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# Adventures of the Atomic Rangers

The Day the Moon Ran Away with a Spoon

GagMen Episode 37, April 2015 A Basic Fantasy Adventure set in the retro sci-fi world of the Atomic Rangers "Shoestring Budget Sci-fi" Written by the GagMen on the GagMen RPG Podcast Illustrations by Gaghouse Productions Contact: shutup@gagmen.net

#### Basic Fantasy Rules

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General Ideas and Story

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## Introduction

This adventure was created with the Basic Fantasy Rules (by Chris Gonnerman) but could be used for most retro-clone versions of Dungeons & Dragons, or any version of Dungeons & Dragons with which you may be more familiar. The adventure is designed for beginning level characters, preferably between levels 1-3, and was written with lots of silly little things meant to make your gaming experience light and fun.

Unfortunately, there is not an equivalent science fiction role-playing game as affordable or accessible as Basic Fantasy, As such, we have adapted Basic Fantasy rules and other elements of the world to create Basic Space. Basic Space rules are in no way endorsed by Chris Gonnerman, and are purely an experiment of the GagMen. If the rules that we have adapted don't fit your style, feel free to change them or try your own solution. Otherwise, make sure your seatbelts are fastened and your tray table is in the upright/locked position (in other words, we're not sure how this is going to work, so please bear with us!).

#### Shoestring Budget Sci-Fi? What in the world is that?

How can a story based seventeen years in the past also be set in the future? The future that we live in, or as you may like to call it "the present", is just one possible world that could exist. The Atomic Rangers setting is the future as represented in the 1930's serial films and the 1950's television shows. It is a universe filled with shining chrome rockets flinging themselves to the stars and into harm's way to set the universe on the path of justice.

This retro-sci-fi universe does not always follow the rules and physical laws that we know today; for example your characters might survive a short space walk without a suit. Other possible examples may include that when a rocket stops firing, it stops motionless in space or immediately crashes on the nearest planet, not following normal rules of inertia or physics. A simple way to accept this is to understand that writers from the era really had no idea how the universe worked, so they just made stories and guessed the rest.

One distinct characteristic of this era was the small budget (or, "shoestring budget") assigned to achieve epic results; as a result, the occasional fish line or zipper might be seen holding the universe together!









#### Dwarves are from Mars and Elves are from Venus

We have only just begun to explore this world, however since we used the Basic Fantasy rules it only made sense to use the same races in order to save a little time. The Elves used here are a race native to the jungle planet of Venus. They are a ritualistic and ancient race that has long observed Earth. The Dwarves control the red planet Mars, and are stern, smart, and keen to work on devices.

These races should play about the same as in Basic Fantasy, and you can expect others to be included. So far the adventures of the Atomic Rangers have yet to leave the solar system, but you can expect more adventures that will expand their universe and introduce many new friends and enemies. For wherever there is injustice and tyranny, you will find the Atomic Rangers fighting for what is right!

## Summary

When danger looms in the Solar system and the human race is threatened, only the Atomic Rangers have the power to defend them! As ancient secrets are discovered on the Moon, an old enemy stirs at the chance to wreak his revenge on earth and the Rangers! While the answers may lie on Venus, if Barn Zordo has any say, all the Ranger will find is their doom! Buckle up Rangers, for galactic adventure and interstellar mystery waits as you witness "The day the Moon ran away with the Spoon!"





# Setting/Theme

#### History of the Future

Our story is set in the far flung future of 1996, the atomic rocket age. Humans have made leaps and bounds in atomic technology, turning its destructive potential into a hope for the future. With atomic powered rockets, humanity has begun exploring space, reaching the planets of our solar system and far into deep space. The Earth Space Patrols enforce and protect the more primitive civilizations on neighboring planets, and apply the only true justice that can be found in this new lawless frontier.

#### The Atomic Rangers

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With the universe opened to exploration and Earth more vulnerable to attacks and

invasions than ever before, the inhabitant created a special force that would protect the defenseless, uphold the law, and stop evil before it begins. Though the Rangers were founded on Earth, their organization has grown to include groups of different races and species that have each learned the benefit of working together for a better future. All sentient races in the solar system are aware of the Atomic Rangers, and either respect or fear them.

