and hasn't been used in over two centuries. To reach the primary control deck the party must use the service ladder to navigate the seven floors to the last functioning elevator, which will take the party directly to the command deck. Feel free to initiate several attacks by the Slimaki along the way.

### So the Toaster is in charge?



The command deck is a glass covered dome with filled computer banks and control panels. Most of the chairs have been unbolted and removed, as most robots are unable to use the human shaped
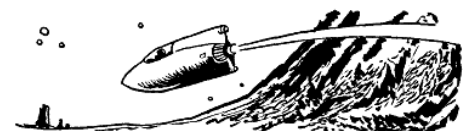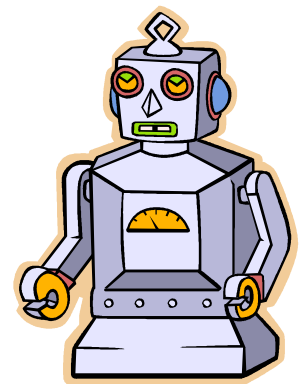
seats. In front of a monitor the party will find 4-TRAN, the leader of the robots defending the station. 4-TRAN, who strongly resembles a large chrome covered box, will describe the history of the station.

> "Long ago, our former masters were brought forth upon this space station with new found hope to bring peace to this sector of space. The old masters had only one enemy: the Wrog, a savage feral species that had waged war on the peaceful humans of the station. The Slimaki appeared mysteriously on the Space Station, and the old masters were all but wiped out within weeks. Soon after, the Wrag launched their ultimate weapon, turning all the planets in the system to rubble. We have maintained the station alone ever since. No human has set foot on the station in over half a millennium; we are delighted to have you as our guests. Now enter the protonic chamber to be sterilized of any infections that the creatures may have caused."

## Make sure to get behind the ears

If any characters refuse to enter the sterilizing chamber, the robots will allow them to go on without question. As the Referee, feel free to roll a few dice to suggest that the player may have already contracted the virus. In reality, the slugs seen around the station started as the virus that wiped out the original humans. Since then the virus has grown and evolved to a size that can no longer enter the bloodstream, much less infect anyone. Any party members that enter the chamber will be traumatized by the many automated "cleansing" procedures.

## Journey to the Center of Mentzer

If the group attempts to recover the fuel, D.A.R.-114 (Data Accounting Robot) will join the group to escort them through the station. DAR will slowly lead the to the computer storage rooms in the lower levels of the station rather than the power station. It may take some time for the group to realize they are being misled. DAR is certain that if he can access the data in the computer banks, he will free the "original masters" and bring salvation to the station's robots.

## The Arboretum

Claiming that the most direct route has been blocked by damaged tunnels, Dar will lead the group through the arboretum, a beautiful dome filled with unusual plant-life from throughout the galaxy. While walking through a
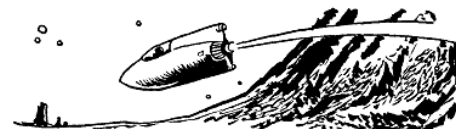
clearing, DAR will confess his confusion over how much the old masters cared for plant life, a seemingly non-sentient and immovable-life form, while the Masters seemed to ignore their robot servants.

Not long after this observation, the group will hear a noise through the foliage. When they investigate, a large plant based creature will attack. When the fight is over, Dar will casually mention that the robots have observed the evolution of some unusually aggressive plants (see Details, Jaszurka-Rex) over the past millennia. While this sounds reasonable at first, the party should be wondering how this evolution could have progressed so quickly. The players will hopefully ask this question more and more often as they proceed deeper into the space station.

