Drift RPG

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Lost Opportunities

Alone.

The night closes around and the next day slowly approaches.

Nine months until we see the daylight again, whatever colour it may be, it cannot be soon enough for me. The dusk is politics, the world we've abandoned. The dawn is politics, the world we shall save, if we only had the wherewithal, the purpose clear, but we never seem to get things quite right. It's only around midnight when I can settle down and get work done, make some small advancement that may save a hundred or a million, all doomed to die before we return any way. A blink of the eye. And we are the lucky souls who can blink and see a generation pass, and see all those chances lost to us. Still I prefer the daylight.

We failed this time, and I'm sure they will speak of it for years, years of argument and debate, all to solve a problem that ceased to have any meaning only an hour ago. It's too late, we can't save them. They have the time, but we do not.

Meteors are funny things, they tend to be hardly noticeable in the grand design. But sometimes they are more, a message a touch in space. On Tiradi 4 they were the harbingers of destruction. A collision on a sister world, alien and uninhabitable, millennia ago was all it took. A sliver of that hostility began to take root, and the colony will die.

Ultimately it was just an analog of algae, but one whose chemistry for the most part ignored ours. But not quite enough, and now the women of Tiradi 4 cannot bear children who can out live the year.

And we failed them. We should have been able to save them, or at least move them somewhere safe, but we lacked the desire, the drive to save a generation who would be buried on our return.

Someday politics will be all we have left, and then we may finally regret our inaction, our stance of superiority. But by then it will be too late.

–From the Journal of Dr. Hedsi Baker

Upon a Dreary Star

Imagine how your world will look in a hundred years. How will the people and the culture change? And what would you be if you suddenly found yourself there, as you are now? A hero, a nostalgia, a alien?

Traveling between the stars brings this to the fore. A journey may take but a few years to the traveler, but two centuries may pass until returning. It is a hard road, but it is the only one that leads to the stars.

Almost a millennia after humanity left their home, giant ships navigate the void between systems. Huge and powerful, even the most peaceful capable of annihilating life on a planet, these ships have become the

gods of the colony worlds. Passing through their traditional routes bringing new technology and occasionally colonists, take with them new ideas and talented individuals, their arrival is a sudden and rare change to the colonists. And the ship's masters? They look out upon their protectorates knowing full well that the man they drink with tonight is the great grandson of their last drinking partner on this world. It is a difficult life, in ways different from the colonists. But it is necessary for humanity to keep what it has taken.

The worlds beyond earth have a dual threat. They are places of alien natures, biologies incompatible with humanity, some downright hostile. In the midst of this the colonists fight a never ending war, solving the problems of living on a new world one at a time, a endless stream of specialized innovation and cultural development. The ships pass through the empty and not so empty void between stars, bringing authority, news, and advancement to the worlds they serve. Ultimately it is time that is the greatest barrier, as each world and each ship performs is necessary function they drift apart, their cultures as alien as their lives, and they risk losing sight of the one thing that holds them together, their humanity.

The Myriad Truths

A culture can be defined in various ways. But the most telling is the truths of the society. Those things which are so basic as to be unquestioned except by outsiders and outcasts. In Drift, these are Truths, which define a character's perspective and methods of life. Each character has taken something from, his or her culture, and these elements comprise their truths. The following is an incomplete list of truths, so feel free to create more.

- **Aspiration: Chaos** - The structure of the world requires shaking, in the very least to prevent stagnation. Pure energetic action and disorder provide the fertile ground for life at it's best.

- **Aspiration: Exploration** - The journey to find new worlds, both metaphorically and in reality is the fundamental drive. To deny it is to stagnate and die.

- **Aspiration: Knowledge** - The advancement of humanity is defined most directly by the body of knowledge that has been accumulated. Without this we would be nothing more than animals.

- **Aspiration: Peace** - The path of war has held humanity back for millennia. Only a concerted effort and unending vigilance can allow us to overcome this base urge and become truly masters of ourselves.

- **Aspiration: Purity** - Things, including people, must attain a state of true being. It is the reason for existence, without that we would be purposeless. What matters is working towards this perfection in ourselves and those around us.

- **Aspiration: Stability** - The first necessity in life is to stabilize your environment. Without stability life consists of merely surviving and nothing truly worthwhile can be accomplished.

- **The Great Wheel** - All things return in time, and balance is restored. Living in balance and setting things right that are imbalanced helps to guide the world in the correct path.

- **My Country, Right or Wrong** - The first and most basic loyalty is to your nation, whether chosen or by birth. You may work to change policies you disapprove of, but it is your responsibility to support the results, regardless of your agreement. To do otherwise would invalidate the entire process.

- **Law and Order** - Society exists because of the rules that must be obeyed. Following those rules provides the necessary structure for humans to grow beyond their humble beginnings.

- **Natural Law** - The laws of nature predate humanity. Without them we could not exist. To forget them and try to change them is the ultimate folly.

- **Sin: Anger** - To be clouded in judgment and to show anger to another human is to insult the rise above the beasts. Humanity is beyond such unconsidered action. Violence carries a determined nature and it is with determination that is should be performed.

- **Sin: Dishonesty** - To tell a lie is to put at risk to world in which all people must live. The world is harsh enough, without trust all would be for naught.

- **Sin: Hubris** - Pride is a violation of the natural order, it ignores the truth worth of the world and yourself. One's place is not to stand in defiance to the rest of the world, but to work within it.

- **Sin: Love** - Romance leads to pain, and placing one's desires above the needs of your society will cause nothing but heartache. Learn to live, not to love.

- **Sin: Lust** - Reckless carnality is wasteful, regardless of the target of the desires, giving in to them causes the people around you to suffer, and likely yourself when you return to your sense. Keep those desires firmly in check, or you will regret it in the long run.

- **Sin: Self-Denial** - To deny one's self is to open the door to self destruction. You must live, and experience the world, in all it's grandeur and villainy.

- **Virtue: Beauty** - Aesthetics define what is good and what is evil. Beauty in it's truest form is what makes life worth living.

- **Virtue: Freedom** - To be one's own master is the greatest gift, and the greatest responsibility. Striving for better world, freeing others, and living your own life for yourself, these are the central tenets of freedom.

- **Virtue: Friendship** - Friends are those to whom you owe the greatest debt. A true friend is your rock, a place of stability and one must be protected against all threats.

- **Virtue: Hope** - When the world turns darkest, it is time to shine through. Hope is a great power and it can guide you through the most horrible events.

