WILD JUMPS

Dangerous voyages for *Uncharted Worlds*
Malcolm Harbrow

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Written by Malcolm Harbrow
larpwellington@gmail.com

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Donna Giltrap, Aaron Hicks, and Richard Love.
I wrote these rules for them, but never had to use them.

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INTRODUCTION

Wild Jumps is a story supplement for the *Uncharted Worlds* roleplaying game which provides additional material on jumping wild, the dangerous and reckless method of travel used by explorers, smugglers, and people wanting to escape trouble. It is likely during the course of your campaign that your characters will do this. The aim of this book is to give you some answers ready to hand to deal with this possibility. *Wild Jumps* includes:

- Common rules interactions around Wild Jumps
- Story suggestions for handling controlled, rough, and bad Jumps
- Three sample Jump Points.

Because sometimes, you've just got to be somewhere else...

JUMP TRAVEL

In *Uncharted Worlds*, ships travel from system to system using Jumpspace, another dimension which allows instantaneous travel between two points in real space. In theory, a Jump can take you anywhere you want to go. In practice, the requirements for precise data, the structure of Jumpspace, and the desire for safe and predictable travel mean that Jumps are usually performed between fixed Jump points. Systems are connected by chains of these points, allowing safe, if time-consuming travel.

But sometimes you don't want to be safe. Sometimes, you don't have time. Sometimes, you know where you're going, but you don't know how to get there. Or you're off the beaten track, Out There beyond charted space. Or you need to get somewhere in a hurry, without spending weeks crawling through transit systems. Or you just need to get out of here, now. That's when a Wild Jump is necessary.

Wild Jumps are always dangerous. They are rarely predictable. But when you've got to go, you've got to go…

MAKING A WILD JUMP

"Wild Jumps are exceptionally unsafe. They involve Jumping directly to the destination, despite the navigation-warping gravity of planets and stars…"

> **MECHANICS: WILD JUMP**
> When you force your ship to make a Wild Jump, Roll 2d6.
>
> On a 10+, the crew only suffers nausea, headaches and other minor effects. You reach a point within a week's travel of your destination, or choose from the list below.
>
> On a 7-9, the illness and hallucinations are pronounced. The GM chooses one from the list below:
> - You find an uncharted world, ready for exploration.
> - You find exploitable resources, there for the taking.
> - You discover a scientifically-interesting phenomenon.
> - You discover wreckage or ruins of unknown origin.
> - You find a new path to a well-known destination.
> - You encounter a faction or culture that is new to you.
>
> On a 6-, the GM will describe the ugly, debilitating, terrifying consequences. It's full of stars.

Wild Jumps cannot be made within planetary atmospheres, and strong gravitational grips (black holes, proximity to stars, etc) will also interfere with Jumps, automatically causing them to fail.

Appropriate preparation makes a Wild Jump less risky. Ships with suitable facilities — precision sensors, extensive star-charts, or a supercomputer, akin to those found in the Navigation, Observer, Research or Survey workspaces — can spend the time to make an Assessment, potentially gaining a Data Point that can be applied to the Jump. Unwelcome information that could be revealed from such an Assessment includes unusual Jumpspace topography, gravitational anomalies which could disrupt the Jump, nearby massive objects which could pull a ship out of Jumpspace, or problems with navigational equipment or even the Jump drive itself.

Assistance may also make a Wild Jump less risky. Characters can Get Involved on the Wild Jump by explaining how they have helped reduce the risks (e.g. by

assisting with the calculations, fine-tuning the drive, or accurately determining the ship's position). If successful, this may upgrade or downgrade the level of success of the Wild Jump by one level, turning a rough Jump into a controlled one, or a terrifying Jump into a merely rough one. Complications or costs could include suffering increased after-effects from the Jump, suffering harm from drive venting or overloading, or a requirement to push the drives past their safe limits. A failed Move should make the Jump worse.

A common situation is using a Wild Jump to escape pursuit or combat. As noted in Uncharted Worlds (page 144), starting a Wild Jump takes up all of a vessel's power output, leaving it briefly defenceless. A rough Jump or complication from a Get Involved could include damage if the ship is being fired upon, or the pursuers analysing the Jump signature and making a Wild Jump of their own.

CONTROLLED JUMPS

"Well-controlled Jumps produce very mild effects, nausea, headaches and the like."

There is moment which feels like you are being turned inside out, then with an agonising lurch you are back in real space...

Questions:
- What do you think you saw out of the corner of your eye as you emerged from the Jump?
- What disturbing thing do you think you heard in Jumpspace?
- What ship system is acting up and how?
- What did you dream of in your moment in Jumpspace?
- Describe the symptoms of your Jump-sickness. How is your body coping with being roughly pulled out of the universe, then shoved back in?
- What small item can not be found after the Jump?

