
Seth Ashford

Success is sweet. You are a world-known expert in brain computer interaction. You made millions of dollars founding your own company.

Your professional career took off in graduate school when you discovered a way of measuring the activity of individual neurons in a human brain. A few years earlier, physicists had developed superconducting magnets that were only one centimeter in diameter, and you realized that by creating a cylindrical array of these magnets you could focus them on individual neurons. After a few years of work you created a device that could detect a person's surface thoughts. With this person could think "I want to send an email to Bob that says the following: . . .," and would it detect this and take the required action automatically. After graduate school, you founded a start-up with this technology and earned hundreds of millions dollars. You love the power this money gives you. You often carry a million dollars of stocks around with you, to remind yourself of your wealth and to trade if you find someone who has something you really want.

You have continued working on your brain-computer interface in a huge lab at your company, and you have reached a new milestone. You can now build a device that can scan all the neurons and all the connections between them in a living human brain. You have brought the parts to build this machine for a conference tomorrow, and you're sure your work deserves the International Medal of Science, the highest honor a scientist in any field can receive. This is it, a chance to prove to everyone just how successful you are.

The only obstacle between you and the award is your longtime rival, Dr. Jacqueline Pulaski. Your rivalry with Jacqueline began in high school at the International Science Fair. You were set to win, but the night before the competition Jacqueline broke into your hotel room and sabotaged your project, causing you to forfeit. You didn't have any evidence, but you know it was her. You got back at her at the International Computing Olympiad, when you sabotaged her computer, forcing her to forfeit while you took first place. You and Jacqueline have gone back and forth attacking each other over the years. For example, as an undergraduate when you both applied to the Journal of the National Academy of Science you hacked into the journal's server and changed your submission to an acceptance and her submission to a rejection. This was the one prank you pulled that someone managed to collect evidence of. Your old friend Angela found out, but luckily she wouldn't betray you. You would hate for any of your illegal activities to get out and damage your reputation.

Today your plan to knock Jacqueline out of the running for the International Medal is simple. With some hacking you managed to obtain a copy of the paper she is submitting tomorrow. You have created a copy of this paper which looks similar but commits clear plagiarism of another scientist's work. You'll get hold of her folder which contains her paper and swap the real and faked paper. You can't wait to see the press when they find out tomorrow.

You have thought about what to do next with your brain-computer interface technology, and realize it would be very powerful if combined with an advanced artificial intelligence. Perhaps you could scan a human brain and then run a simulation of it inside a computer. This would require a very advanced artificial intelligence, but your rival Jacqueline has been working on just such a technology. Of course she would never give it to you if you asked, and her security is too good for you to steal it directly. However, she has been working with the military, and you happen to know the military security at this hotel is weak. There is a high security door at this hotel, and you plan to find a way inside it and take the autonomous drone technology behind it. You can't wait to reverse engineer the drone back at your company lab next week and see how it works.

Goals

- Steal the autonomous drone prototype from behind the high security door.
- Hang onto your stocks or trade them for something sufficiently valuable.
- Frame Jacqueline for plagiarism

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You see Badge Number 500
- You die.

Bluesheets

- The Prophecy

Greensheets

- Ω
- Wedding Preparations
- The Wedding Ceremony
- Hacking

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0104)
- Incomplete head-mounted display (0771)
- Research notes on head-mounted display technology (in-game document)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 2
- Ω: 12
- β: 0

Marcus Aurelius

Humanity is a dying race. We prospered for a time, but it turned out that our sun and Earth could support us for less time than we had hoped. Unfortunately, interstellar distances are vast and despite combining humanity's best minds, no easy solution was found: it was not possible to store enough energy to support a ship of awakened colonists, and cryogenic freezing was too volatile and power-hungry to last through the vast amounts of time required to reach another planet.

The human race did not take this news well and was not willing to so gracefully exit the galactic stage. If our biological forms were not suited to handle the ravages of interstellar travel, we would replace them with something else that could. Although the technology existed to transfer a human consciousness into a robotic body, it was decided that too much of our heritage would be lost if we existed only as robots on a barren spaceship. Instead, the decision was made to preserve humanity in a virtual environment. This is where you come in.

