

CIRCLING THE PLANET

AN OPEN SYSTEM MODULE SET IN DEEP SPACE



Version 1.2

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Covert Photo courtesy of NASA

Author's Note

This RPG module is an open system module (meaning it works with any system). I have planned on utilizing it with Fudge, GURPS, or Traveler. This version does not have much art but future versions may have art. If you wish to contact me about this or any other RPG element I create or should create I welcome comments at: contact@arirpg.com Also, please visit my website which will focus on the game system I am creating along with the rest of my RPG related creations, <http://www.arirpg.com/>. Since this module is open system, it requires a read through and tailoring to make it playable.

Description

This module is about players who get stuck in a dilapidated cargo ship in an orbiting debris field guarded by an automated satellite. They must use cunning to survive, escape and steal their spacecraft back.

History

An ancient brutal race of aliens built automated defense satellites around planets deemed valuable. The race is gone but not all the satellites have been destroyed. This particular satellite is around a desert planet that was mineral rich. While it is not valuable by today's standards, the satellite still guards the planet.

Plot Hook

- Players are part of a salvage company told that they have a contract to retrieve a vehicle from one of the orbital debris fields generated by this satellite. They will be given a signal generator that will allow their vehicle to pass by the satellite unmolested.
- Players receive a distress signal from a man stuck in this debris field. He will pay them handsomely if they can get him and his spacecraft away from the debris field. He will explain that a signal generator at a special frequency is needed to pass by the satellite unmolested. Acquiring the signal generator should be fairly easy.

Entering the System

The system is not developed as it does not currently have any significant value. The system is an average star with four planets orbiting it.

- Outer Most Orbit - Small Rocky planet, no significant resources, basically an oversized asteroid. Trace Atmosphere.
- Second Outermost Orbit - A large gas giant, several small moons, no significant resources.
- Second Inner Orbit - A large gas giant, several small moons, no significant resources.
- Inner most orbit - A barely habitable desert terrestrial planet with a breathable oxygen atmosphere. The highest forms of life are small scrub plants, which generate the oxygen. This planet has a desolate ring of damaged and destroyed spaceships and a small asteroid shaped moon.

Automated Satellite

The small moon orbiting the desert planet is in fact a large defense satellite disguised to look like a natural body. Its armaments can vary based on the game system but it always operates in the same way.

- It interrogates all nearby spacecraft for certain signals. If it scans the correct signal it then ignores them.

- If it scans an incorrect signal or does not receive the signal after a certain amount of time, it activates its main functions.
 - Uses large energy or other type of limitless ammo weapon to damage and disable but not destroy a ship. Aiming for weapons, engines, and shield generators.
 - Once the satellite determines the ship is no longer a threat. The satellite moves the disabled vessel via tractor beams into orbit around the planet.
 - The satellite then sends out a signal to notify the alien race that there are ships available to salvage.
- The automated satellite is heavily armored/shielded making it a difficult target.
- Vulnerability - The satellite ignores small and slow moving craft, like a person in a spacesuit as they are not threats.

Plot

When the characters arrive within scanning distance of the inner most planet, read the following:

“Upon scanning the desert planet, you find an artificial ring of metals, plastics, and artificial materials, in a cloud of debris in an unstable orbit around the planet.”

If they scan further:

“The debris contains the remnants of spacecraft. The spacecraft cover nearly every spectrum from cruisers and fighters to cargo and research vessels. The spacecraft are in various states of disrepair. Some of them seem to be in better shape than others though.”

If they scan for the vessel they are looking for they find a small cargo craft, relatively intact that is part of the ring in a low orbit around the planet.

Attempting audible communications with the small cargo craft will be difficult but is possible, visual communications is not possible.

If they establish contact

“The air is filled with static... you are about to give up on this attempt when a voice breaks the noise... “Greetings. My name is Favin... Favin Martock.... Am a trader with the Federation.... Thank goodness you arrived.... Careful of the satellite.... Ship is damaged.... In low orbit... must act quickly!”

No more communications is possible with Favin; all conclusions are that the communications system is damaged.

If they attempt to drag the spacecraft

All scans indicate that the satellite will fire upon the spacecraft, if they attempt to drag it without restoring communications on the ship. Both ships have to be transmitting the frequency, which requires they be hardwired together.

If they attempt to dock with the spacecraft

Make sure the entire party gets aboard Favik’s ship. Once they are, they will be gassed or shocked in order to render them temporarily unconscious. Favik will then steal their ship, abandoning them on his ship.

Ship

The ship is short-medium journey, small cargo transport capable designed to carry a crew of 2 or 4. The ship during its last overhaul was equipped with a faulty power regulator. When the ship got grazed by the satellite, the power regular blew taking many essential components disabling the ship in the process. The ship has a couple of urgent items to note once they are onboard:

- The ship will run out of air in 2d10 times number of characters worth of hours until the environmental system processor is back online. Emphasize that Favik was one person taxing the system as opposed to 4-6 player characters.
- The ship will deorbit and enter the planet in 2d10 hours until the fuel flow regulator is back online.
- The player characters can degas the ship and lose 1d4 hours of air to gain 1d4 hours of orbit.
- The player characters can manually use the maneuvering thrusters requiring a moderate engineering check, which gains 1d10 hours.
- The ship has enough spacesuits for the player characters to do space walks. The spacesuits only carry 2 hours' worth of air.
- In the passenger room, they can find a journal kept by Favik that explains what is wrong with the ship, and where the parts can be found. Favik isn't dumb, but he didn't have the skills to make it work.