A successful Wild Jump means that the characters get to where they want to go, or find what they want to find. The side-effects are not serious enough to constitute a debility, except in extreme cases (e.g. if someone paid a cost to Get Involved). If the characters Jumped into uncharted space however they may still need to find their way home.

ROUGH JUMPS

"Rough Jumps can cause pronounced debilities like synaesthesia, hallucinations and illness."

There is a ripping, stretching feeling as you enter Jumpspace. You feel like you are being simultaneously pulled and squashed in different directions. The ship shudders, jolts, shudders again, and then you're through...

Questions:
- What nightmare did you have during the Jump that continues to haunt you?
- What impossible memory do you have of what happened during the Jump?
- What disabling problem(s) do you have as a result of Jump-sickness?
- What horrific thing that isn't there do you keep seeing after the Jump?
- What lingering after-effects do you have?
- What vital ship system has failed, and how bad is it?
- What, impossibly, has gone missing during the Jump?

The after-effects can simply be treated as a minor debility e.g. hallucinating, dizzy, nauseous. Most of these will cause the character to become clumsy in certain circumstances. In extreme cases, the debility could be major, a semi-permanent condition requiring professional treatment.

On a rough Jump, the GM chooses one from the list below. Those in bold are good options.
- **You find an uncharted world, ready for exploration.**
- You find exploitable resources, there for the taking.
- **You discover a scientifically-interesting phenomenon.**
- **You discover wreckage or ruins of unknown origin.**
- You find a new path to a well-known destination.
- **You encounter a faction or culture that is new to you.**

EXAMPLE OUTCOMES

You find an uncharted world, ready for exploration:
- An airless rock, with interesting features — huge craters, towering mountains, ice-caps, a planet-spanning chasm.
- A world with a breathable atmosphere, possibly habitable. Pick a predominant climate or terrain type (arctic, tundra, desert, arid, savannah, forest, jungle, ocean, mountains) and one or more unusual or dangerous features (storms, plants, wildlife, unusual terrain)
- A world with a non-breathable atmosphere — too thin, toxic, wrong gas mix. Pick features and/or climate as above.

You find exploitable resources, there for the taking:
- Metallic asteroid field
- Gas giant for fuel scooping
- Planet with native biosphere and interesting plant or animal life

You discover a scientifically-interesting phenomenon:
- Neutron star
- Nebula
- An alien space probe
- Planet with an unusual biosphere or unexpected life (gas giant lifeforms, icebound aquatics, very thin atmospheres, extreme heat)

You discover wreckage or ruins of unknown origin:
- Wrecked alien starship.
- An eroded pyramid on a moon orbiting a once-habitable planet.
- A vast network of bomb-shelters on a radioactive world.
- A huge artificial bridge across a vast natural chasm.

You encounter a faction or culture that is new to you:
- Lost ship from a faction from another setting.
- An(other) alien species.
- A secretive group in the process of establishing itself.

A VERY BAD JUMP EXPERIENCE

"Some travellers claim to have experienced distorted, nonsensical horror-scapes during a particularly awful Jump. Others come out of these Jumps with disfiguring injuries or mutations. Some lose their minds in the Jumpspace. Others simply don't come back at all. And then there are the rumors of beings, terrors living in the null-space between Jumps. Tall-tales and hearsay, surely."

Your vision distorts and everything stretches and gets slow. Normally jumps are instantaneous, but this one isn't. Instead it seems to go on forever…

Questions:
- Who is screaming and why?
- What do you see or hear in Jumpspace that makes you doubt your own sanity?
- How has your prolonged exposure to Jumpspace damaged you?
- What, impossibly, appears in the ship to you during the Jump?
- Which lost ship do you hear a message from, and what is it saying?
- There is a nightmarish Thing crouched over one of your crewmates. What does it look like and what is it doing? How do you make it stop?
- How do you end the Jump?

On exiting Jumpspace:
- What vital ship system has failed, and how bad is it?
- What ship system is only just working, and how long will it last?
- What lingering after-effects do you have?
- How much time has *really* elapsed?
- Who has horrific injuries and what are they?
- Who just isn't there anymore?
- What has come with you out of Jumpspace?

The after-effects can be treated as injuries, or as minor or major debilities. The characters will likely be somewhere they don't want to be with a damaged ship and multiple injuries. If they're anywhere at all...

FINDING YOUR WAY HOME

On a rough or very bad Jump, the ship is unlikely to be where the characters want it to be. If they are lucky, they are in a charted system, and getting somewhere civilized may simply be a matter of time. If they are unlucky, they will be in an uncharted system, and face the risk of a second Wild Jump to return to charted space.