- **Virtue: Instinct** - The purest expression of survival is instinct. Acting without thought to cloud what needs to be done. It is the last best hope when danger comes calling.

- **Virtue: Justice** - The world must be maintained in a set of balances. When actions remove harm the innocent, it is the responsibility of the just to alleviate the situation.

- **Virtue: Love** - Romantic emotions are the pinnacle of human experience. They define what is good and bad in our lives and give us purpose in the face of despair.

- **Virtue: Reason** - The fundamental human experience is to think. To forget the power of reason and ignore the abilities of careful consideration is to become less than human, less than what we should all aspire.

- **Virtue: Sincerity** - Perception of dishonesty is a break down in the ability to interact in a real society. Truth is less important than the social obligation of being of one face.

- **Virtue: Strength** - Strength defines status and weakness is a loss of that status. To show strength is good, to be truly strong and self-reliant is even better.

- **Virtue: Unity** - Discord brings pain and destruction. By cultivating a unified purpose among people around you, you aid them as well as yourself. When disunity arises disaster is at it's heels.

- **Virtue: Wealth** - True worth is based on your ability to acquire material wealth. It is the ultimate game, and victory in it implies a true master of the world.

Pictures of the World: Insights

The development of technology and the discoveries that allow it's use in every day life, stem from understanding some of the basic ideas that pervade the scientific world. Each idea is simple at it's core, but the full understanding of the insights involved can take a lifetime. Like Truths, more Insights can exist than just those on this list, so feel free to create new ones. Each Insight has a trio of suggested technologies, to give some ideas for how it can be used.

- **As Above, So Below** - The world contains few patterns when you know how to relate similar phenomena across different scales. **Technologies:** Particles, Astrogation, Psychology

- **Complexity Theory** - Simple systems permit surprising complexity and the emergent features they produce are the true source of the variety of systems in the world. **Technology:** Computation, Genetic Pathology, Developmental Psychology

- **Equal and Opposite** - The world works with a constant dynamism of forces, each creating equilibrium with their opposition. **Technologies:** Drive Systems, Trajectories, Interrogation

- **In a Long Enough Time Span** - Patience allows meaningless data to take on a more structured form, as the irregularities pass away, only the true nature of the system remains. **Technologies:** Subtle Genengineering, Astrogation, Experimental Sociology

- **Latent Expression** - Systems are often best defined by the hidden features, the ones which appear only in unusual circumstances. **Technologies:** Military Psychology, Developmental Genetics, Quantum Engineering

- **Linguistic Evolution** - The growth of language stems from deep neurological structures. By deciphering this a fuller understanding of thought processes is possible. **Technologies:** Linguistics, Memetics, Neurobiology.

- **More Power** - Any problem can be solved with the sufficient application of force. The hard part lies in delivery. **Technologies:** Weaponry, Power Systems, Conditioning

- **Occam's Razor** - Simplicity is often a key indication of the most correct theory. **Technologies:** Macrobiology, Orbital Mechanics, Data Analysis

- **The Part is Not the Whole** - Only by distinguishing phenomena can the subtle features that make a theory complete be revealed. **Technologies:** Artificial Intelligence, Xenobiology, Economics

- **Principle: Comprehension** - That which cannot be made accessible, is not truly understood. **Technologies:** Cybernetics, Interface Design, Corrective Psychology

- **Principle: Probability** - A deep understanding of probability, especially in it's less standard forms, is the foundation for explaining phenomena. **Technologies:** Quantum Theory, Education, Mutation Theory

- **Principle: Unification** - The goal of unification reveals deep structure other attempts at investigation often miss. **Technologies:** Theoretical Physics, Political Theory, Quantum Chemistry

- **Turtles All the Way** - The structures of the universe are in a never ending pattern, deciphering each new stage depends out reinterpreting the previous stages. **Technologies:** Particle Physics, Investigative Genetics, Psychotherapy

- **The Wheel Turns** - Cycles are found everywhere in nature. By finding these vital patterns the fundamental forces can be deciphered. **Technologies:** Electromagnetics, Medicine, History

Talking the Talk: Babbles

Culture and technology both have a tremendous array of details. Speculating about the far future makes it essentially impossible to make those details form a cohesive whole. Instead, we fall back on consistent terms and references and build on them. Insights have Technobabble, short snippets of exotic sounding technology or science which can be repeated to help build a consistent style to how the technology you use feels. Likewise, Truths have Culturebabble, important events, people, places, works of art or literature, quotes, and practices that form the details of your cultural perspective. Together these are called Babbles. The following are some examples:

Culturebabble

- Keeping Draknal (Aspiration: Purity) - Cognitive dietary restrictions.

- The Cerulean Sigil (My Country, Right or Wrong) - A post-digital flag.

- Yinwolf (Natural Law) - A predator from your homeworld you try to emulate.

- Bal Chadwick (Sin: Dishonesty) - The great deceiver, who betrayed your people.

- The Ascendancy (Sin: Love) - The historical event when your society banned families and romance.

- The Achebe-Chen Manifesto (Virtue: Freedom) - The definite list of methods for pro-active liberation.

- "A good human is strong she raises herself, a great human is strong enough she raises her entire community." (Virtue: Strength)

Technobabble

- Reverse Chromaticity Quark Beam (Equal and Opposite)

- Pico-tech Retroviral Agent (Latent Expression)

- Subtextual Immersion (Linguistic Evolution)

- Forsere Reduction Analysis (Occam's Razor)

- Micro-expression Student Evaluation (Principle: Probability)

- Cognitive Dissemination Theory (Turtles All the Way)

Sailing the Stars: The Circuit Ship

The first step in starting a game of Drift is to describe the ship on which the game will be played. This defines the tone of the game, as each ship has it's own purpose and function, as well as specialties and resources. Due to the rarity of inter-ship communication each ship has developed it's own culture and technology base, often quite different from their siblings. Since the following choices impact all the players, it is advisable that they be consulted to help make them. If desired they may be put to a vote or selected in turn by each player, how ever the group sees fit to choose them.

1. **Choose Ship Type:**

    - **Military** - This ship's primary mission is to defend the holdings on it's circuit, often this is a complex task, relying on training locals and setting up defensive and offensive technologies. A military ship can easily gain control of a system upon entry, the difficulty lies in maintaining that dominance after the ship has left.

