
While Nobody's Watching: Scenario

"Gaspra was named by its discoverer Neujmin for a resort on the Crimean peninsula. Consequently, many of the asteroid's craters have been named for resorts and spas worldwide."

Recent Human History

The year is 2177.

Human history through 2002 is a reasonable approximation of real history, with a bit more low-budget spy movie mixed in. Hostilities in the middle east wear on; terrorism in Israel slowly escalates. India and Pakistan posture threateningly at each other. The US gets hopelessly bogged down in Afghanistan, while the rest of NATO extricates itself as best it can. AIDS rampages through southern Africa.

In 2014, a terrorist cell under deep cover in the Pakistani military gains control of several missiles, one of them armed with a nuclear warhead, and launches them at Israel. Panic and hysteria take over, and in the next few hours, nearly every nuclear weapon and most of the long-range conventional weapons in the region are launched. Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, most of Syria, and parts of Saudi Arabia and Egypt including the entire Sinai peninsula are reduced to a collection of glass craters, and there are pockmarks from India to Algeria. The Mediterranean and Red seas pour water into the new Great Dead Sea even as the mushroom clouds loom. What isn't already melted is on fire as ruined refineries and pipelines bleed oil. Fanatics fight all around the wreckage. China and the US start mustering and sending in troops almost immediately; Europe responds more slowly, having been drawn into more of the panic. When the smoke clears, the Chinese are trying to restore order in India and Pakistan, the Europeans deploying around the Mediterranean, and the Americans are trying to assert control of what's left of the Arabian peninsula and everything from Iraq to Afghanistan. Two decades later, the atmosphere is mostly clear again, European "advisors" are steadily extending their sphere of influence south through Africa insisting on radiation cleanup, AIDS treatment, and near colonial style "democratic" government for the survivors; the Chinese military is turning administration of India and Pakistan over to the Chinese bureaucracy for the long haul, and the Americans have oil flowing again and are firmly turning down all offers of assistance in Afghanistan.

In 2036, Russia and Kazakhstan apply for membership in the European Union, and a privately held Canadian corporation called Betadyne launches a successful manned mission to the moon, sparking a new space race. Within fifteen years, China, Japan, Australia, Brazil, the EU, the US, Canada, and four multinationals have all either landed on the moon or put a manned station into orbit around the earth or moon. In 2049, the NAFTA treaty is given a major overhaul, allowing free movement of people as well as goods and providing for coordination of taxes and corporate income information, and suggesting negotiations on a unified currency will begin in ten years. Various South American nations politely but firmly decline to join and start strengthening their own trade treaties. In 2052, a joint US/Canadian project heavily backed by a newly public Betadyne makes the first manned Mars landing, then loses an astronaut to a stroke on the return flight. Betadyne's stock tanks and it is bought up by the Zantrel Corporation, which renames itself Zandyne and promptly launches the first successful global satellite communications network. In 2054, the First Bank of Taiwan, one of the largest landholders in the country, is bought out by what soon proves to be a Chinese front organization. Within months every "bank office" is bristling with armed guards; scarcely two years later Taiwan is under full Chinese administrative control as another special economic zone.

North American unified currency negotiations begin and end in 2059; every bank and vending machine manufacturer on the continent complains about the aggressive eighteen month implementation timetable for the North American dollar. Canada formally leaves the British Commonwealth. The penny is kept despite protests but the new copper-colored dollar and five dollar coins catches on anyhow. In 2061, the Dengali Pharmaceuticals Corporation comes out with a cure for AIDS, and makes it

available at cost. The pundits have a field day comparing the 2060s to the 1960s. In 2065, the first resistant relapse is reported; the rate skyrockets briefly, then stabilizes at about one percent of cases. Also in 2065, Australia builds the first permanent human installation on the moon, an unmanned station that monitors asteroid strikes and looks for hints of seismic activity. In 2069, Africa as a whole posts its first year of population growth since 2014. In 2070, Brazil and Japan launch a campaign to restructure the UN or at least reapportion the security council seats; it is hotly debated for nearly three decades but ultimately produces no changes whatsoever. The year 2073 sees the establishment of first continuously manned human installation on Luna; the next twenty years see a proliferation of human habitations on the moon, with every major government and two dozen corporations having at least one person in residence by 2095.