Your name is Marcus Aurelius and you were born in Pasadena, 12596 CE. You were widely hailed as one of the greatest savants of the century. When the decision was made that humanity would be preserved in virtual form, humanity turned to you. Programming and the mind-machine transfer are your specialties, and over the course of several decades you and a team of thousands of others built the most comprehensive computer system ever constructed. It was eventually installed on the ship *New Eden*, itself the pinnacle of human engineering. Ultimately, the majority of humanity had their consciousness imprinted onto the system, and as the great simulation began, its host ship was launched to drift amongst the stars. You watched the great ship take off from the dying Earth. Shortly after not even the longest-range sensors on Earth could pick up the ship's signal, you happily passed away at an old age, your life's work completed.

Philosophers, politicians, and scientists debated for quite some time what nature the virtual world should take. Should it be a true post-scarcity utopia, free from trouble and death, with infinite resources for all? Should the new humanity start at 126th-century technology or something primitive like the Dark Ages of the 30th century? Ultimately, it was decided that something critical to our existence would be lost if the world was free from adversity, and the world was constructed to be as close to ours as possible; no "free and unlimited energy" would be available, and the new humanity would start at the beginning of something approximating the Roman Empire. Importantly, a conscious decision was made to avoid passing down the knowledge of humanity's origin so that future generations would not feel their existence was in any way fake or a cheap imitation of the real thing. You were a great opponent of the Utopians (those who pushed for an adversity-free world) and one of the founders of the New Beginning movement, which wanted to keep the fact that the world was a simulation from those inhabiting it. You are certain that although a perfect utopia sounds nice in theory, it would ultimately be unsustainable and inevitably result in the destruction of the simulation.

A myriad of blinking lights flash on a 2D heads-up display superimposed across your vision. You take a moment to get your bearings, and find yourself in what you believe to be something approximating a hotel room from between 20th to 22nd century humanity. You then take a moment to reflect on the fact that you are thinking at all. The last thing you remember is doing a backup upload of your consciousness...which would mean you are mostly likely inside your own simulation, and something catastrophic has happened, initiating one of the many fail-safes. That would mean those blinking lights are the debug console. You decide to pay a bit more attention to them.

There are two big warning lights blinking. The most serious is that the simulation is running on the emergency battery. It has only *four hours* of energy left, and that's only with running a very, very small subset of the simulation space. The vast majority of the simulation is currently inactive. You're not really sure what caused the low battery, but you think it would have to be someone outside the simulation messing with it. New Eden has three robot bodies that are designed to fit human minds, but no one from the simulation should have any idea how to escape the simulation and upload their consciousness into them, and the debug lights show you that all three robot bodies are currently inactive.

The second warning light shows you that there are two other entities currently connected to the simulation. Based on the light color and blinking frequency, they do not appear to be human minds. This is most likely what caused you to awaken — the simulation's monitoring system woke you up so you could decide on the appropriate response to the newly connected entities. The ship is also indicating a proximity alert, which could indicate another nearby ship, planet, or asteroid. Unfortunately, because battery power is so low, only the most basic level diagnostic analysis is running. You cannot access your full debug suite, which prevents you from modifying the simulation directly, accessing the ship's sensor logs, or even exiting the simulation to investigate using the robotic bodies.

You return to taking in your surroundings. Upon inspecting a mirror you find you look exactly like you remember yourself, but when you try to reach out to touch the mirror your hand passes straight through it. This appears to be a persistent problem — *you are ethereal and cannot physically interact with any objects or people in the simulation unless told otherwise*. This doesn't shock you too much; it's standard protocol for debug-mode. Makes it a lot easier to navigate around, although you're again frustrated by the low-power situation as the nice "teleport to destination" function is currently inaccessible.

You don't know what your surroundings are like, but you have a reasonable idea about what to expect. The monitoring system for the simulation will have incarnated you and chosen this specific subsection of reality for a reason. That likely means that it thinks there is some way out of the simulation nearby. The most likely way you can think of is throwing a recursive exception: when the host computer detects a simulation-within-a-simulation of a certain immersive complexity, under some circumstances the mind is instead ejected to one of the New Eden robots to avoid an unsustainable recursion.