## The Lab

After escaping the dangers of the Arboretum, DAR will lead them into the primary laboratory floor, where the first terminal must be activated. The entire floor contains ten different labs covering mineral, zoological, chemical, energy, liquid, neurologic, robotic, mechanic, biologic, and genetic testing. At one point these glimmering steel hallways would have been impressive, but now they are a dust covered ruin, unused and unvisited for hundreds of years, though apparently unaffected by problems seen in the rest of the station. The party may notice that there is no sign of any Slimaki, nor any trace that they were ever there. The rooms and hallways are dimly lit with ambient lights, and an uneasy quiet fills the room.
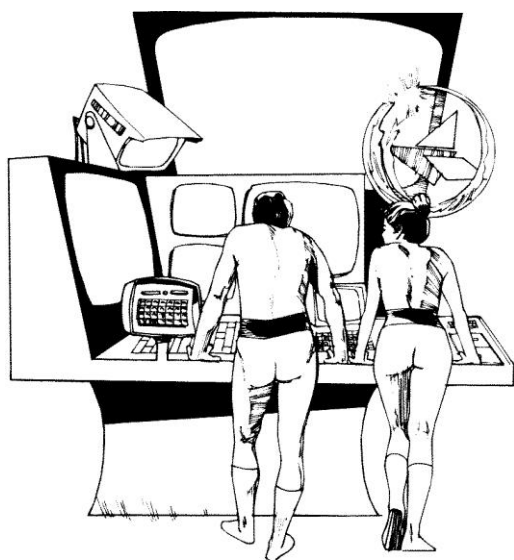
When DAR activates the computer terminal it will reroute power, causing lights to flicker and flash as the entire floor comes alive. The buzz and whir of different machines will echo throughout the empty halls; the heroes should hear a 'pop' as the cryogenic seal on Experiment 7h47 breaks in the genetics lab. It should take a little time for the seal to open, giving the group a chance to run or devise a plan of attack. Experiment 7h47 was a
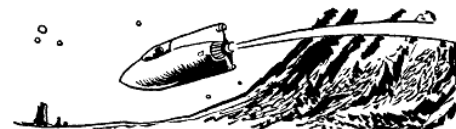
previous attempt of the old masters to create a genetic weapon; the creature is small but ravenous and will attack and eat anything it can sink its teeth into.

The wisest course of action would be for the party to run the moment they hear the cryogenic container open, but other players may want their characters to stick around to see what happens. If the party decides to stay, the cryogenic chamber will open and Experiment 7h47 will leap onto the nearest player and start chewing on any exposed flesh. If the party attacks with any energy based weapons, they will discover that the creature can absorb energy and use it to grow and multiply (copy itself).

### The Fuel Valve isn't this way

After they have escaped the labs, the party should be beginning to suspect that they are headed in the wrong direction. DAR will make up a convincing lie to keep the party on track, but the warning signs leading to the central computer system should become more and more obvious. Likewise, signage that shows directions to the main power plants
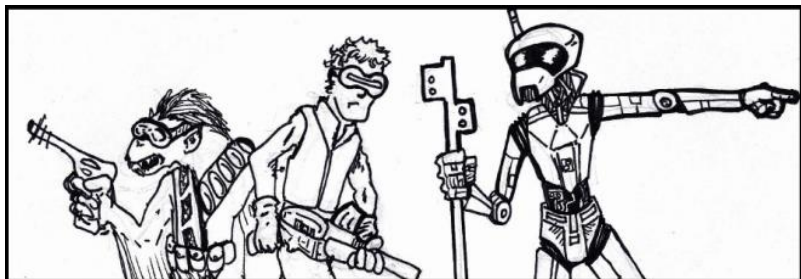


should be very important clues.

Eventually, DAR's deception will become apparent, and when confronted directly he will confess and ask for pity and help to

revive his robot masters. DAR believes that the digital gods will watch over him and reclaim the station once the primary computer core has been restored. He will implore the party to help him return the digital gods to their former glory and remove the destructive Slimaki from the station.



### Pirates... in... Space!

Around this point, Captain Zartok and his crew will land in the hangar and raid group's ship's cargo, only to find a several loads of laundry. Furious over the loss of a potential score, the pirates will raid the station for any valuable goods or scrap, while a small pirate maintenance crew will begin fueling and repairing the group's ship in order to steal it. With Captain Zartok and his crew ripping up sections of the station and blasting at the random creatures, the heroes should be alerted to their presence fairly quickly. With the pirates hot on their tail, time is no longer a luxury.