Contact

In 2100, an unidentified spaceship enters the solar system, broadcasting on dozens of radio frequencies. Earth goes slightly mad, but eventually the UN manages to assemble an international team of experts and direct the ship to a small orbital station which is cleared out and sterilized for the occasion. A month later, a Rakeb astronaut makes a first address to the people of Earth in halting Chinese, English, and French. Five years later, a human engineering team finishes Earth's first faster-than-light spaceship based on the theories and designs provided by the Rakeb, and both ships (the Rakeb ship with only half its crew, the other half remaining behind on Earth, half ambassadors, half hostages) set out on the multi-year journey back to the Rakeb homeworld of Vircus. While Humanity holds its breath waiting for news from their first interstellar explorers, and every scientist and engineer on the planet pours over FTL drive designs, a child is born on Luna, the first human born off of Earth, ten years after the arrival of the Rakeb.

In 2117, the Human/Rakeb joint expedition returns to Earth. With this as a distraction, China engages in an economic and then bureaucratic takeover of Japan, using nearly the same tactics as it applied in Taiwan, and a great deal less patience for holdouts. The second expedition from Vircus brings Rakeb scientists in greater numbers, who sit down with the Earth-based team that had been working for seventeen years, and in 2120 turns out a vastly improved FTL drive, dubbed the Rackonimov/Tr'kali drive. Travel time between Earth and Vircus is cut from years to months. Incremental advances in this technology eventually bring the one-way trip down to about 4 Earth-weeks.

Agitation from some elements on both Earth and Vircus, heightened by the drastically decreased travel time, combined with backlash from the destruction of one of the FTL prototypes in an act of terrorism leads to a mutual diplomatic embargo: no Rakeb is to be allowed on any planets or moons in the solar system, and no Human is to be allowed on any planets or moons in the Rakeb system. Within two years, the Kingdom of Gaspra, a new nation comprised entirely of an expanded hub station in the asteroid belt near Jupiter's orbit, becomes the defacto exception to the embargo.

2122 sees the establishment of the first continuously manned human installation on Mars. It is owned by Falstaff Corporation, and named Sagan City. Humanity's colonization of the system continues to take root in 2125, when the first self-sustaining human installations on Luna come online. Within 10 years, the first childbirth on Mars was celebrated around the sun. The EU renames itself the United European Community. In 2129, the UN, backed by both the UEC and America (these days, Mexico and Canada act as defacto sidekicks to the USA) passes a resolution declaring that no single nation or corporation can control an entire planet. This is intended to curb rapid squatting. Within 3 years, China claims the entirety of Ganymede, stating it is only a moon. In 2135, a science outpost sponsored by the UN cautiously takes footing on Europa. 5 years later, once that has proved somewhat successful (by the multiple corporations which follow the UN in sponsoring an outpost), another intrepid group sets up home on the greatly volcanic Io.

In 2144, the Rakeb re-allow humans on Vircus, demonstrating that relations have eased significantly. By 2145, the diplomatic embargo has ended completely, and Rakeb begin to venture to Earth and the occasional Human settlement elsewhere in the system. In 2149, Luna declares itself an independent nation, amidst a mostly bloodless coup with a few scattered "terrorist" acts. The

UEC attempts to stop this, but gives up rather than start the first inter-gravity-well war. The very next year sees the first Mars installations to attain self-sufficiency.

