

**REVENGE IS A DISH
BEST SERVED...**

**...IN
SPAACE!**

CREDITS

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INTRO

Downloader, meet the ...in Spaaace! demo I ran a couple times at GenCon. ...iS! demo, meet your downloader.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

If you've read ...in Spaaace! you know that it's not exactly a prep-intensive rules-fest. The bulk of this demo is an oddball clique united only by the desire to find a robot supervillain named NV. The characters are built with character rules. As the GM, you need to build challenges appropriate to the number of players with characters.

Typically, I threw up about three challenges. If no one took Gigobot 5000, one challenge was "No Way to Get There," which prompted one group to buy travel tickets out of a guy's raincoat. That guy turned out to be front for a group of white slavers taking the characters off to mine astro dust until they dropped. This led to a PC revolt, with the monkey getting shot by a gigantic redneck preying-mantis, prompting the Sloth Machine to dump some Doc Inna Box on him but, being too lazy to read the label, he used mantis-specific medicine which caused the monkey to grow chitin and respond favorably to his shooter's pheromones.

When Gigobot 5000 was in play, I just had NV steal his fly space-ride. (In the stunning conclusion, Gigobot also found out NV was copying his wardrobe).

One group of characters ran into a gigantic, planet-wide party in the system where they were hunting for clues. Another got entangled with Pat's whiny, telepathic ex-girlfriend while they were trying to lure NV with an exquisitely enviable artifact called something like "The Jeweled Balls of Tharzidak."

NV himself was the ultimate challenge, though he really only interacted with the characters in one demo. It worked well for me to present him as (of course) pathologically jealous of the Sloth Machine. ("...and while Gr33d and I were out robbing banks and kidnapping beauty queens, you got to stay at home on the sofa eating pizza and watching TV! All because dad felt it was thematically appropriate!" "Sometimes, dad let me taste beer." "He did not!")

In short, wing it. I typically spent less than five minutes on prep each time, and it worked fine.

A POSSIBLE PROBLEM, UNLESS IT ISN'T

I found that by the end of the game, I usually had most of the tokens and could readily fiat that someone else was already killing NV when the PCs arrived (which I did) or simply send three-quarters of the party to a fiery, cataclysmic doom (which I also did). It didn't seem to impinge on anyone's fun, to be honest — lines like "The transdi-

mensional hillbillies are now using your former head as a spittoon" and "I'ma reprogram your courtesy unit with my ball bat!" seemed to make character death seem like a small price to pay.

Nevertheless, I recognize that some groups may be reluctant to submit to the sadistic whims of a GM with a fist full of tokens, so I'll propose some alternatives for the players.

PLAY THE COUNTER-GATHERING GAME

...in Spaaace! is really two games being played at the same time. One is the game of controlling the plot, and the other is the game of gathering the tokens. Naturally, success at one typically means failure at the other. Players who concentrate on picking losses carefully can probably fend off the GM in the endgame.

WHEN YOU WIN, DON'T BE GRACIOUS

When a player wins narrative control, there's no reason to simply survive being dumped out the airlock when you can narrate something that puts your character at an advantage. It can't be a huge plot insertion, but try something like "I find an emergency space suit on the outside of the ship, get into it rapidly (because it's designed for this very contingency) and then sneak around to ambush the pirates who assume I've walked the plank into the starry void." Put the ball back in the GM's court to get full value of the token you exchanged.

IMPOSE HOUSE-RULE LIMITS

Depending on how much you want to alter the playing field, you can make two very simple tweaks to the rules for ...iS! and radically alter the GM's ability to play an aggressive token-sweeping game.

Option number one is to limit how high the Challenge rating can go for a single plot point. The best limit is to say no single Challenge can be greater than the highest single Trait of any character. If you use this with the demo, no Challenge can be greater than 3, because no character has a Trait above 3.

Option number two is to simply start the GM out with a number of points to spend on Challenges that's equal to the points each player gets to build a character. This really levels the playing field — possibly to the point that the players wind up fighting each other, rather than curb-stomping the GM's story authority. But hey, whatever works for your group. Some GMs may even secretly like it.

ON THAT EDIFYING NOTE...

Here are the characters. Go nuts.

JUNKIE MONKEY

MOTIVATION

You got ripped off. NV stole your stash. You want it back.

BACKSTORY

You're a genetically enhanced orangutan trained in the arts of mechanical repair. At some point, tinkering with robot impellers and star drive redundancy manifolds got boring, so you started smoking pot. Just like the commercials warned, it led to harder stuff – tailored viruses of the pleasure centers in the brain, targeted spinal nerve iontophoresis, and finally, the nadir of the drug experience: Psychosis. A carefully designed nanospore, "psik" not only does the normal drug schtick of making you feel smart, invulnerable and euphoric, it temporarily activates usually-dormant regions of the brain responsible for psychic powers. Thus, the more people around you are high, the higher you become.

You had amassed a big freaking pile of the stuff, enough for a gigantic psik rave, and then this robot supervillain called NV came along and swiped it.