Trained to protect the new open frontier, each Atomic Ranger is extensively trained in combat, justice, honor, etiquette, and discipline. Rangers are accompanied by several deputized agents with specialties to help accomplish different mission objectives. Each member of the team is treated as an Atomic Ranger in the field. After four years of apprenticeship under an Atomic Ranger, a deputy can enroll in the academy to

become a full Atomic Ranger themselves.

Atomic Rangers keep secret the atomic knowledge of the special power source that makes space travel possible and powers the signature weapon the Atomsabre. The rangers have recruited the most brilliant minds in the solar system, and as a result have the most advanced equipment available their cause.

#### The Earth, the Moon, and the Stars

Our story begins on Earth, at the Atomic Ranger Base U.S.A. Earth of the future is a glorious utopia, and each wall of the base is covered in chrome. Occasional panels of flashing lights help control special features of each room. The base is located in the harbor of





New York, just off the coast of Liberty Island. Lady Liberty still stands nearby, and the cadets say that she watches over the academy to ensure the freedom for the future.

Departing from Ranger Base USA, the party will travel to Moon base X, only to find clues that will lead them to the jungles of Venus. The moon has been colonized by over a hundred-thousand inhabitants. Most people are housed in underground bunkers, but there are

several domes on the surface to grow crops and livestock. The heavy mining of moon has upturned a few strange and surprising artifacts, often turning construction areas into archaeological digs.

Venus is

covered in a

dense jungle and inhabited by a deceptively primitive race of elves. Underneath the dense jungles there is evidence of an ancient civilization that may have seeded many other worlds. One of the more exciting locales on Venus includes the pyramid Temple of Amure, an ancient ruin that is hypothesized to be a temple dedicated to the Venusian god Amue. The deep jungles of Venus are inhabited by dangerous reptilian creatures; few people try to venture into them without a native guide.

## Plot

#### The Call to Adventure

Our story begins on the Atomic Ranger base, as Commander Neeson gives the group a tour of the facilities. Neeson has called the party

together for a very special mission, the details of which he plans discuss back in his office.

During the tour, the commander will point out the launch pad with a rocket ready to launch at all times, reminding the party how the rangers must be vigilant and always prepared for danger. Along the hallway back to his office, there are several paintings of famous Atomic Rangers of the

past, with one notably covered.

The covered painting is Baron Zordo, a ranger who betrayed the trust of the Atomic Rangers and continues to use his secret atomic knowledge against the rangers at every turn.

When the group reaches the commander's office, they will discover a





Martian dwarf already in the room; he will immediately stand when the party enters.

"I would like you to meet Dr. Zeral," Commander Neeson gestures to the dwarf. "Dr. Zeral is one of our leading scientific experts, and is in charge of any investigation into unusual events; like the one has just occurred on the moon."

The Doctor will explain that mining on the moon has unearthed (or, un-mooned) a collection of artifacts that suggests a link to people that might have visited the earth before the time of man. The doctor will need to go and see the location of the artifacts and interpret the different symbols discovered before he can determine where they came from.



been secretly placed on the fuselage, blowing a hole in the main fuel tanks. Experiencing extreme fuel loss and having already reached the point of no return, the rangers are forced find a safe haven to make repairs before falling back to earth. Sputtering on the last drops of fuel, the crew should locate a derelict space station on the radar. With no other contacts in range, it may be

#### Bang! Zoom!

Commander Neeson will quickly usher the team and Dr. Zeral to the already prepped rocket ship Ranger-6 for a quick take off. The Ranger-6 is a chrome coated, cigar-shaped rocket that stands over a hundred-



their only chance.

## Canned Squid

The derelict was a refueling station that was abandoned during the Mechano-Wars. The station has six main floors, connected by a nonfunctioning elevator shaft that runs through the center of the station, and a ladder

feet tall on its four fins and points to space. The party should make their way to the command bridge and strap in for blast off.

The rocket soars into the heavens... until it reaches eleven miles up, when a sudden explosion erupts from the rear. A bomb had system in parallel. The station is dusty, and many of the controls are covered in cobwebs. Once they are cleaned off, however, the chrome and bright control lights will shine through.