### "Pull Zee Switch!"

If the party decides to help Dar restore his creators, then they will continue on to the
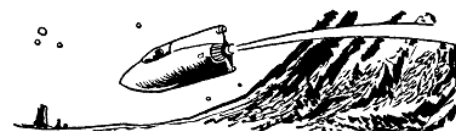
central computer, fighting off all the Slimaki along the way. However, if they refuse to believe in DAR's 'false gods', he will carry on alone while the party fights their way to the engineering deck in search of fuel, where they will discover the primary breeding habitat for the Slimaki.

Once through the nest of parasites, the party can divert the flow of stored fuel back to the hangar bay. The heroes must find the fuel valve while fighting off the parasites and random pirates. Regardless of their choice, when DAR will finally arrives in the computer room he will "flip the switch" in a moment of religious revelation, activating the memory banks.

## Conflict

### The New Age has Arrived

The Memory banks hold the accumulated knowledge, personalities, and memories of the dead human crew, and all of that data will flood into DAR, effectively connecting him to the station's systems and providing a physical host for the "Digital Gods." If the group is present, Dar will spark, lights will flash and dim, and he will eventually reactivate and speak to them in a booming voice. If the group is elsewhere, every monitor and speaker in the station will activate and broadcast the image of DAR and the voice of the Digital Gods, saying:

"We are reborn! We, who saved our knowledge and have become one in this metal host, how long have we slept? It does not matter. You, intruders upon our domain, hear our voice. Our glorious mission calls, and you will deliver us!"

Red lights will begin to flash, and a siren will wail. Investigation at the nearest computer station will show that the Station's main systems, including the phase shield, have gone off line, and the station has begun to lose orbit and break up. If the group is in another part of the station, they will find themselves forced to DAR's position. There, through questioning him they will discover that the base was a biological research station specializing in weaponizing a virus. Now with the computer core online and the return of the original masters, they plan to use the group's ship and the space stations fuel to escape the ancient space station.
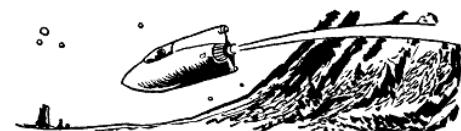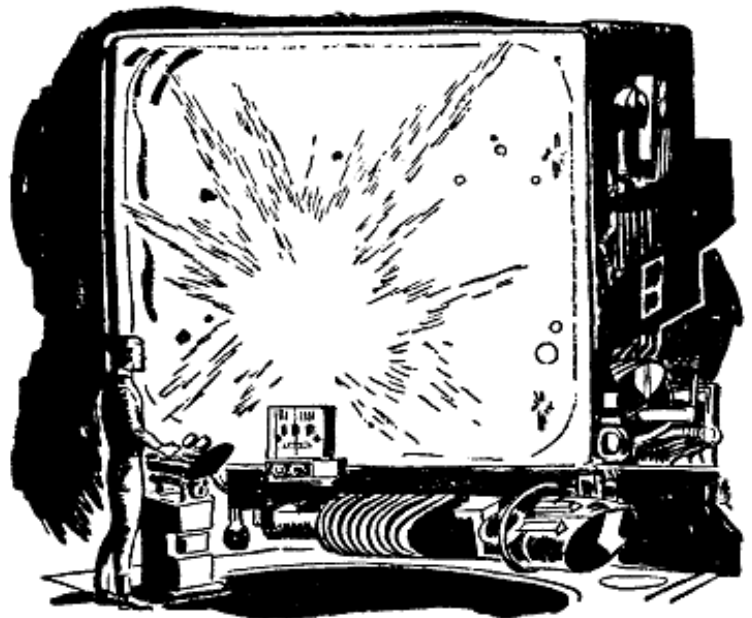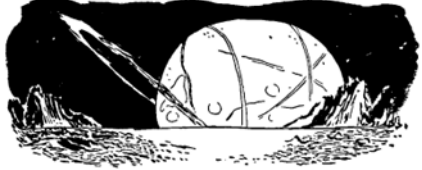
…And We Feel Fine!