    - **Political** - This ship is a traveling embassy and diplomatic station, it attempts to forge alliances and keep a general political structure over it's circuit. There are a variety of different goals for these ships, as they have all grown from a government organization of one sort or other.

- **Scientific** - This ship is a mobile research laboratory, it distributes it's discoveries to the world's on it's circuit and acquires any advances left by other ships. Each of these ships originally had a specialty, but the demands of time and their circuits have caused them to broaden their fields of study.

2. **Choose Ship Truths:** A ship's culture is complex and has grown slowly based on interaction with their circuit worlds and the requirements of long term space travel. Select seven Truths to determine the cultural features of the ship. These will be the consistently available truths for later in the game, often characters will acquire one or more of them over time.

3. **Choose Ship Insights:** A ship's scientific and technological development tends to be along standard lines, which is the reason that new recruits are so desired. Select five Insights to reflect the technological thinking of the ship's crew. These entrenched ideas of the ship's technologists provide a baseline for intellectual approaches. From here a character may be considered traditionalist, or a radical. Often over time these insights will be acquired by characters, as they slowly conform to the intellectual standards of the ship.

4. **Choose Technology Bases:** Over time the fundamental technologies available to each ship have changed. Often one base is as good as another, but a given ship has developed the related technology further. Choose three short phrases to describe the technology of the ship. These should be worked into the way that characters on the ship use their insights. These technology phrases are one of the best sources for a character's technobabbles.

5. **Choose Ship Name:** This can be anything, but the players will probably all want to agree on it.

Joining Up: The Team Members

Creating a character is much like creating a ship, each character has a set of Truths and Insights, as well as a description. However a character has the freedom to further define their Truths and Insights using Flavors.

1. **Describe Character:** A character should have a name, and a fairly well defined physical description. Some of the description should be left for the game, but it's a good idea to have major aspects in mind before hand.

2. **Truths and Insights:** A character has five total Aspects, i.e. Truths and Insights, at least one of each. They can be chosen from the main lists above. If a character is going to be native (see Step 4) to the ship, all but one of these must be from the Ship's lists.

3. **Select a Homeworld:** Ideally all characters will be from a different homeworld. Although native born characters are possible, it's less likely, since most crew members retire to a circuit world before raising a family. It is also possible for multiple characters to be from the same homeworld, but most ship leaders avoid placing too many individuals from the same homeworld into a team.

4. **Select Role:** Once the character has been created, it is time to select the character's role in the team, with the rest of the characters. Often this phase of the process should be done with the rest of the players, to help fit all the characters together. The best way to think about roles, is to determine what unique element this character brings to the team, whether it be due to Truths, Insights, or a predominance of a given type of Flavor. Don't worry too much about fitting a character to the role, characters will change and develop over time, so that they will further suit their developing role in the group.

5. **Create Some Babbles:** Now that you know your role, create five Babbles, but no more than two per Aspect. Most of these Babbles should be related to your role in some way, although one or two can be in another area. If you are stumped for ideas, consider situations your character could be involved in on or off duty, and make your Babble something you'd off-handedly say about how you'd handle it.

Traveling the Circuit

The next step, once characters have been created is to determine the circuit that the ship traverses in it's travels. These are not the only systems the ship could encounter and it is not uncommon that new systems may be added or dead ones removed. The initial circuit for the ship should include the homeworlds of each of the characters.

Each world should possess seven Truths, including the truths of any characters from that world. The travel time between each consecutive system can be anywhere from two months to a year. (This can be randomly determined by rolling a 2d6.) The order of the circuit should be determined, including where any systems in addition to the player character systems will be located. (This can be done by going around the table, adding the homeworld of each player, flipping a coin to decide if an additional system is between that homeworld and the next.)

Every circuit the GM should change one or more of the Truths of the world, as it slowly changes over the decades. The exact time dilation between the ship and it's circuit can vary considerably. Any where from one to six months on the ship can be equal to a year on it's circuit. This is a fairly important choice, as it will determine the pace of change the game encounters. A default would be two months equals a year.

Risky Business: Resoving Crises

A *crisis* happens when at least one character is attempting something important, with an uncertain outcome. If it isn't important, or if all the players and the GM have a pretty solid idea what will happen then there is no reason for a crisis. A crisis will always be a gamble, not only about whether the character succeeds or fails, but also about how much is at stake when that happens.

Much of Drift is composed of missions, either on a circuit world or on the circuit ship. Often missions are routine, but these are hardly interesting. The risky missions, where the team goes up against people opposing their goals or dangerous situations, those are worth showcasing. To see how the opposition of a mission is constructed see Crafting a Mission, below.

At the same time, team members won't always get along. They may disagree, fight, or compete. Indeed, sometimes your biggest opposition can be your own comrades. At other times crises occur without either a mission or another character, these special task crises use the dice pools in On Task, below.

When a character wants to achieve some risky and significant goal, and either some elements of the mission or other characters have other plans, or when some part of the mission threatens a character in some important way, then it is time to resolve this crisis. A given crisis can have more than two initial goals, but these are just the starting point, as the crisis is resolved what is at stake may turn out to be bigger than any of the original goals.

Once you know who or what is participating in a crisis and the direction of each of their goals, each character or mission element determines its starting dice. With the exception of task crises, this is done by first choosing an Aspect for the crisis. This should be based on how your character or mission element is approaching the crisis and achieving its goal. If none of your Aspects fits the crisis or at least how you want to approach it, then you choose either a cultural or a technological approach - equating to Free Truth or Free Insight for a character, respectively. If you are using an Aspect you start with 2d6, if you are not, you start with 1d6.

After you determine your Aspect you work in your Babbles. For characters, if you are using a Truth, you can describe any Culturebabbles on that Truth. Describe how you mention that trope as part of your attempt to resolve the conflict. Likewise if you used an Insight, you can use any Technobabbles on that Insight in the same way. For mission elements, any written Babbles can be used if either an Aspect is being used, or a new Babble can be written for this mission element, as long as there are fewer than two already. Each time a Babble is described into a crisis, it adds 1d6 to your starting dice.

You also have the option of using Babbles that don't belong to your current Aspect, at a cost of 1 Drive or Threat. This Drive is recorded under the Category where the Babble is located. This is the only way you can use Babbles will acting without an Aspect, even if you have a Babble under Free Truth or Free Insight, you must still spend Drive to use it.

In Drift, there are some general rules about rolling dice in crises.

- Leave all dice out until the end of the crisis - the dice keep adding up, so it works best to keep a running tally on the table, both of your total and the current stakes.