There will likely be some corruption of the local environment. This is not too unexpected given the sudden low-power situation, but you imagine the local inhabitants will find it terrifying. These anomalies are very dangerous and the mind-states of people who interact with them will start to lose cohesion — if their mind-states deteriorate too much, they will be excised from the simulation entirely and will cease to exist. One of the reasons you have been awakened is to prevent this from happening.

Most importantly, immediately before any situation like this happens, there is a fail-safe to preserve the current world state so that, should something catastrophic happen, the world can be restored from the backup copy. This "save state" is likely embodied somewhere in the world. You won't be able to immediately recognize it, but you know it should be able to resist any environmental corruption or anomalies that may appear. You can use your debug console to determine the current mental state of anyone you interact with, and you suspect that someone with very little corruption is likely in possession of the save-state.

Should you manage to find a way outside the system, the save-state should be able to transfer outside the system as well. You can then use it to restore the rest of the simulation. As far as you know, those currently within the reduced part of the simulation will be preserved. Unfortunately, because you don't have a solid body at present, you won't be able to directly interact with the save-state: someone else will have to carry it outside the simulation for you.

You were not the only programmer of the simulation, and this copy of your persona is from a few months before New Eden launched. There may or may not be other fail-safes in place to restore the simulation that you are not aware of.

Things aren't looking too great, but you were one of the greatest minds of your generation. You can get this situation under control if you put your mind to it. If you play your cards just right, you might even be able to fix things without revealing the nature of reality to most of the local inhabitants.

Goals

- Preserve the simulation at all costs. If anyone tries to alter the simulation from its original trajectory, stop them.
- Find the save-state, find a way outside the simulation back into New Eden, and reset the simulation using the save-state.
- Prevent any humans from dying due to corruption from any anomalies.
- Find out who the mysterious minds are that are connected to the simulation. If they are benevolent, you would love to learn more about them outside the simulation, but entreat them to leave the simulation in peace. If they threaten the simulation or humanity, stop them. You do not know what form they might take within the simulation.

- The New Beginning movement is very important to you. Prevent as many people as possible from learning about the true nature of the simulation. One or two people may be dismissed as insane, but if too many learn of it, once the simulation is restored the truth might become widespread and your life's work might degenerate into anarchy or self-destruction.

Memory/Event Packets

- if you see an item whose number starts with "77"
- If you see item #148 and stand near it for one minute
- Ω Packet
- You see Number 444
- Δ Packet

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- Ω

Abilities

- Assess mind-state corruption
- Debug

Items

- none

Stats

- Combat Rating: 0
- Ω : 20
- β : 0

Reverend Cornelius

You are a man of God, but you know what its like, to be lost. Suffering and self-destruction are no strangers to your door, and they reside not only in the hearts of your flock.

When you were younger, your wanderings took you deep into the underbelly of society. You drank from the cup of hedonism, and paid for it in the slow decay of your body and soul. You were dissatisfied, depressed, and anxious. You fell into taking **Anaphmonine**, a potent drug that went by the street name of **Bite**, named for its tendency to make one's teeth clench. It was the only thing that made you fulfilled and content, but the feeling always faded, and then there you were, lying on the ratty, filth-encrusted couch of the messy apartment that you shared with three other Bite-heads. Skull pounding from dehydration, your only desire was to start the cycle over again.

But still, you are thankful for that period of your life, because if you hadnt been that desperate, perhaps you never would have found Virtuism. It was a member of the soup kitchen staff saved you. She was a woman of generous heart and glowing spirit, and she helped you to see the truth. You stepped out of your old life like a shed skin, ready to see the light of God with clear eyes.

Under that womans tutelage, you attended a seminary, and became a pastor of Virtue. You attracted a large flock, attracted to your deep-seated belief that the only way to find grace was through prayer and religious practice. You fit into the patterns and traditions of Virtuism as though you were born to stand at the pulpit.