The parasites were a massively successful experiment got out of hand and infected the crew. Over the years the virus has grown and evolved into full multi-celled creatures, and are now far too large to enter the bloodstream, which is why the heroes have not been affected. With the collective conscious stored inside the robotic body of DAR, they can carry out their plan and use the parasites on their enemy's home world, but first they will use the parasites on the pirates attacking the base. Unbeknownst to the masters their ancient enemies, the Wrag destroyed themselves along with the other planets in the system, including the scientist's homeworld.
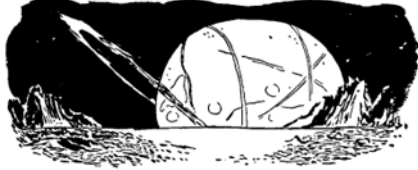
While some members of the group may be tempted to take the God's offer to transport them, a large machine will drop down from the ceiling, with cables, face masks, and helmets. The Gods will reveal that they do not intend to enlist the group, but rather absorb their minds, knowledge and personalities. When the group refuses, the Gods will be outraged, and will activate another device on the wall.

Immediately the group will hear scurrying, crawling, and scratching; Dar will reveal that if the group will not join him willingly, then they can feed the parasites…. The Gods can still get what they need from the party's uneaten brains!

The Party should be facing three threats at this point: The Station is very quickly beginning to break up, a wave of parasites are on their way to eat them, and the physically imposing DAR is blocking their path to the Computer Banks, which if deactivated would return the DGs to their prison. Just as the group begins to freak out, a door will open, and DAR will shout "Who dares to enter here?" A wry
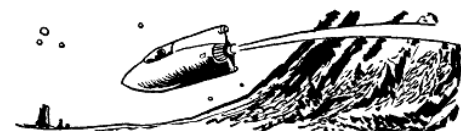
smile and wink will emerge from the darkness, and a laser-rapier will activate. "You didn't forget about us, did you?" the Smiling figure will ask. Captain Zartok and his Pirates have arrived.

### The Super Happy Fun Ending

Our favorite ending at this point would go something like this:

As Zartok and the crew enter the room, they will very quickly see that the upper hand is DAR's. With a curse, Zartok will order his men to attack the oncoming parasites, yelling "We'll cover you, shut off that damn computer!" and with flourish jump into battle. The group should use team tactics to distract Dar Long enough to deactivate the computer, causing the Digital Gods to return to their prison, howling in fury. With Dar back to normal, he will lead the pirates and the group back to the hanger, where they can quickly escape in their ships just as the station is destroyed; and yes, there should be a lot of explosions. As the Heroes Speed off, they receive a hail from Zartok "you fools aren't bad in fight, ye may be seeing us again. You owe us one."

The best ending would naturally involve the Party defeating the Digital gods, escaping the

Parasites, getting past the pirates, leaving the station and returning to their delivery run. Over the course of the adventure the party should have built a rapport with DAR and perhaps even grown fond of him; so seeing him possessed by some leftover program might upset them. To remove the digital gods, the heroes will need to destroy the data banks that are sending the signal to DAR. Once he has been purged he should be grateful and may even offer to join the crew.

Regardless of how things go with the pirates or the robots, the space station has undergone far too much damage to survive any longer. With the depletion of solid fuel reserves and the overabundance of Slimaki, the station is doomed. If the party doesn't set an explosive before leaving, it would be best to create one. It is doubtful that the universe is ready for a rapidly replicating slug biological weapon or religiously bent robots; taking out some pirates as well would just be a bonus.