- Each time a 6 is rolled on a die, immediately roll in another die into your roll. This considered part of rolling in the original die, so finish this before anything else.

- The side with the largest sum wins the crisis. If there is a tie, no side is winning.

- The tens digit of the second highest sum is the stakes value for this crisis (e.g. 18 total = 1 stakes, 32 total = 3 stakes).

Under these rules, every side rolls their starting dice. Now every side except for the winner has the option of spending a point of Drive or Threat, to roll in a 1d6 or passing. This Drive is recorded under the chosen Category (the Aspect, Free Truth, or Free Insight) for this crisis. If the GM has reached her Threat maximum, then she must pass. Likewise, if a player previously drew a Stop Drive card, then that player's side must pass. If all non-winners pass, then the crises is resolved with the current winner. For crises with more than two sides, all non-winners choose whether to pass before they roll their 1d6, but passing in an earlier round does not prevent you from using Drive or Threat in a later round.

Choosing to use Drive or Threat in these situations is not wholly mechanical, it means that your side is escalating the crisis to try to get your way. When you don't pass, you should spend a little time describing the nature of that escalation, especially focusing on the Aspects and Babbles which you used.

Once a round occurs where all sides pass, the crisis ends. If there is a winner, that side is the final winner, but depending on the stakes, the results may be more or less than what the winner had desired. If there is no winner, due to a tie with all sides passing, then the crisis is defused, and no stakes or goals gained, with instead each side describing an uneasy truce. First the winner describes their part of the outcome, based on the value of their stakes.

Stakes	Outcome	Consequence
Zero	Patched or Unsteady Result	na
One	Functional and Sufficient	Troublesome
Two	Solid and Lasting	Crippling
Three	Magnificent and Inspiring	Lethal
Four	Earthshattering	Excessive

Then she determines how the stakes for the crisis are applied. For a mission this usually involves applying the stakes on the mission map, by first adding to unconverted nodes of this mission element, and then converting tokens of the opposition.

Alternatively, stakes can be spent to cause consequences to a participating character or mission element. When inflicting a consequence against a character, bear in mind that you will often apply more stakes than the final consequence severity, as a character can draw Drive to reduce the stakes in a consequence, using Free Truth or Free Insight (based on how he participated in the crisis).

Lastly, stakes can be spent to alleviate consequences, when doing so this must be part of your goal in the crisis, and the cost is one stake per stake that the consequence cost. You can partially reduce consequences in this manner, reducing a Lethal consequence to merely a Troublesome one.

If there are more than two participants, then there is an opportunity for the runners up to get part of their goals. After the winner applies stakes, she gets to choose whether the next runner up (or which of the next runner ups, if there is a tie) gets to have part of its goal. The stakes for the runner up are equal to the next lower total rolled on the dice and cannot contradict or cancel any stakes effects already spent on this crisis.

After applying stakes this runner up can then choose to let the next runner up use the next smallest total for stakes. Note, that in this way, the lowest totaling side can never get part of its goal since the first total used is the second highest, which is why this process need not be done if there are only two sides in a crisis.

The Drive Deck

Drive is an important part of Drift, it represents when a character is putting in extra effort or special cunning. These are also the moments when a character will change. Whenever a character uses Drive, the player draws a card from the Drive deck. This process can continue unless the card drawn is a Stop card. In that case this is the last card that can be drawn for this purpose, either for this crisis or to reduce this consequence.

During a crisis, you keep the Drive cards out where the GM can see them, as the Threat and Double Threat cards indicate a (potential) increase in the Threat the GM has available to spend.

When spending to reduce a consequence, you can draw Drive, recording it under Free Truth (if you used a Truth or Free Truth for this crisis) or Free Insight (if you used an Insight or Free Insight for this crisis), reducing the stakes of the consequence by one for each Drive. This continues until you choose to stop, you run out of consequence, or you get a Stop card. You should describe how you are evading the consequence by the skin of your teeth. If any consequence remains, the person applying stakes decides with the mitigated version is, it cannot be further reduced in this way.

The cards of the Drive deck should be made from blank index cards, marked with Stop, Threat, Double Threat, or left unmarked. In any case the cards should all leave room for description of some event, person, or object of note during the mission. A card that hasn't been filled in this way is called an open card.

When you gain at least two open cards during a crisis, you may keep one of them after the crisis to fill in something description of the current mission or the team's situation. This can be either by drawing and captioning the person, place, or thing, or by naming it and adding at least three short descriptive words or phrases underneath. You don't need to spend too much time, but it should be something easy to read and understand, something to bring back memories.

As you spend Drive, you will also be recording Drive on an Aspect, your Free Truth, or your Free Insight. Between crises, this recorded Drive can trigger into changes for your character. On an Aspect, these changes are voluntary, at any time:

- five recorded Drive can be spent to change one of this Aspect's Babbles

- ten recorded Drive can be spent to add a new Babble to this Aspect

No character can have more than ten Babbles, so if an eleventh Babble is added, one must be removed at the same time, from anywhere.

For Free Truth or Free Insight if either has recorded Drive on it equal or greater than twenty then, then twenty recorded Drive it is immediately spent and one of your existing Aspects must be replaced by a new one. The new Aspect must be chosen from either the Ship's lists or the Truth list of the current world (if any). The Aspect replaced is based on the following criteria:

- The last Truth or last Insight a character has cannot be replaced.

- The Aspect with the lowest number of Babbles is replaced.

- In case of a tie, the Drive with the lowest recorded Drive is replaced.

- In case of a tie, the player may decide which Truth or Insight is replaced.

Building the Drive Deck

The Drive deck is constructed in groups of ten cards. In each group there are two Stops, three Threats, and one Double Threat. Make sure that all cards leave room for adding description from players during play. At the beginning, the Drive Deck is built from four groups of ten cards, making a forty card deck.

Once less than a fifth of the cards in the Drive deck are open, it is time to add new open cards. Use the following table:

| Current Deck Size	Fewer Than X Open Cards	Cards to Add
40	8	10
50	10	10
60	12	20
80	16	20

If you need more than a hundred card Drive deck, either trim out some of the cards and replace them, or follow the trend in the table (adding thirty cards twice, and so on).

Shuffle the Drive deck at the beginning of each session, and if it runs out of cards shuffle the discarded cards back into the deck.