By 2153, the UN recognizes Luna, complete with a seat on the Security Council. Following a political trend from the past decade, the US (along with the rest of North America) declares a policy of strict isolationism. Though still a member of the UN, it announces abstinence on most international issues. The US government also takes a sharp turn against established religion, amidst much national public support. In 2154 Australia releases tourism slogan "Australia: the only place you're still legally allowed to have a sense of humor."

In 2160, the Chinese establish a research outpost on Venus. 2168 sees an orbital station built around Neptune, and by 2171 there is a small outpost orbiting Pluto, thus completing Humanity's grab of the planets. In 2172, PARC Astronomy, a private exploration company, announces the Navigator project, intending to culminate with the first Human/Rakeb combined exploration of an unexplored star system within six years.

The Rakeb

The Rakeb are humanoid, short-legged but long in the arm and torso and broad-shouldered relative to humans. They have smooth skin with patterns in pale browns and greens that vary wildly by individual, and large delicate vaguely cat-like ears. They're adjusted to rather warmer climates than humans, and the Rakeb that work in places comfortable to humans are generally seen wearing several layers of clothing and carrying a thermos of some hot and sugar-laden drink.

The Rakeb are carbon-based: the cellular level chemistry of Vircus's lifeforms is remarkably similar to that of Earth's. Their mineral balance and set of essential amino acids is different from that of humans, but the Rakeb can readily find nutritious if not necessarily tasty things to eat in ordinary human fare, and they share the human fondness for, and intoxication by, alcohol. Wines and liquors are among the hottest items of inter-system trade, which is dominated by luxury organics and artworks.

The single Rakeb word for their primary unit of societal organization has been translated as a "collective" and seems to cover everything from a corporation to a religious order to an extended family clan. Human negotiations with the Rakeb have generally been with collectives or groups of collectives with mercantile, scientific, or religious interests. They claim to have nothing like national or worldwide governing bodies, but somehow manage to rarely, if ever, have large scale conflicts.

Rakeb culture was heavily influenced by their contact some 3500 years ago with the "Aeray", mysterious beings the stories of whom would be considered myth or legend by humans were it not for the Gifts: thousands of ancient artifacts that performed functions from the commonplace to the miraculous, many of them still in use today and all highly prized by the collectives that hold them. Reverence for the Aeray and their Gifts is the nearest thing to a Rakeb religion, at least that anyone talks about publicly, and devoted Rakeb visitors have spent a great deal of time talking to officials of Earth religions and attempting to determine whether the Aeray also visited Earth.

Radical Groups

Recent years have seen the formation of several radical revolutionary groups in the system, mostly based on non-earth planets. They make the news occasionally, either when they engage in acts of terrorism or when one government or another goes in and kills off a bunch of members.

Free Mars A collection of revolutionaries representing a loose association of most of the non-corporate domes on Mars. This group isn't as terrorism-focused as the others, though corporate interests on Mars are always whining about weapons buildup and

the threat of nationalization.

Lunar Rights Movement This group longs for the good old days on the moon, when anyone could set up a dome and be beholden to no one. They protest the legitimacy of the Lunar government, and its participation in the UN.

SelfSufficiency A group based in the belt, but with representatives on many space station habitats. Argues for the need to be self sufficient, for stations to produce their own food and materials. Their militant wing, with which they disclaim all association, has been known to blow up transports and disable spaceports.

GreenWar Militant ecological group now focused on opposing terraforming operations. They engage in acts of terrorism against such operations, with a wanton disregard for human life. They have fewer and fewer supporters as their attacks become more violent.

People's Liberation Front of Ganymede A secretive group principally active among the Chinese colonists on Ganymede. Most colonists are forced laborers, political prisoners or social offenders. This group seeks to form an independent colony, without the yolk of Chinese dominance.

Night Angels The solar system harbors many groups devoted to piracy. There is a strong market for mercenaries, saboteurs, and freelance terrorists who infiltrate cargo crews, smuggle goods, or outright attack shipments. The Night Angels are a large, cell-organized group slowly becoming notorious. They are suspected to number in the hundreds. While they are likely to be a part of many different kinds of illegal activity related to space travel and trade, they fall under one umbrella of organized crime.