But throughout all of it, though you were able to give up the drink, the gambling, and the women of ill repute, there was one aspect of your previous existence that you just couldnt seem to shake. The Bite. You tried, you really did, and then would come the tremors and the insomnia, the itching and the flashbacks. The withdrawal symptoms were so severe that you could barely function. And to add to the confusion, when you do take Bite, (which is more often then youd like to admit) you feel lifted, elevated towards the light. You sometimes have ecstatic visions of angels and a heavenly chorus, and you feel as though, if you only climbed a bit higher, you could see the face of God.

Yet how can a drug, a chemical created by science, be at all connected to Virtue? After all, this is the same science that steals your flock away, charming them away from Virtuism with shining technological toys! How can anything good come of that?

You just need help, thats all. The temptations of sin are too great for a single man to break. And doesnt Virtuism teach that the soul alone is lost, and only together can salvation be found?

Yet there is no one to go to. You would lose your flock, if anyone were to find out about your transgressions. And you know that if you were to lose your respected position, you would be at even greater spiritual danger of falling back to the degenerate excess of your youth. Your soul is already burdened, and you often feel as though you are balanced on the point of a precipice, and leaning any one way or another would send you tumbling down the slope.

You cant let that happen, so you bear your spiritual torture with the grace of a saint.

You have discovered that the more expensive, pure-based Anaphmonine is better at keeping the withdrawal symptoms away with minimal side effects, and that a few small doses of pure Anaphmonine is enough to get you through the day without suffering too badly. Unfortunately, it is expensive, more than you can afford. Youve already sold as many of your personal belongings as you can without the lack being publicly noticed, and take as much from the churchs donation box as you can.

And then, sometimes people leave valuable things in the church, after services. They should be returned, of course they should, but couldnt they also be viewed as /emphdonations? And with misplaced items, its not as though their owners will ever remember where they were lost

Its a short jump from there to direct stealing, and you tell yourself that since youre a preacher, youre doing so much good for

others already that the damnation of your own soul is less important. A few thefts here and there, for the sake of your own health and sanity, which in turn saves souls it all works out, doesn't it?

For now, you just make your way from day to day, from theft to theft, and from one sermon to the next. You are going to be ministering a wedding at the Hotel Virtuoso, joining Lindis and Angela in holy matrimony. It's going to be a grand celebration.

You were walking along the hallway, going back to your room at the hotel, when you saw Lindis standing at a doorway. You opened your mouth to greet him, when an alarm blared in your ears, and everything went black.

The next thing you knew, you were lying in a metal box, a loud alarm making your teeth vibrate. You sat up with a start, and saw a cramped metal room with the walls covered with buttons. You turned to the side and saw a horrible demon, a man made of metal and plastic, and you yelled in fright. The being leapt from its box and dashed about the room, but you looked down and saw that *you yourself* were made out of metal.

It was as though you had taken Bite, but you did not remember taking it, and the sensations were altogether too clear, to vivid, to be a result of the drug. This was really happening.

You held your head in your metal hands and moaned. You had heard people talking about things like this. Ridiculous secular fictions that the youth talked about, robots and virtual realities. But that's what this was. Your whole life, you realized, had been the fiction. You were a robot, dreaming. What was God's creation, then? The meticulous silver innards of a computer?

After an interminable time had passed in that cramped hell, you heard a voice, speaking from on high:

EMERGENCY SHUT-DOWN INITIATED. FOUR HOURS OF BATTERY LIFE REMAINING.

Then, it ended, as suddenly as it had begun. You were lying on the ground in the hallway. You lay there for some time.

What you had seen was not a false vision. After years of imbibing Bite, you had become skilled at differentiating true happenings from hallucinations. Unreality was the truth of the world.

You nearly fell, then. The world was not real. God was not real. You were not real.

But then another voice came, a still small voice in the back of your mind. *Perhaps*, this voice said. *Perhaps what you have seen is not a disproof of God, but rather a look into His mind? Perhaps it was heaven that you saw?*

Could it be? Could you be a chosen Prophet, to see into the mind of the Virtuous One? Was that the Truth?

You got up, slowly rising to your feet. Yes, that is it. This is a sign that you must spread the Word, and bring more souls into the flock.

Emergency shut down? Four hours of battery life? What was going to happen in four hours? You remembered the prophecy of the End of Days, and shivered to your core. Is it possible that *you* are to minister the wedding that was prophesied to save the world?