Crafting a Mission

During a game of Drift, the GM has the job of building a mission for the player's characters to resolve. The seed of this can come from various sources. Homage to a favorite TV show episode or story can serve as inspiration. Alternatively you can build on character's previous escapades. Once you know what you want to mission to be about, Drift quick method to described the characters and situations within the mission.

The once you've determined the core idea for the mission the next step is to list a number of Truths and Insights, between four and ten total. Pull these from the planet or ship on which the mission occurs, the player characters, or, especially in the case of Insights, based on what appeals from the main lists. Space them out on a piece of paper and start connecting the truths and insights, indicating conflicts or alliances between cultural and technological aspects of the mission. Label these with a specific situation, a character, or both. This will produce a map of your mission. The mission map below, is inspired by the Republic of Gaithsmark mission Election Duty.
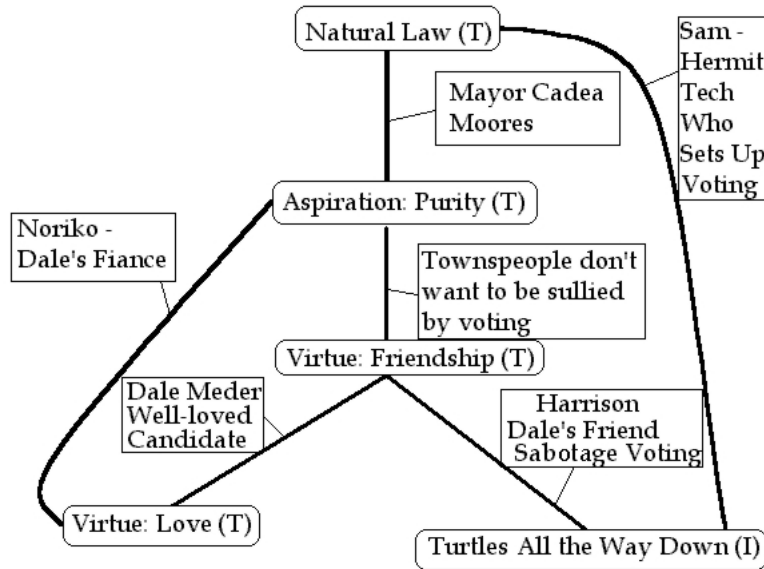
When player characters interact with any of the characters or situations, treat them as having the two Aspects which they link. Each link can have two Babbles as well, which can be used without penalty by either Aspect, but you can assign those before or during play. It is likewise easy to add new characters and situations during play, by filling in a new link. In the map above it could be a riot in the town to destroy the voting machines (connecting between Natural Law and Turtles All the Way Down), or a romantic rival of Noriko's or Dale's (connecting Virtue: Love with Natural Law).

Performing the Mission

The mission map also provides a way to describe the success or failure of the mission. As stakes are applied in crises by or against mission elements, those stakes can be spent on mission tokens.

A character can spend stakes to add success tokens or remove failure tokens on a one-to-one basis to either node belonging to the mission element in the current crisis. Likewise, that mission element can spend stakes to add failure tokens or remove success tokens from its nodes. In either case, no node can have both success and failure tokens, nor can a node have more than three tokens of either kind.

Once all the nodes of a mission element are filled with either success or failure tokens, that element has (at least temporarily) been removed from the action. Depending on the situation it is either too far gone or not particularly risky to deal with any more, at least until something else is affected first.

Once all the nodes of the mission have three tokens after all stakes are spent on a crisis, then that crisis concludes the mission. Tally up the successful versus failed nodes, the more nodes are won, then the mission is a greater success in the final analysis. The players and the GM work together the describe the aftermath of the mission.

Threat

As GM your mission elements are the people and situations of within the scope the missions you craft. They don't have Drive like characters, but you do have a Threat you can call upon in much the same way. You base Threat is one, unless every mission node has a token on it. In that case, your base Threat is two. In either case, your threat is increased by one for each Threat and two for each Double Threat card from the Drive deck. However you may only use the largest total among the players participating in a given crisis, you may not add them together from different Drive piles.

On Task

Occasionally a character tries something significant and risky that lies entirely outside of the mission and independent of other characters. In this case, the opposition for this crisis is very risk level of the task at hand, rather than an entity with Aspects and Babbles. Use the following table to determine the opposing dice. The stakes from this cannot be spent on the current mission(s), and the GMs base threat is always one.

Risk	Opposing Dice
Reliable and Mostly Safe	2d6
A Calculated Risk	3d6
A Dangerous Gamble	4d6
A Long Shot	5d6

A Good Ship

One of the most crucial elements of Drift is the ship the players select. This develops the context for the entire game. The following ships are examples of different approaches which can be taken to making your ship.

U.N.S.C. Chimera - Military Ship
Truths:
    Aspiration: Stability
    Law and Order
    My Country, Right or Wrong
    Sin: Anger
    Sin: Dishonesty
    Virtue: Friendship
    Virtue: Strength
Insights:
    As Above, So Below
    Equal and Opposite
    More Power
    Principle: Unification
    The Wheel Turns
Tech Bases:
    "Organically grown metal"
    "Extremely powerful magnetic fields"
    "Entropy detectors"
Description:
The Chimera was originally commissioned as a Peace Keeping ship by the old Earth U.N. It's primary job was to prevent the dominance of any one colonial power. Eventually it's mission mutated to being concerned with stability and keeping the colonists from becoming too violent to other colonies in system. Also the Chimera has developed a strong sense of brotherhood amongst the ground units employed, while officially lower ranked they still manage to have significant sway over the more divided naval hierarchy due to this cooperation.
Missions:
War games - The only way to keep readiness is to practice, practice, practice. On the other hand, when that practice is on an barely explored world, it's hardly going to be just a game.
Mutiny! - Some naval officers have decided to make their move and take over the ship's control room. They intend to become the new commanders, but is your team willing to stand by and let that happen? Or maybe they want to help?

The White-Plumed Crane - Military Ship
Truths:
    Aspiration: Purity
    The Great Wheel
    Natural Law
    Sin: Lust
    Sin: Hubris
    Virtue: Beauty
    Virtue: Justice
Insights:
    In a Long Enough Time Span
    Latent Expression
    Occum's Razor
    Principle: Comprehension
    Turtles All the Way
Tech Bases:

"Intron modulation therapy"
"Adaptive crystalline structures"
"Post-gravitational convolutions"

Description:
The White-Plumed Crane is essentially a Shaolin Temple in space. It's furthers the ideas of it's Buddhist sect, long since separated. They carry on the ancient tradition of righting wrongs and aiding the oppressed, often being content to appear as heroes of legend on the worlds in their circuit.