Technology

There are only a small number (less than thirty) of ship capable of FTL travel, and all are somewhat dedicated to travel between Earth and Vircus. Travel within the system, however, is very common. Due to lack of a regulatory organization, the flow of people and cargo throughout the solar system supports entire industries.

Neither Humans nor Rakeb have yet conquered gravity.

For most kinds of passenger travel, passengers spend the majority of the “flight” is an induced sleep (with a few brief periods of wakefulness). Cryofreezing also exists, but the waking process is long.

The standard sidearm is still the preferred basic weapon of conflict. With the advent of space travel, compact low-energy weapons became the norm. There is the basic technology to deflect projectiles, but it is sketchy at best: the common (actually uncommon, as they are expensive and rare) “force shield” can only stop a small number (three) of projectiles before burning out completely. Medkits exists that can save a life very quickly.

Gaspra

History

Gaspra started as one of many hub stations built in the belt to facilitate cargo shipping and provide a place from which to mine asteroids. The station was named after the asteroid Gaspra, located near the inner edge of the belt. Leon Paxton, an entrepreneur,

found himself very rich after lucky returns on investments in the belt. When the diplomatic embargo was put in place, he saw opportunity, and began the massive expansion of Gaspra station. Soon, it was the only developed place where Rakeb could stay in-system, and was the primary jumping point for FTL travel.

In 2125, the UN recognized the Kingdom of Gaspra as an independent nation (in part from Rakeb pressure) with King Leon Paxton as its ruler. The station's expansion and success continued. Stories abound of its "casino and hotel" which were host to all major interstellar diplomatic events in this system.

When the embargo ended, Gaspra's decline began. Interstellar trade and political negotiations now occurred on Earth, and there was no longer any need to make the trek out to the asteroid belt just to have a meeting. The station has re-re-focused to mining support and simply being a hub. However, because of its facilities, it is attractive as a base for corporate research and other business.

Government

The current government of Gaspra, with the King absent, is pretty much an oligarchy: The last officially appointed ministers just keep handing their positions down when they get bored. This has worked out well enough, and so no one rocks the boat too hard. Of course, people make noise about democracy, but they shut up pretty quick when the topic of airlocks and accidents comes up. Of course, everyone is just a tenant of the King when it comes down to it, and so they don't mind so much.

There are three ministers: Trade, Security and Engineering. The Minister of Trade was and is the most prestigious position. When Gaspra was a hub of interstellar commerce, he directed the operations that kept the station in business. More recently, the Trade Minister is the defacto ruler of the station, and the manager of the casino. The Security Minister, of course, is responsible for law enforcement on the station, though there isn't much of it. The Engineering Minister keeps you all breathing, and has the most staff.

Together they are responsible for making what accounts to laws, for judging trials, and for setting rents. They present a pretty unified front, and no one really knows how internal conflicts get worked out.

The current Trade Minister is James Nyberg (Tony Camire). The current Security Minister is Jacob Canning (who is recently dead). The current Engineering Minister is Joruri Fuwa (Jen Selby).

Laws

Gaspra works mostly on Common Law derived from European and American law. Contracts are enforceable and civil suits are possible. The three ministers act as a triumvirate of judges. In theory their decisions must be approved by the King, but that hasn't come up since the King left the station.

There is no prison. If people get rowdy, they get beaten up and knocked out in the infirmary for a while. The security minister is in charge of that. Violent crimes are punished by deportation or execution. Of course, this stuff doesn't happen very often.

The Station

Gaspra is capable of holding approximately 3500 people. However, it's current stable population is only about 600, and much of the station's facilities are shut down.

Gaspra has many sections; different parts were built during different incremental expansions. (Conveniently, section numbers correspond exactly to MIT building numbers.)