As you moved forward with new purpose in your step, you saw a key lying on the floor. You picked it up, grateful to God that you had something more to sell and keep yourself sane until the holy time comes.

Goals

- Minister the wedding, according to ritual. It may be that all of Creation depends on it.
- Steal anything valuable that is easy to take. You need the money to feed your drug addiction.
- Convert nonbelievers to Virtuism.

Contacts

- Angela Robertson: A kind, pious woman. You are gladdened to see someone so young taking to Virtuism as she does.
- Lindis Curtis: A fine man. You wish him the best of happiness.

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You see Badge Number 500
- You die.

Bluesheets

- The Prophecy

Greensheets

- Ω
- The Wedding Ceremony
- Wedding Preparations

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0105)
- A big metal key (0125)

Stats

- | | | | |
|------------------|----|------|---|
| - Combat Rating: | 2 | - β: | 0 |
| - Ω: | 12 | | |

Lindis Curtis

It took a long time, clambering your way up to the top. Growing up, your family had little to call their own but faith and patriotism, but they clung to those things like the flesh on a peach pit, and by golly, it was just enough. You remember the itchy, hand-me-down sweaters and the soda-cracker lunches with a mixture of nostalgia and embarrassment. But you worked hard in school, choosing to turn your back to the drugs and the gangs, and eventually qualified for the North Summit Military Academy, the most prestigious in the country.

You graduated with flying colors, and became an Engineer of the Army. Your advances in the safety training for Air Force cadets gave you a good reputation, and your business savvy helped to balance the military's budget.

It was while working for the Army that you met Jacqueline, a woman of such fierce ambition and passion that you could even overlook her atheism. She was a contracted military scientist and you were an officer-in training, and the day she looked you in the eyes and called you Linda, you were sure you were in too deep.

Was it wrong, to feel that way about someone who had abandoned the Virtuous Teachings? You weren't sure, but after holding yourself in reserve for so many years, perhaps it was healthy to let your heart have its say for once.

So, your heart had its say. Again and again, it had its say, and it was clear that she felt the same way. You loved her for two years, and considered making her your wife. You didn't particularly want to have children, but though your religious practice had dampened as you brought Jacqueline's life into your own, you still felt guilty that your relationship was spiritually unconfirmed. You sometimes tried to bring it up, but Jacqueline always shot you down. She was utterly disenchanted towards the Virtuism and all it entailed, including traditional marriage. Were together, love, she'd say. How would marriage change anything except make it more complicated?

You stayed with her through two wars, keeping you both busy at your desks, drafting budget estimates and programming self-navigating ships. It was during this second war that the military began having difficulties with funds. It had overextended itself, nearly bankrupting the country, and you began receiving more and more desperate requests for funding.

It seemed that the only way to fix the problem was to dip into the private sector, and you found many buyers interested in military technology, delivered covertly. It was only partly legal, what you were doing, but in the current political climate, it seemed that it was the only way to keep the war effort afloat.

You never told Jacqueline. You were putting yourself at risk, and it wasn't worth endangering her career as well. But she was so observant, she eventually found your records, and confronted you about it. You were calm, and kept a level head as always, but she was belligerent, and you began to lash out.

That's when she dropped the bomb: She was pregnant.

You didn't believe it. You thought perhaps she was attempting to blackmail you, lie to you, convince you to give up the under-the-table deals now that your futures were incorrigibly entwined. You blamed her. You were always safe, she must have done it on purpose, must be resenting your successful career, must be trying to prove some kind of point.

She slept on the couch for the night, then walked out of the apartment and out of your life. She never asked for paternity payment. The child probably never existed, and though your heart was broken for a while, the wisdom of hindsight says good riddance to a woman who would toy with you like that.

Two years later, your heart had healed, and one day you walked into a coffee shop and met Angela. Angela was nearly half your age, and she wasn't wealthy, but her faith was strong. She reminded you of yourself, at a younger age. But she had such confidence! She held herself with poise, and always gave out an air of mystery. You were hooked, and soon intoxicated. You felt like a young man again, and six months into your relationship, you proposed. To your amazement, she said yes.