Missions:
In Search of the Grand Master - The Grandmaster Schwartz left the established parts of the ship years ago, now she is only approachable if you track her down in the engineering sector, which is mostly automated. Rumor has it that she can teach ancient techniques the current masters have never learned. Are you willing to find out?

How Strong is Your Kung Fu? - It's time for the yearly martial arts tournament. Each school will compete for the title of champion. Is your Kung Fu good enough?

The Republic of Gaithsmark - Political Ship

Truths:
Law and Order
My Country, Right or Wrong
Sin: Love
Virtue: Friendship
Virtue: Sincerity
Virtue: Strength
Virtue: Wealth

Insights:
Complexity Theory
Linguistic Evolution
The Part is Not the Whole
Principle: Probability
The Wheel Turns

Tech Bases:
"Programmable Micro-organisms"
"Shaped Nano-dense materials"
"Gamma ray optics"

Description:
The Republic of Gaithsmark was once a colonial government, which moved on ship to permit the administration of conquered colonies. Over time, more and more systems have been added to the Republic, shifting the joint military and political mission of the ship to a purely political role. The Republic attempts to keep the local powers under their sway, and eliminate any authority from other ships which cross their path.

Senatorial Infighting - Sometimes the senators like to attack each other down on the Senate floor. Unfortunately one of them has decided to attack Senator Jin Ku in a much more permanent matter.

Elections Duty - It's the grunge duty of the ship, so everyone gets a bit of it. This time your visit won't be filled with the normal missions, instead your team needs to run the elections for Senator for this planet. This is no mean task, after all this time, how many of the colonists remember how to vote?

Census Ship 5 - Political Ship

Truths:
Aspiration: Knowledge
Aspiration: Stability
The Great Wheel
Natural Law
Sin: Hubris
Virtue: Reason
Virtue: Sincerity

Insights:
   Linguistic Evolution
   Occum's Razor
   The Part is Not the Whole
   Principle: Unification
   The Wheel Turns
Tech Bases:
   "Learning ceramics"
   "Space ready cellular machines"
   "Gravitational computers"
Description:
Census Ship 5 is part of a fleet of twelve ships developed by the Colonization Authority, a joint organization of half a dozen major space nations. They built the ships to maintain accurate databases of the planets on their circuits. Over time Ship 5 has violated their non-interference restrictions on several occasions, but the leadership will only intervene in case of man-made disasters, they feel that natural events are not to be tampered with.
Missions:
Database Breakdown - Something is wrong with the database. The core seems to be inaccessible. What's happened? Is it an external event causing equipment failure? A design flaw finally appearing? Or is someone trying to undermine the purpose of the ship?
Data Evaluation - The data evaluation tasks are so behind that the assignment you get is several decades old. But not everything adds up. How do you track down the problems when half the original team has retired?

University of Io - Science Ship
Truths:
   Aspiration: Exploration
   Aspiration: Peace
   Aspiration: Stability
   Sin: Dishonesty
   Virtue: Freedom
   Virtue: Hope
   Virtue: Reason
Insights:
   Complexity Theory
   Linguistic Evolution
   Occum's Razor
   The Part is Not the Whole
   Principle: Comprehension
Tech Bases:
   "Meta-feedback algorithms"
   "Self-aligning materials"
   "Channeled neutrinos"
Description:
Once the University of Io was actually located on the moon it's named after. But once the mining opportunities had dried up, the University decided to pick up and follow the out-bound colonists they had educated on Io. Now it tours the circuit which of those colonies. It's primary focus had been computer science, but over time the University has necessarily broadened it's research interests.
Missions:
Tenure Review - And you thought field duty was rough. These guys make the Inquisition look pleasant. And if they're not satisfied, good luck getting funding, computer time, and new students.
Admissions - Every world has it's brightest, but how can you make sure they deserve to attend UIo? Navigating the politics, economics, and simple strangeness of the culture won't be easy.

Valtech Inc. - Science Ship
Truths:
    The Great Wheel
    Sin: Love
    Sin: Self-Denial
    Virtue: Beauty
    Virtue: Freedom
    Virtue: Instinct
    Virtue: Reason
Insights:
    In a Long Enough Time Span
    Linguistic Evolution
    The Part is Not the Whole
    Principle: Unification
    Turtles All the Way
Tech Bases:
    "Auto-mutative bioforms"
    "Psychoactive symbiots"
    "Bio-electric generators"
Description:
Corporate deep space research lab turned Hedonistic fun-fest, Valtech was once a biotech firm, who served various colonial corporations. Over time, they advanced and their clients did not. In order to retain clients they developed a novel approach to interacting with colonists, masquerading as a mystery cult. Over time this has altered the ship's culture from hard working, if laid back corporation, to drenched in excess. Of course that only adds to the mystique.
Missions:
Containment Breach - There's lots of nasty stuff in those secured labs in Blue sector. And now some of it isn't just in Blue sector anymore. Party time is over, it's time for some serious damage control.
Product to Market - R&D is all well and good, but sometimes you need to take the research and make something that will sell. Marketing needs to be redefined for each world, and with circuit based deadlines, it can be a real killer.

And a Star to Sail Her By

Another vital element of any Drift game is the worlds and systems on the circuit. These systems often drive the game, providing the problems and dangers encountered in the yearly business of the ship. The following are sample systems and some worlds that can be placed in systems of their own.

Carnibus - Three World System
A single-star system, with two habitable worlds, as well as a mining colony in the far asteroid belt. Due to the metal poor natures of both Carnibus 4 and Carnibus 5, the mining colony, Minerva's Tear, is vital to both worlds. Internal strife between the two terrestrial colonies, however, tends to dominate the system.
Missions:
Message of Peace - As the only truly neutral faction in the conflict between the two planets, the ship has been asked to carry an envoy from Carnibus 5 to their sister planet. This may be a chance to forge peace in this system. Or it may be yet another failure for diplomacy.
Harbinger of War - The arrival of your ship included some new technical data, helping to improve the mining facilities of Minerva's Tear. Unfortunately that technology has also permitted the development of a new weapon system. Now the governments of both planets are going to try to get a hold of it before the other side does. It seems peace will soon be a distant memory.
Worlds:
Carnibus 4 - Planetary Colony
Truths:
    Sin: Anger

Sin: Lust
Virtue: Beauty
Virtue: Friendship
Virtue: Sincerity
Virtue: Unity
Virtue: Wealth

Description:
A highly developed society, centered on family status dominates this green world. Well terraformed this once lifeless world has been made to grow many conventional plants and animals. Only minimal tweaking has been required to handle lower trace metals, and an increase in surface temperature. The standard climate of Carnibus 4 is tropical, with little seasonal variation.