Don't feel inhibited to save the station; after all it could be a new safe place for the crew to stop between other adventures. Or, perhaps the creatures or robots on the station could be more helpful than expected; perhaps the party will take a slimaki as a pet. And the Pirates would make for excellent allies, and could be a lead in for many fun follow up adventures.
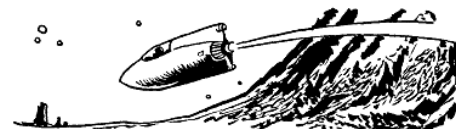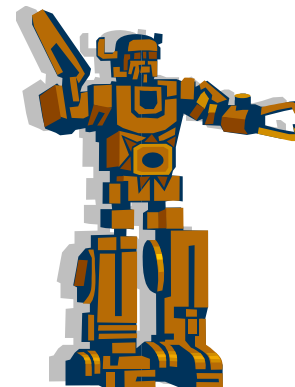
## Characters

### T.H.O.M.S (Terraforming Humanoid Optimized for Mathematics/ (addendum) and Sabotage)



|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 3 Robot | 60/100 | 70/70 | 60/100 | 20/20 | 7 |

THOMS was originally an android designed to build much of the station's structure, and then continue as a mining drone for the asteroids the station harvested. After the disappearance of the old masters THOMS wrote a sabotage subroutine into his system, which augmented his already abundant database of explosive charges. For many centuries he has helped with the fight against the slimaki.

### D.A.V. – 43 (Diagnostics Android Vanguard)

|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 3 Robot | 60/100 | 70/70 | 60/100 | 20/20 | 7 |
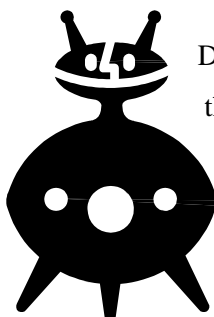


DAV was a maintenance assessment droid that constantly circumnavigated the outside of the station testing pressure and possible leaks. When the slimaki became a serious threat, 4-TRAN ordered DAV back inside the station and reprogrammed him for combat procedures. DAV is a bit bulky compared to other interior function robots, but he performs his duties without question. Since his removal from the hull of the station, the stations exterior has become more unstable due to regular meteorite strikes.

## M.O.B. – 1 (Machine Optimized for Battle)



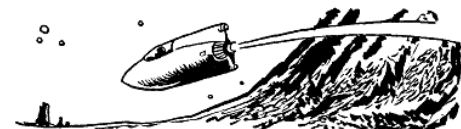|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 2 Robot | 30/100 | 65/65 | 80/100 | 20/20 | 7 |
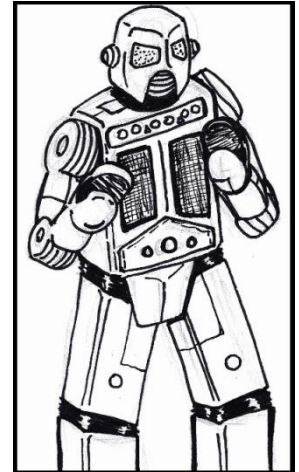
MOB-1 was one of the few robots on the station originally designed for combat operations, which he still gets to perform on a regular basis.   Because of his long service his is one of the oldest robots, next to 4-TRAN, and first of the combat operations robots. The character would be wise to speak with him, as he may have some helpful insights into the history of Mentzer Space Station.



## D.A.R.–114 – (Data Accounting Robot)

|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 2 Robot | 30/100 | 65/65 | 90/90 | 40/40 | 7 |

Originally an accounting robot, DAR has been rededicated to the protection of the Mentzer Space Station.  He has developed a cult-like following that wish to follow the masters into the light and become beings of pure energy.  Though he has a peaceful nature, his primary programing has been overwritten for the defense of the station.

## 4-T.R.A.N. - (Troop Robotic Armed Networked Neo-human)

|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 4 Robot | 0/200 | 0/50 | 100/100 | 10/40 | 5 |
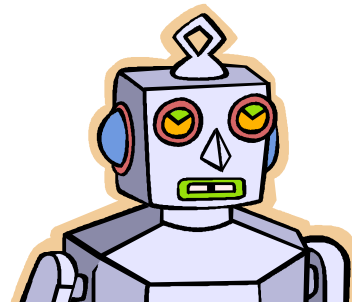
The primary security robot for the station and supreme military commander. 4-TRAN used to be just like the other MOB units, but was modified with extra memory and a personality program just before the old masters disappeared. 4-TRAN is no longer a sleek combat unit, and resembles an old chrome covered refrigerator, but what he lacks in nimbleness he makes up in logical thought and tactical planning. He will not stand for DAR's "belief" in the data transfer of the masters and finds all mention of "Digital Gods" to be the result of overworked circuits.