Components Needed

- **Power Regulator** - The Ship requires a power regulator for main systems to come back online. **Mission 1**
- **Environmental System Processor** - The Ship requires a new processor for the environmental system to generate new oxygen. **Mission 2**
- **Fuel Flow Regulator** - The Ship requires a fuel flow regulator for the ship to fly without manually flowing fuel. **Mission 3**
- **Communications Unit** - The Ship requires a new communications unit in order have communications capabilities. **Mission 4**
- **Navigation Computer** - The Ship requires a new navigation computer so that the ship will fly in the desired direction. **Mission 5**

Ring of Debris

The ring of debris is crowded with pieces and sections of spacecraft. Use normal zero gravity rules for moving through the debris. If the system does not have any zero gravity rules, then follow these simple steps. Make a jump/acrobatics/strength type of roll versus an average difficulty and you will move that many spaces a round until the character hits an object or uses some other way to slow down or change directions. If they jump in a random direction they will travel 1d10 rounds and use the chart below to see where they end up.

D10	Result
1	Damaged Fighter or Mission 1
2	Damaged Research Craft or Mission 2
3	Damaged Cargo Craft or Mission 3
4	Damaged Warship or Mission 4
5	Damaged Escape Pod or Mission 5
6	Large Piece of Metal
7	Large Piece of Plastic
8	Large Piece of Glass
9	Damaged ship half

Mission 1 – Damaged Fighter / Power Regulator

This fighter was part of a group of military spacecraft sent to investigate the nature of ship ring. The ships weapons and engines were damaged but its electrical systems are intact. The pilot was knocked unconscious and slowly suffocated. The ship is still in standby mode. His body is still in the seat. The power regulator for this ship is under the seat. A zero-g check followed by an engineering/craft check is required to remove the body and power regulator. Any failure related to removing the regulator, either through the engineering/craft check or zero-g check, results in the ship's maneuvering thrusters activating causing the ship to proceed to spin wildly. A piloting check is required to get the ship under control and remove the power regulator.

Mission 2 – Damaged Research Craft / Environmental System Processor

This research craft had a mandate to explore and catalogue this solar system. They had found a small organic pod on one of the small moons orbiting the second gas giant. The pod turned out to be an egg sack for small spider creatures. The creatures hatched and attacked the crew. The satellite just added insult to injury crippling the craft and moving it to the debris field. Use creatures that are low hitpoint and small threats on their own, but are dangerous in groups. There are enough creatures on board to pose a serious threat. If the players are gun-toters, then fight their way through. If they are puzzlers then they can flush the creatures into space or use the environmental system to decontaminate the ship. The decontamination procedure floods the ship with flammable gas and ignites it, which is why the research team didn't use it.

Mission 3 Damaged Cargo Craft / Fuel Flow Regulator

This cargo craft was part of an organization working for a military contractor. Their goal was to setup a military research base on the planet. The ship's cargo is full of land based weapons and temporary quick setup buildings. The ships reactor was hit and flooded the ship with radiation. Fortunately the system is a match for the one on their cargo. The high radiation levels killed the crew within hours. The spacesuits will provide some protection, but emphasis they must work quickly in order to survive.

Mission 4 Warship / Communications Unit

This warship was part of the group of military spacecraft sent to investigate the nature of ship ring. The ships weapons and engines were damaged but its communications unit is still intact. The spaceship is equipped with defense robots that are currently active trying to protect the ship. They are not smart and can be easily tricked or disabled by stealthy characters. They are very lethal in direct confrontations though. They are programmed simply to protect the ship from all invaders. The player characters could explain that they are not invaders or they are not harming the ship, etc.

Mission 5 Escape Pod / Navigation Computer

This escape pod was one of the many that escaped from a larger ship that has since crashed into the surface. Grabbing the navigation computer should be fairly straight forward, but there is a lone survivor could be found unconscious/hyper sleep. If the navigation computer is taken, it will disrupt the system and kill the occupant. If the occupant were awoken earlier, then the system can be taken apart easily. The occupant does not remember who they are and are extremely disoriented. It is up to the game master to determine their significance.

Boarding the Satellite

Once the ship is built the satellite can be boarded and disabled. It has anti-tamper mechanisms, which will activate in the case of failures to disable the satellite. The anti-tamper mechanisms will activate in the following order:

1. Activate an alarm and send communications to the group who put it there.
2. Fill the satellite with knockout gas.
3. Electrify panels causing damage to whoever touches them.
4. Activate a self-destruct mechanism with a 5 minute timer. Note: The self-destruct mechanism will damage a large radius around the satellite and kill anyone left onboard.

Crashing to the Planet

If they fail to stop the ship from deorbiting they will end up on the planet. The ship will survive the reentry with the characters in various states of injury. There is numerous debris scattered on the surface of the planet. The planet is a desert planet with small bits of scrub grasses. Emphasis that life will be hard but escape is possible either through the construction of a ship or transmitter. Escaping from the planet is beyond the scope of this module, but elements of it can be used once they do escape, although Favik will be long gone with the spacecraft. A campaign could be made to track him down.

CONCLUSION

Once gone from the debris field, they will find Favik in orbit around the last planet. He is busy going through the stuff on the ship, along with taking showers and eating food. If the players are fast or stealthy they can quickly board the craft and take the ship.

NPC

Favik Martock

- He is a skinny weasel guy who is desperate to get away and does whatever he can to make a quick buck and has no qualms about screwing people over if it benefits him. He is a low level trader in a local trade federation. Favik is smart, sneaky, and lazy. He has very little weapon skills, but trickery and deceit has saved him so far.