Missions:
Take me to your leader - The previous family your ship has dealt with has apparently been killed by parties unknown, causing a subtle version of a civil war. Unfortunately to do your job, you need to find the new leaders. And if you can't find them, you might just have to make them.

Blight season - With all the moisture Carnibus 4 is ripe for a crop blight, and nature has decided to oblige. While there's enough variety to keep much of the colony alive, several regions could be hard enough hit to cause mass starvation. Fortunately your ship is here to the rescue.

Carnibus 5 - Planetary Colony
Truths:
Aspiration: Stability
Law and Order
Natural Law
Sin: Dishonesty
Sin: Lust
Virtue: Reason
Virtue: Unity

Description:
A sparsely populated but heavily regimented society, Carnibus 5 has a colder, harsher environment, with significant seasonal shifts. It slightly eccentric orbit has required greater tolerance of cold and darkness to be provided to the main crops grown here, as well as the colonists. Notably Carnibus 5 has a strong, state enforced, education system. As a result it manages to be run as a fairly direct representative republic.

Missions:
Library Blues - In updating the Carnibus 5 educational library, your team has uncovered several significant inconsistencies, especially pertaining to the early colonization of the system. Is this an honest error? Or is something sinister being hidden?

Voted in a Flash - Due to the technologic arrangements Carnibus 5 has each representative elected over short period of time, and all at different intervals and times based on the region. As a result the person in charge yesterday might be back on her farm today. And someone who you insulted in the bar yesterday may be the next person voted in. Politics can be a funny thing.

Minerva's Tear - Mining Colony
Truths:
Aspiration: Exploration
The Great Wheel
Sin: Hubris
Sin: Self-Denial
Virtue: Friendship
Virtue: Freedom
Virtue: Wealth

Description:
More risky than many mining colonies due to the out-dated equipment, the miners of Minerva's Tear are aware of the risks, and face them gladly. The colony is run by a council of four mining corporations, which branched off various interstellar interests centuries ago. The companies are hereditary, with the key offices

passing to either familial heirs, or chosen successors. This has managed to keep things somewhat stable, and the corporations for the most part cooperate in doing business.
Missions:
Corporate Skirmish - Due to more advanced detection technology your ship has ascertained a previously unimportant asteroid contains a significant vein of gold. Rarer than usual in this system, and much needed for certain electronics still in use, this discovery will certainly excite all the corporations, perhaps a little too much.
S.O.S. - Your team has encountered a mining ship broadcasting a distress signal. Upon investigation the ship seems empty. Did the crew escape? Who set the signal? Could this be a sign of piracy in the belt?

Euler's Star - Two World System
A binary system, with the stars orbiting within about an AU of each other. The only inhabitable planet, Euler's Paradise has a long orbit around these two stars. There is also a constellation, Echo Station, which extends out from directly between the two stars.
Missions:
Euler's Watch - A small orbital station around Euler's Paradise, Euler's Watch is a place for exiles and prisoners. Kept under watch by those who have lost the desire to live under the strict rules of their homeworld. However, some of the greatest criminals of Euler's Star are kept here. And now some of them have escaped.
Distress - A small beacon is detected from one of the uninhabitable planets in the system. Is it a relic of a failed colony, a crashed ship, or something more sinister? And to make matters worse, that world will soon be nearing one of its suns, and if anyone is still alive, they soon won't be.
Worlds:
Euler's Paradise - Planetary Colony
Truths:
    Aspiration: Peace
    Aspiration: Stability
    The Great Wheel
    Law and Order
    Sin: Hubris
    Sin: Self-Denial
    Virtue: Unity
Description:
A planetary society based on a strict, but simple approach to life. Maintaining strong cultural expectations the people of Euler's Paradise rarely find themselves faced with internal challenges, owing to the difficulties of dealing with the erratic weather, as well as the occasional visits from Echo Station. Their elected council rules slowly, but strictly, enforcing laws to the letter. However, the residents of Euler's Paradise work hard and play hard. The climate is mostly temperate, with a tendency for freak weather patterns, especially during the more eccentric parts of the orbit, usually termed, "Storm Season".
Missions:
Quiet Rebellion - Strange things have accompanied the arrival of the ship. It seems that some people are beginning to express their displeasure with Euler's Paradise. The capitol city, Elsmere has been plagued by inexplicable acts of protest, and it's beginning to shake everyone up. So the question is, whose side are you on?
Eye of the Storm - The atmospheric regulators that help keep "Storm Season" from being uninhabitable have begun to malfunction. The repair team has been lost in a freak weather front, which has spread across half the globe. Your team needs to find out what happens and fix things, before Euler's Paradise becomes a dead world.
Echo Station - Constellation
Truths:
    Aspiration: Chaos
    Aspiration: Peace
    Sin: Anger
    Sin: Dishonesty
    Sin: Love

Virtue: Friendship
Virtue: Instinct
Description:
A free-wheeling collection of satellites, stations, and orbiting craft which have long since lost the use of their engines, this node of commerce and life, called Echo Station after it's largest member, is a chaotic milieu nearly devoid of any rules at all. The leadership structure of Echo Station varies from week to week, but several unwritten rules are adhered to, simply to keep the constellation from falling into disrepair and war. Combat in the constellation is strictly prohibited, and with the unpredictable nature of one's neighbors this is more a matter of common sense than enforcement. No one interferes with free trade, especially with import ships from Euler's Paradise. And no one tells their neighbors what to do.
Missions:
Hot Potato - It's supposed to be a routine investigation. But somewhere along the way something went wrong. Now it seems that everyone is recognizing the team, and not in a pleasant way. In the middle of suddenly hostile territory, how do you find out what happened? And how do you get out?
Mirror Shades - The solar deflection system has always been a little buggy, but since Green 14 was burnt to a cinder, what passes for the civil authorities have decided something needs to be done. Fortunately your ship has just arrived.