CENTRAL TRAIT

Bioengineered Grease Monkey (2 tokens). As a modified primate, you're more intelligent than most humans (though clearly no wiser), you're stronger, and you're a pretty darn good mechanic. You can also hold stuff with your feet and, if necessary, fling poo.

SIDE TRAIT

Drug Addict (2 tokens). You know how to score and slam, and you're also quite adept at taking advantage of any friends who have yet to abandon you.

NOTE

You cannot talk. You can only grunt, gesture, pantomime, and write notes.

RULES SUMMARY

You start with seven tokens.

Any time you laugh out loud, give a token to the person who made you laugh.

When an event is in doubt, you blindly bid for the right to narrate the outcome.

- If you bid fewer tokens, the GM narrates but has to give you a token.
- If you bid more tokens, you give the GM a token but get to narrate.
- If it's a tie, you narrate but lose ALL the tokens you bid.

Your traits act like free virtual tokens when you're bidding. If you bid no actual tokens and win on the strength of a trait, you don't have to pay.

You can propose completely random events. The GM decides how unlikely they are and sets an ante cost of 1-5 tokens.

Separate from the ante, you bid normally. If you win the bid, you give the GM the ante in addition to the single token the winner always donates. If you lose the bid, you keep the ante.

GIGOBOT 5000

MOTIVATION

NV stole your Barry White vocalizer unit, and your business is suffering. You want it back.

BACKSTORY

Gigolo robots have always been a controversial luxury item, and none more so than those equipped with the nigh-irresistible simulated voice of Barry White. You were making serious money in the Amazon Moon Belt when a robot supervillain named NV – one of the original Seven Deadly Synthetics – snuck up behind you, knocked you out and stole your voice unit. They don't make them any more – the closest you'd be able to get is Mel Torme unless you go on the black market. You can't afford black market prices, and anyhow, why should you pay to get a replacement for something that's yours to begin with?

CENTRAL TRAIT

Robot Gigolo (3 tokens). As a robot, you're stronger than a human being, insensitive to pain, and immune to the lures of procreation. As a gigolo, you can lay down a smooth line of jive, boogie with perfect rhythm, and please the ladies the way only a selfless engine with no personal interest in sex can.

SIDE TRAIT

Starship Pilot (1 tokens). Piloting a ship is like making love to a woman. You just mess 'round with the controls and pay close attention until things seem to be going well. You own a fly intergalactic ride, and the payments are murder. All the more reason to recover your smooth.

NOTE

Until you recover your Barry White unit, you can only talk in a creepy, rhythmless, metallic monotone – like the Cylons from the old 1980s Battlestar Galactica.

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THE SLOTH MACHINE

MOTIVATION

Not much. It would be cool to get the landlord off your back, though.

BACKSTORY

You were built by an evil genius as part of a robot supervillain megateam, but you were never that into it. Known as “the Seven Deadly Synthetics,” you personally got included for symbolic value more than anything else. After LU5T and PR1D3 got junked, the group split up over artistic differences. Since then, you’ve just been, you know, hanging out. Now you hear some dudes are pretty mad at your brother NV though, and you don’t blame them. NV is a jerk.

CENTRAL TRAIT

Poorly Thought-out Robot Supervillain (2 tokens). As a robot supervillain, you’re stronger than most humans, you don’t feel much pain, and you can fly. You used to have heat vision too, but you hocked it to make rent last year.

SIDE TRAIT

Stupification (2 tokens). You’ve got this screen on your chest that you activate by pulling a big lever (like an old time slot machine – your builder was into puns and stuff). It disrupts the thought processes of biological beings that can see the display, leaving them distracted and apathetic. Some of your process-servers and skip-chasers are getting wise to it, though.

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PAT L'OISEAU

MOTIVATION

NV stole your lover. You want to retrieve your paramour or, failing that, to kick NV's shiny metal ass.

BACKSTORY

You grew up in Kansas on Earth, attended a small liberal arts college in the Horsehead Nebula and were really just starting to find your way as an adult in the universe when you met Leslie. Les was different from your other relationships, not being a telepath or an empath. (You've always been catnip to the psychically aware because of your incandescently beautiful soul.) It was really, really cool to go out with someone who didn't know what you were thinking all the time, who didn't know you were lying when you said, "Hey, that haircut looks great!"... but then this smooth talking robot with a Barry White voice got Leslie high, issued an invitation to come see his place in the Asteroid Belt, and your beloved has been gone ever since. You never even said, "I love you" – not from shyness, but because those lousy telepaths always knew.

CENTRAL TRAIT

General Artistry (1 token). In an attempt to cash in on your incandescently beautiful soul, you've learned how to play the guitar, write poetry and paint. You can also talk your way into art shows, wear flouncy shirts, and smoke with a cigarette holder without looking stupid.

SIDE TRAIT

Incandescently Beautiful Soul (3 tokens). It's not that you're a better or kinder or more ethical person: But, from what mind readers tell you, your soul is just... pretty. Telepaths and empaths find you much less unpleasant to be around than most people, and even normal people sometimes find you more than usually charming.

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