The station still has enough fuel to refuel the Ranger-6, once repairs have been





made. The station has ample supplies, with the exception of escape pods. According to the station commander's log, the station was abandoned after an attack, but he never says from who or what.

If anyone in the party does a thorough analysis of the systems, they may discover a large puncture in the side of the hanger deck. During the war the station took aboard an alien egg, which gave birth to a shoal of space-squids. The squids attacked the crew, forcing them to flee the station. Once the squids reached maturity they would lay a new egg before beginning their migration. The remaining egg is guarded

of the new generation.

by one

The nesting area is on the hangar deck; if anyone approaches or damages the eggs the protector squid will attack. If the group changes the power feed in any way (say by emptying out the fuel cells to fill up Ranger-6) then the guard squid will attack!

Space-Squid, Giant (see page 19)

#### Digging up the Spoon on the Moon

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The moon is a short distance from the derelict station, and the docking facilities at Moon base X will be able to make permanent repairs to Ranger-6. The crews at the dock will start working right away, allowing Dr. Zeral and the rangers to be escorted to the dig site deep underground. The site is under one of the

> horticultural domes, as the moon crew was digging out a large underground cavern to house tractors and other farming equipment. The artifacts were only found a few days ago and they stopped all excavation after the discovery.

The domes that comprise Moon base X are connected by pneumatic 00 tubes, rocketing people back and forth between each of the domes. The domes are made with a thick glass and steel reinforced girder supports. When the ranger party arrives at the horticultural dome, they may be surprised by the freshness of the air and fragrant aroma of the flowers. There is a series of grain silos near the entrance of the dome, with an elevator that will take them down to the lower level.

The cavern is carved to a smooth flat surface in the entry area, but on the far side of the cavern it is obvious that they are still in the





process of breaking apart the rock. In the rough patch is a sectioned off area surrounding a few small items lying around the floor. One of the cavern miners will point out that the items have been left as they were found. The miners marked off the area and stopped all mining operations until the Atomic Rangers could check it out.

Among the artifacts is a series of metal plates with unusual carvings and a crescent shaped piece of metal that resembles a spoon. Dr. Zeral will study the markings for a while before declaring them similar to the runes found in the walls of a pyramid of Venus. The

spoon seems to be a focal point, but Zeral is unsure how it is connected. Zeral will suggest that they should gather the artifacts and travel to the ruins of Venus.

#### Surprise Party

The group should gather up the artifacts and ready for transport. Most of the pieces are small enough to fit into a shoebox, which Dr. Zeral will carry. Once back on the surface of the

horticulture dome, there will be a loud crash as a rocket penetrates the dome on the far side. The glass dome will seal itself around the rocket, but the rangers should recognize the markings on the rocket as the sign of Baron Zordo. A squad of Atomic Powered Killbots will make their way out of the rocket on head straight for the group.



The rangers need to get Dr. Zeral and the artifacts safely back to Ranger-6, but first need to stop the Killbots. Even if the party could escape, the killbots would destroy the inhabitants of Moon base X will little difficulty. The Killbots were sent by Baron Zordo to retrieve the "spoon", so they will select Zeral as their primary target. When the spoon is dropped or handed off to another person, the

Killbots will switch to a new target.

Conflict Ancient Uenusian History Before the age of man, the Venusian Elves were masters of the solar system with technology far beyond mankind. While they could harness the power of the stars and bend it to their whim, the elves were

corrupted by greed and folly which plunged their civilization into a dark age. Their once towering cities have since been swallowed by the Venusian jungles and overrun by dinosaurs. The





few remaining elves are peaceful savages that live on the outskirts of the old cities.

One ancient secret of Venus lies hidden away inside an ancient pyramid: the control center for an orbital satellite placed around earth so the Venusians could monitor the development of humanity. The "spoon" was a crescent control rod to manipulate the moon, and is intended to be used in the pyramid control room. The pyramids were constructed thousands of years ago and even the elves had forgotten their purpose.