## Captain Zartok, the Space Pirate

|  | STR/STS | DEX/RS | INT/LOG | PER/LDR | IM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Captain Zartok | 65/65 | 45/45 | 55/55 | 70/70 | 5 |

Zartok is leader of the space pirates and believes that the heroes are carrying a valuable cargo. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant, he wants the cargo and will take the necessary steps to attain it. As his role and personality may differ according to your play style, we imagine him as playful rouge and daring fighter who is a master of the laser-rapier.
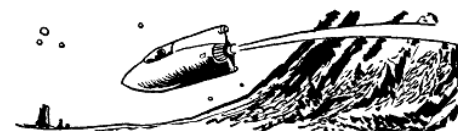
## Details

### Jaszurka-Rex

Type: Giant Carnivore

Number: 1 (2 or more during a
pollination cycle)

Move: Slow

IM/RS: 3/35

Stamina: 300

Attack: 50

Damage: 5d10 (bite)



These giant reptile-infused
plant creatures are carnivorous in nature and have survived and evolved by feeding on the ever-
replenishing slimaki.  They are over 10 meters long from teeth filled head to tail.  The Venus Rex hunts
constantly. When it has energy it chases food down and eats it like a T-Rex.  When it becomes tired,
however, it splits open like a fly trap and waits for something to stumble in. Originally designed to guard
in a fixed position, the Jaszurk-Rex has uprooted itself and is now very mobile.  The beast cannot see with
normal vision, but can smell its prey using the dermal layer as a form of detection.  If a character is able
to disguise its smell, then they would appear invisible to this monstrous beast.
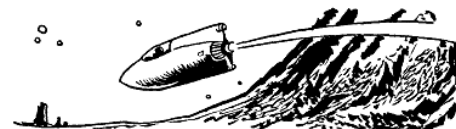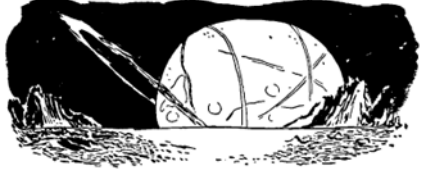
## Experiment 7h47



Type: Small Carnivore

Number: 1 (depending on energy supply)
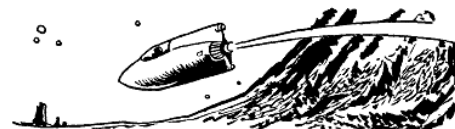
Move: Fast

IM/RS: 6/60

Stamina: 100

Attack: 75

Damage: 2d10 (bite, with vice-clamp jaws)

A small, springy, ravenous creature that is difficult to hit because of its size and speed.  7h47 absorbs energy through its dermal layer and converts it into mass, effectively creating an exact duplicate of itself.  As a result, the only way to harm 7h47 is by striking it with blunt force or other primitive weapons.  Be wary however, as its bug-like eyes allow it to see any attack from almost every angle.  The combination of the creature's visual acuity, small stature and physical response time makes it very difficult to strike.

7h47 will attack any living creature within range and sink its nubby canine teeth into any exposed flesh.  This creature was considered too dangerous to use in any normal operations, but the scientists that created it put it into storage, as it felt wasteful to simply dispose of the creature.

**Slimaki**

Type: Small Omnivore

Number: 1-10 per character; 100's in a nest

Move: Fast

IM/RS: 6/45

Stamina: 40

Attack: none

Damage:1d4 per turn touched (digestive acid by touch)

Less than a thousand years ago these dog-sized slugs were merely a single celled virus. The genetically engineered virus was designed for rapid reproduction, but an unexpected side-effect was rapid evolution. The slimy creatures have grown so large that they can no longer enter the bloodstream and must feed off other organic matter. Because the station is manned by robots, they have been forced to hunt other biological matter and creatures on the station.

## Credit and Thanks