Omicron 5 - Two World System
A one star system, Omicron 5 has a single colonized world. The second inhabited body is actually a circuit ship, which has been derelict for over three hundred years. The "victor" of a chance encounter between two circuit ships which had been feuding for over a century, the U.S.S.C. Utah, has been in a slow orbit of Veti, the inhabited world ever since.
Missions:
Lucky Streak - The Lucky Streak is a freelance courier between the two worlds, and it's cargo is typically contraband to both. But in a system where this sort of smuggling is typically ignored, why is the ship calling you for help? And what might it be carrying that the residents of the system don't want you to know about?
The AbsCom Conspiracy - Officially no one on the Blue Mongoose survived the encounter with the U.S.C. Utah, but recently AbsCom corporation, the current leader in both worlds communication systems, has become erratic. A recent unexplained homicide of an investigative reporter who had interviewed the CEO is drawing some concern. Word on the street says these are all connected, but who is playing who for a sap.
Worlds:
U.S.S.C. Utah - Derelict Ship
Truths:
Aspiration: Stability
My Country, Right or Wrong
Sin: Anger
Sin: Lust
Virtue: Freedom
Virtue: Friendship
Virtue: Unity
Description:
The Utah is run by a simple elected bureaucracy. The different ship positions are still held as the government, but they are now voted in among the qualified candidates, for a six year term. The atmosphere of the ship ranges from loose and fast, to prim and proper. Each of the major districts was once a support site for a division of marines. The different traditions and ideals of the divisions has evolved and mutated with contact with the planet, into a handful of districts each with a very distinct character.
Missions:
The Loaded Gun - Recent tensions between Utah and the planet have gotten worse. Now Utah is threatening to use orbital bombardment to weigh a recent trade agreement in their favor. As things get more ugly, you arrive, and are asked politely but firmly to arbitrate.

Return to Space - A recent development may permit the repair of the Utah's engines. But what kind of ship would they become if they could once again travel the spaceways. And what would that do to the planet with which they have grown interdependent.

Veti - Planetary Colony

Truths:
    Aspiration: Knowledge
    Aspiration: Purity
    The Great Wheel
    Sin: Love
    Virtue: Beauty
    Virtue: Sincerity
    Virtue: Wealth

Description:
A highly meditative society, Veti has a long tradition of rule by it's elders. Leaders are selected primarily based on their skill as debaters, and the debates to choose the high elder have been known to last for days. A mostly agrarian world, Veti is home to several well stocked libraries, contributed to by passing ships. They rely on the technology of the Utah for many things, but some groups on the planet have a strong desire for self-sufficiency.

The Challenge - When walking down the street in the capitol city of Miguas, some imagined slight has become serious, and now must be handled in public debates. But the trail is deeper than that, because significant amounts of money has changed hands, and something seems to be fixed.

A Hostage Situation - Some of the separatists have taken to something stronger than shouted debates, they've taken a few ship crew members hostage. As it stands this looks to end poorly, especially since the Utah has offered the aid if it's "special forces" and doesn't seem to be waiting for a yes.

Alesar's World - Planetary Colony

Truths:
    Aspiration: Chaos
    Aspiration: Peace
    Natural Law
    Sin: Dishonesty
    Virtue: Freedom
    Virtue: Instinct
    Virtue: Love

Description:
Alesar's World is a case study in anarchy. A constantly shifting and warping society, where no leaders rise to the top for more than a few days. But thanks to several chemicals found in the common food products the relative ambition of the people is small. However, the major danger when visiting the paradise of Alesar's World is the taboos, subtle, but very real, outsiders often fail to realize that they have broken them, until they are shunned permanently.

Missions:

Ambassadorial Replacements - The previous ambassadors have managed to break some subtle taboo before the negotiations could complete. As has the one before that, and the one before that. Now it's the last chance for a diplomatic solution before the application of irrefutable force.

AWOL - Several key personnel were on leave on Alesar's World, and are now refusing to return. Your team has been sent down to determine what has caused this sudden change in loyalties, and to determine if Alesar's is dangerous enough that it will be taken off the circuit.

Miranda 4 - Planetary Colony

Truths:
    Aspiration: Exploration
    Law and Order
    Sin: Anger
    Sin: Hubris

Sin: Lust
    Virtue: Freedom
    Virtue: Justice

Description:

The world of Miranda 4 is a recently founded colony, still thriving on new discoveries and territory. The Colonization Authority has managed the migration if it's colonists for nearly one hundred years, and is the accepted authority of the planet. The marshals who represent the Authority provide local law enforcement in the small towns and homesteads.

Missions:

Fungi Rush - The recent discovery of a novel fungus variant appears to herald two significant changes to Miranda 4, first an influx of colonists interested in reaping this new resource, and a break down of the power of the Authority as corporations begin to arise. To what length is the Authority prepared to go to protect it's position, and what means might it's more unpredictable marshals take?

Slow Motion Plague - Miranda 4 is sparsely populated, to prevent sudden cross contamination due to it's colonization technology. But upon recent arrival the colonies have been subtly altered, on approach to the planet it appears a plague has struck, fallowing large regions of the planet, but the Authority claims all is well.

Epsilon Gamma Phi Gamma - Constellation

Truths:

    Aspiration: Knowledge
    Aspiration: Peace
    The Great Wheel
    Sin: Self-Denial
    Virtue: Instinct
    Virtue: Reason
    Virtue: Strength

Description:

Epsilon Gamma Phi Gamma is many things. It is a failed colonization platform, due to it's planet having toxic levels of heavy metals. It is a haven for one of the strangest faiths ever encountered. It is a very dangerous place to live, but a wonderful one to visit. The people of Epsilon Gamma Phi Gamma follow the Two-Fold Path. A strange and esoteric religion that attempts to divide the higher and lower parts of a person, by climactic control and conditioning, the residents of this constellation are highly reasoned and culturally developed, but during the night cycle, all that changes. The people become near animals, dwelling in a constant flux of excess and desire. One night is usually enough to scare almost any one away, or make them into a convert.

Missions:

Dr. Jekyl - The ship needs a new expert, and it just so happens that a perfect choice exists on the constellation. But first someone needs to convince her that moving out of the daily cycle won't cause madness and death. And then someone will need top make sure that the first person was right.

Mr. Hyde - Due to an accident the ship has lost several key biologics from the hydroponics bays. Replacements can be found, but the only person who sells them on the constellation avoids doing business during daylight. It's expected to be a harrowing journey, and that's just the haggling over price.

Name:
Player:
Team Role(s):
Description:

Homeworld:
Description:

Original Truths:

Free Truth

Free Insight