The GM Room is 34-303, the Mechanics Room is 34-301. The Casino is 36-156. Marlene Kilgore (Janet Leung) has a Diner in 36-144. The Main Docks are 37-212, the School Auditorium is 2-190, and the Infirmary (where the wounded can be healed if needed) is 26-204.

Recent Events

Three days ago, Anabelle Trenton-Hobbes (Susan Dorsher), a local asteroid miner, towed in a large object of unknown construction from the belt. Basic inspection showed it to be of unknown but apparently extraterrestrial origin. The Rakeb have claimed to not know what it is, either, but are definitely interested. Upon hearing of the news, the UN has dispatched a large number of scientists, reporters, and their entourages on a charter shuttle to Gaspra. They will arrive on the night of Saturday September 29.

Additionally, on Wednesday the body of Jacob Canning, the Security Minister, was found dead — riddled with bullets. This is the first time a Minister of Gaspra has been murdered.

Thursday, Prince Darien Paxton (Rickland), the Crown Prince of Gaspra, arrived on a shuttle from Earth. He is here, in his own words, to bring back the golden age of Gaspra. Many long time residents are cynical about his prospects for success. He will be hosting a welcome dinner for himself Saturday night 9–11pm in Kilgore's Diner (36-144).

Friday morning, Kyrk Velour, a recent arrival on the station, was found dead, floating near the station. He had been shoved out an airlock after being tortured, or so it seemed. No leads have been made public at this time.

Upcoming Events

- Friday Night 9/20: Zero G training: in the Main Docks, (37-212), 8-9 pm. All new arrivals on station are urged to attend.
- Saturday Night 9/21: "Welcome Home" Party for Prince Darien Paxton, 9-11 pm, in Kilgore's Diner (36-144).
- Monday Night 9/23: Rakeb Religious Discussion: 7 PM in the School Auditorium (2-190)
- Wednesday Night 9/25: Deng Zou (Tom Giordano)'s Birthday Party: 9 PM until "Late," in the Main Docks (37-212)
- Friday Night 9/27: Zero G training: in the Main Docks (37-212), 8-9 pm. All new arrivals on station are urged to attend.
- Saturday Night 9/29: Zandyne Corporation Public Announcement: 6 PM, in the School Auditorium (2-190)
- Saturday Night 9/29: Anabelle Trenton-Hobbes (Susan Dorsher) Officially Presents her Asteroid to the UN, 8 PM, in the School Auditorium (2-190)
- Saturday Night 9/29: Departure of the Navigator: midnight

Shuttle Schedule

Each of these is a cargo-shuttle flight that is docked on Gaspra from 6pm to midnight on the day specified.

- Friday: Venus → Neptune; Mars → Ganymede; Ganymede → Earth; Luna → Milton Salt asteroid platform
- Saturday: Luna → Ganymede
- Sunday: Ganymede → Earth; Falstaff asteroid platform → Saturn Orbital
- Monday: Europa → Mars; Mars → Ganymede; Earth → Pluto
- Wednesday: Ganymede → Venus; Uranus → Neptune
- Thursday: Ganymede → Mars
- Friday: Neptune → Earth; Ganymede → Luna
- Saturday: Ganymede → Earth; Venus → Ganymede; Europa → Mars; Saturn Orbital → Luna; Earth → Vircus

On Saturday at midnight, the Navigator, the FTL ship built by PARC Astronomy, intends to depart for an as-yet unannounced unexplored system. Wish them luck.

Items For Sale

The following items can be freely bought in the Mechanics room. Item cards should be available.

- Gun: \$100
- Knife: \$50
- Club: \$50
- Automatic MedKit: \$300

Also, for any thing that requires something like “\$100 worth of electronics materials” (where the price and type may differ), you can buy the material in the Mechanics Room and create the item card. This, of course, does not apply to bars of platinum (which are worth \$10000 on Earth, but generally can't be efficiently cashed or divided here).