If the system is uninhabited, then finding where you are after a Wild Jump requires an assessment using Expertise (by locating known pulsars, bright stars or other interstellar navigational beacons, comparing stellar spectra to those in survey databases, performing navigational calculations etc). Data Points from a reliable fix can be used for the subsequent Wild Jump. Unwelcome information could be locational ("beyond the galactic rim", "on the far side of the Great Nebula", "in Cephalisk space"), it could introduce threats (a flare star, gamma ray burster, debris), travel obstacles (e.g. a need to perform multiple Jumps to return to civilised space), or simply represent failure (in which case the ship will need to Wild Jump to a nearby system and hope for the best).

THE VAULT

Themes: Exploration, Mystery

Outline: After a Wild Jump, the characters emerge in a system with a dead star — and one lonely planet containing ruins of an ancient civilization. This Jump Point is partly inspired by "The Star", by Arthur C. Clarke.

Set the stage: (Read this after asking the usual post-emergence questions)
"You stand outside the vault. The landscape of this airless moon looks melted and blackened, burned to a cinder when the star it orbited died. Ahead of you is a wide, downward-sloping tunnel in the hillside, partially buried by a landslide. And at the bottom of it is a massive, armoured door".

Questions:
- How did you find the vault? What odd feature drew your attention to this tiny, airless piece of slag in the first place?
- How old is this thing? How long has it been here?
- What have your sensor scans told you about the interior? What completely unexpected readings did you get?
- Who built it and why? Where are they now?
- What do you hope to find within?
- How are you going to open the door?

Possible threats:
- Landslide (Mindless: crush everything, close tunnel)
- Radiation blast (Passive: disrupt communications, debilitate life-forms)
- Alien disease or computer virus (infect, debilitate, kill / destroy)
- Security system (Mindless: alert guardbots, awaken sleepers)
- Ancient guardbots (Intelligent: locate intruders, kill intruders (protect sleepers)).
- Sleeping aliens (Intelligent: assess situation, attempt communication, find suitable planet (defend territory, activate self-destruct mechanism))

THE GRAVEYARD

Themes: Mystery, Survival

Outline: After a Wild Jump, the characters emerge in a system which is a graveyard of lost ships, drawn together by a gravitational anomaly. They must try and salvage them to escape. This Jump Point is inspired by the Doctor Who episode "The Doctor's Wife" and classic SF stories such as Milton Lesser's "The Graveyard Of Space" and Edmund Hamilton's "The Sargasso of Space".

Set the stage: (Read this after asking the usual post-emergence questions) "The mass of ships drifts in the void. As you approach, you pick out a few familiar designs - and many completely alien ones. Whatever has drawn them here has clearly been collecting them from well beyond charted space. The ships look cold, dead, and lifeless - and if you cannot find what you need to escape, you will be joining them in this graveyard of space".

Questions:
- What vital component of your ship do you need to repair to escape from this place?
- What do you see which suggests that the wrecks may not be entirely dead?
- What familiar ship do you see, and why have you been seeking it out?
- What force has drawn all these ships here?
- What makes it difficult to escape?
- Who do you know who disappeared on a Wild Jump and was never seen again?

Possible threats:
- Leaky old reactor (Passive: disrupt communications, debilitate life-forms, explode)
- Automated defence system (Mindless: awaken, kill intruders)
- Abandoned robots (Intelligent: gather resources, strip ship (protect corpses of dead alien creators))
- Crazed cannibalistic survivors (Intelligent: kill newcomers, eat prey (steal ship, escape))
- Desperate aliens (Intelligent: salvage ship, escape (attempt communications, trade))

THE BLACK HOLE

Themes: Survival, Horror

Outline: A Wild Jump goes wrong, and the characters emerge dangerously close to a black hole with a crippled ship. Worse, something has come with them out of Jumpspace. They must repair their ship and evade the thing, before it is too late.

Set the stage: (Read this after asking the usual post-emergence questions)
"The nightmare ends and you drop out. Alarms scream, and the radio squeals with a blast of static. The radiation alarm howls. The sensors show a glowing ring of ultrahot gas surrounding a distortion in space. Your predicament becomes clear: you have been dropped out of Jump by a black hole. And it is only a matter of time before you are too close to it to escape".

Questions:
- Which ship system will you need to cannibalise to get the jump drive working?
- What nightmarish horror has come with you out of Jumpspace, and which of you does it want?
- Which critical ship system will fail next if you stay too long in this environment?
- How much time do you have before the ship falls so close to the hole that it will be impossible to escape?

Possible threats:
- Radiation blast from the hole (Mindless: damage ship, disrupt systems)
- Nightmare from Jumpspace (Intelligent: eat mind, return to Jumpspace (defend self, reveal horrors of Jumpspace))
- The Black Hole (Passive: draw ship closer, destroy with tidal forces)
- Accretion disc (Passive: spew radiation, blast ship)