#### Getting Friendly with the Natives

There is a small village outside of the ruins on Venus where elves still dwell that has had occasional dealings with the rangers in the



past. There is a rocket landing platform for the crew to set down, and a group of locals will arrive to greet them. The Venusian elves dress in little more than green tights covered in leaves and other bits of native foliage. Their leader, Chief Beawulf, is wearing a ceremonial headdress that is series of reptilian claws and



scales arranged in an oversized crown. Beawulf is grateful for the arrival of the rangers, as several weeks before a group of Lion-Men arrived and has been periodically attacking their village for supplies ever since. The villagers will point out that the Lion-Men are camped at the ruins, and they seem to be searching for something.

#### Lion-Men, Robots, and Elves! Oh, my!

Beawulf will send his son, Turk, to lead the party through the jungles and into the ruins. It is obvious that there once was a road that led the way, but time and jungle growth has long since covered it up. The journey to the ruins will take a day travelling through the jungles, if the players decide that their party should bypass the jungle using their rocket they may be surprised to find out that the Lion-Men have constructed an artillery turret on one of the pyramids and will shoot down anything that comes into range. There are different dinosaurs roaming through the jungle that may intercept the party (if the game is slowing down and the



group needs a little action, a wandering dinosaur is a great action beat).

The ruins are that of an ancient city, almost two-miles across and covered in moss and vines. The city was designed in a hexagonal

pattern with a pyramid on each point and one in the center. Near the base of the largest pyramid, in the center of the ruins, is the basecamp of the

Lion-Men. There

Doctor Zeral, with the help of the party, will be able to sneak into the pyramid and learn the secrets of the control room. Once he has the connected the spoon and the control panel for

> the moon he will realize that they must both be destroyed.

Unknown to the party, the Baron's forces purposely opened up a gap in their defenses, hoping that rangers would bring the "spoon" and the good

are twenty Lion-Men in the area, most of them are wandering around the camp, while two are up on the top of the pyramid manning the defense platform, and four are out patrolling the surrounding ruins.

The Lion-Men were hired by Baron Zordo, which is made clear by the Lion-men's equipment and vehicles, which were all created using ranger technology. They have already searched and located the control room and have been waiting for Baron Zordo to extract them. If the party simply waits, a completely black rocket will arrive and unload a squad of the Baron's Killbots led by Lieutenant Iona. Iona was a rookie ranger that defected to Baron Zordo; she is now responsible for gleaning the secret of the Pyramids of Venus. doctor. Lieutenant Iona will gloat at the party as she takes Dr. Zeral as a hostage, to ensure that the rangers don't try anything.

#### Throwing the Moon Around

Iona will open a video communication with Baron Zordo to receive instructions as she controls the moon to crash into the Earth, thus destroying the home planet of the Atomic Rangers once and for all. The rangers are restrained by the killbots, who make little conversation. Iona is still impressionable however, and may be swayed by a heroic speech from one of the heroes. Though with the Baron listening over the video screen, convincing her will not be easy.





## Hang In There

If you would like to make a more complicated and dramatic ending for the story, a cliffhanger would keep the excitement strong for a follow-up adventure. The old television and movie serials that this adventure was inspired by would often capture the audience with a suspenseful or highly dramatic ending that would leave the audience wondering what happened next. The cliffhanger event of this episode is Iona at the controls, about to send the moon crashing into the earth. This ending (or lack of ending) method may not suit every game group, so try  $\Lambda$  to measure your group before you leave the game in a lurch.

#### Super Happy Fun Ending

Stopping the moon from crashing into the earth is the first priority for the game; even if it isn't the happy ending it should still happen. A great twist might involve Iona finding a love interest, though it would be more dramatic to have that love interest betray her trust, making her a fantastic return villain for a future game. The elves should help destroy the pyramid control room, and the rangers should scare off Zordo's minions so the elves can live in peace.



## Characters

## **Dr. Fenton Zeral**

(AC 11; hd 2; hp 9; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 2; DMG Cane 1d6)

Standing a towering four feet three inches tall and almost a century old, Dr. Zeral is a top authority from the University of Mars. An older dwarven scientist often called in for his wide range experience and knowledge. His scientific and mechanical prowess has proven a benefit to the Atomic Rangers. Zeral considers himself a pacifist, choosing to spend his time in pursuits that will help not only the people of his world, but the universe.





## **Commander William Neeson**

(AC 17; hd 6; hp 38; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 3; DMG Atomic Cutlass 1d10)

A dashing, stalwart human, Needson is one of the most trusted advisors of the Earth Council and the supreme leader of the Atomic Rangers. Since his appointment and the betrayal of Baron Zordo, Commander Neeson has made a personal point of spending time with each ranger before they are given their first official assignment. He has also created a new method of keeping in contact with his fellow rangers via space radio called the "Communication Engagement Lunar Link" or C.E.L.L...





# **Chief Beawulf**

(AC 13; hd 2; hp 14; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 2; DMG Staff 1d8)

Beawulf ascended to his position by right of his bloodline, as his father was the previous chief of the village. Beawulf is over two hundred years old, with light blue/silver hair, darkly tanned skin, with bright blue eyes. He has had uneasy dealings with the Atomic Rangers in the past. While there have been many miscommunications during the course of their relationship, overall Beawulf has honored a non-aggression pact that Commander Neeson made with the Venusians.

## Turk

(AC 13; hd 1; hp 8; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 1; DMG Venusian Sword 1d8)

A very young man even by a Venusian standards, Turk may be only sixteen-years old, but he is well versed and knows the ruined city of Venus better than most his tribe. He is often frustrated by his father's rantings about the earth men, and will often run off to the ruins to find trouble. Turk is short and thin, with light blue/silver hair like his father, and a dark complexion that he has received under the bright Venusian sun.







# **Baron Zordo**

(AC 19; hd 8; hp 44; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 8; DMG Atomic Cutlass 1d10)

Baron Zordo was once patrolled the space ways as an Atomic Ranger, and with the secrets of the rangers at his disposal he used them for the greater good. Over time, Zordo became jealous of the other rangers and frustrated that his accomplishments were rarely acknowledged.

He eventually discovered more malicious ways to the claim the acclaim and power he sought. He turned to evil and betrayed the rangers, using their secret atomic knowledge to create the Atomic Powered Killbots. His sole goal has been to destroy the Atomic Rangers and take over the universe as its rightful ruler. He has slowly been conquering the outlying planets and claimed his self-made title of baron.





## **Lieutenant Iona**

(AC 17; hd 6; hp 38; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 3; DMG Atomic Cutlass 1d10)

As a young Neptunian woman Iona joined the Atomic Rangers. But on her first mission, she and her partner were captured by the forces of Baron Zordo and brainwashed into joining him. She has since lead dozens of missions with her faithful Kiloton squad and has conquered many planets in the name of Baron Zordo. She has served the Baron for a long time; it may be difficult if not impossible to free her from his evil grasp.





**Atomic Powered Killbots** 

(AC 17; hd 3; hp 17; #AT: 1; save as Fighter lvl 3; DMG Atomic Clamps 1d10)

Killbots were designed by Baron Zordo and are his loyal troops. The Baron will send them out on missions in his personal black rockets in multiples of three. Killbots are unthinking and unfeeling creatures that are trained to kill in the most effective way possible. These killbots are the standard model used for assaults. Heavier and lighter designs are sent out for different missions.





(AC 14; hd 2; hp 14; #AT: 2; save as Fighter lvl 3; DMG Claws 1d6/1d6)

These Savage beast-men wander the galaxy looking for a fight. Humanoid cat people that are roughly human height, Lion-men sport flowing bushy mains and razor sharp claws. While they are able to use weapons, Lion-men favor their claws when given the option. They fight for the highest bidder, but will run if they think they are outnumbered and outgunned; After all, no amount of money can be spent if you are dead.







## Details

#### Future Gear

Atomic Cutlass (damage 1d10)

The cutlass is one of the first weapons an Atomic Ranger will train with. The cutlass resembles a normal sword but is made with metals from collapsed stars, the densest material known to man and nearly unbreakable. The blades are able to withstand tremendous heat without melting, so they are charged with an atomic pack in the handle, charging the blade with atomic energy. Once the blade is activated it can cut through anything, aside from another Atomic Cutlass, and gives off enough heat to cauterize a wound as it cuts.

Atomic Ray Gun (damage 1d8 range 150')



The ray gun is a standard ranged weapon used by the rangers. Powered using atomic energy, it propels a bolt of atomic energy at the speed of light. The bolts crackle with atomic power and burn on impact. The ray gun has been used in other ways as the situation demands. The rangers have used the bolts for anything from starting campfires to welding doors shut in an emergency.

#### Retro Future Races

Dwarves, Elves, Halflings, and Humans – Each race will behave similar to how they are portrayed in the Basic Fantasy Rulebook, with the exception that Elves are native to Venus, Dwarves are native to Mars, Humans are native to earth, and Halflings to Pluto.







#### Lion-Men

Designed for use with Basic Fantasy by Chris Gonnerman

## **Description:**

Lion-Men are a cat-like humanoid race that average six-feet tall and weigh about a hundred and ninety-five pounds. They are covered in fur, with a mane of hair covering their head and neck. They have fingers that end in retractable claws, which can be used as deadly weapons in close combat.

Lion-Men are nomadic, and even they couldn't tell you where their original home planet was. They are greedy and angry, both features that work well for mercenary work. They are not quick to pick a fight, but if provoked they will hold their ground.

## **Restrictions:**

Because of their quick combat reflexes Lion-Men will never have a dexterity lower than 9; because of their stubborn nature they will never have a wisdom higher than 17.





## **Special Abilities:**

They have a heightened sense of smell and can track better than humans and most humanoids. They possess very stringy and strong muscles, giving them twice the leaping distance of other races. They have a higher healing rate and will receive twice the amount of healing performed on them or healed naturally.

Saving Throws: +6 vs Poison they have a very fast metabolism and are able to remove toxins from their blood quickly.

#### Retro Future Classes

When using Basic Fantasy, or the game system of your choice, simply take the fighter class exclusively for the Atomic Ranger adventures. Fighters would represent most average people, but if you feel your game needs to use the other classes add them as you like. Just make sure to send the GagMen an email including which classes you added and how you fit them into the science fiction world.

The Thief class could function as grifters, confidence men or even as merchants in a pinch. The Cleric and Magic-User might represent a specialty group of classes that may not as easily be explained, since magic does not traditionally exist in a world ruled by science (or a close approximation of science). The Cleric could be explained away in the Venusian part of the adventure as witchdoctors, and Magic-Users could represent a super-science that man has yet to understand. For the sake of simplicity, however, it may be best to stick with the fighter class.

#### Secret Decoder

Children listening to the old movie serials often looked forward to decoding a secret message included in every show, which was meant only for them (and the exclusive group of children with a decoder). Each week a new message (usually advertising the show or one of their sponsors) could be used in the game as a secret message system for Commander Neeson to send to the team under the nose of the evil baron. This may not work for every group, and it may require extra planning on the dungeon masters part, so don't feel like must include it. If you decide to use it, we have included a cut-out secret decoder that you can print and cut out for your players to send and receive messages!



<b>Space Squid</b> Armor Class:	18
Hit Dice:	10
No. of Attacks:	8 tentacles or 1 bite + drain
Damage: 10	d4 per tentacle/1d10/special
Movement:	Fly 60'
No. Appearing:	1
Save As:	Fighter: 10
Morale:	8
Treasure Type:	None
XP:	900



The Space Squid is a terrifically crafted creature for the Strings-Attached Space Adventures of the Atomic Rangers, filmed live at the Amherth Theaters in New Jersey. The space squid is over fifty feet long with massive tentacles and a protruding beak to bite down on its prey. This squid is able to survive in the vacuum of space, and will feed on nearby energy sources. Once the squid has attached itself to anything that is powered by an energy source it will start absorbing that energy at a high rate. If it becomes attached to a ship that ship will no longer have any power to make its escape. Likewise, squids can be drawn away from one source of energy if there appears to be a greater source nearby. They are a very docile creature and will only attack if they feel they are threatened or their nests are in harm's way.





When danger looms in the Solar system and the human race is threatened, only the Atomic Rangers have the power to defend them! As ancient secrets are discovered on the Moon, an old enemy stirs at the chance to wreak his revenge on earth and the Rangers! While the answers may lie on Venus, if Barn Zordo has any say, all the Ranger will find is their doom! Buckle up Rangers, for galactic adventure and interstellar mystery waits as you witness "The day the Moon ran away with the Spoon!"