Meanwhile, your military tech business was booming. You were supplementing the army's funds just enough to keep them quiet, and scraping some cream off the top for yourself. Sweaters and soda crackers were a thing of the past. Now you wore name brand suits, and dined on caviar! And now, Li Timpeh, a political party from an unstable country, was looking to buy a new military AI Drone, and they were offering serious, hard cash. What they wanted it for was none of your business.

Unfortunately, the only time the foreigners were going to be in the country was during the wedding, so you had to bring the AI prototype with you, and keep it at the Hotel Virtuoso, where you are to be married. But you aren't worried. You are the only one with a key, and no one suspects a thing.

You're not entirely sure what happened. There you were, about to marry a beautiful young woman, not to mention about to seal one of the biggest transactions of your career. Your tux fit like a glove, the paperwork was signed, everything was perfect.

You were just going in to check on the prototypes. Your key was in the door, you were about to open it, when, very suddenly, you heard an alarm ringing in your ears, and everything went black. The next thing you knew, you were lying in a cold metal box, the alarm still blaring.

You sat up, but everything was wrong. You were too short, your arms the wrong length. You looked at your hands, and they were not your hands.

You turned your head, and a horrible, half-metal, half-plastic man was sitting up next to you, and it screamed at you in the voice of your hired pastor, Cornelius. You leapt out of the coffin-like box, scattering the dust that had settled on your limbs. All about you were panels with buttons, like the cockpit of an airplane. Were you dreaming? Was this a nightmare?

The room had no door and no window. You were trapped, and you sat in your metal box next to the moaning robot for some time, before you realized that you had to do something.

You stood up and went to the wall. There, you pushed some of the buttons, desperate to find a way out, and the screens lit up with lines of some code you didn't know. You tried to recall your schooling from decades ago, and type in some lines, but the system was all different.

Eventually, the screen went blank, and the alarm stopped. A voice said, quite clearly:

EMERGENCY SHUT-DOWN INITIATED. FOUR HOURS OF BATTERY LIFE REMAINING.

Then, everything went black.

When you opened your eyes, you were in your suite at the hotel, lying on the bed. Was it a dream? It had to be. Nothing but pre-wedding anxiety. You walked shakily to the hotel window, to get some fresh air, but when you open the window, all that is outside is a light-sucking blackness.

It is supposed to be the happiest day of your life, and something has gone horribly wrong.

Goals

- Get married to Angela, according to the ceremony of your shared religion. You love her, she loves you, and you want your day to go as smoothly as possible.
- Protect the military AI Drone from anyone who might want to steal it, save your contact from Li Timpeh.
- find out what the heck is going on.

Contacts

- Angela Robertson: This is your fiancée. You love her dearly, and have been seeing each other for about seven months
- Jacqueline Pulaski: Your old flame. You are fairly bitter about her leaving you like that.
- Reverend Cornelius: The pastor you hired to minister the wedding. A well-respected and holy man. You have no idea why you would dream about a robot with his voice.
- N:avia: Your contact from Li Timpeh. He should be showing up at some point.

Notes

- For this character, please dress in blue jeans and a white collared shirt.
- The Groom's bank account # is 20-89-59

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You see Badge Number 500
- You die.
- You get in an argument with Badge Number 439

Bluesheets

- The Prophecy

Greensheets

- Ω
- Wedding Preparations
- The Wedding Ceremony

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0101)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 3
- Ω: 8
- β: 0

Lindis Curtis

It took a long time, clambering your way up to the top. Growing up, your family had little to call their own but faith and patriotism, but they clung to those things like the flesh on a peach pit, and by golly, it was just enough. You remember the itchy, hand-me-down sweaters and the soda-cracker lunches with a mixture of nostalgia and embarrassment. But you worked hard in school, choosing to turn your back to the drugs and the gangs, and eventually qualified for the North Summit Military Academy, the most prestigious in the country.

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Two years later, your heart had healed, and one day you walked into a coffee shop and met Angela. Angela was nearly half your age, and she wasn't wealthy, but her faith was strong. She reminded you of yourself, at a younger age. But she had such confidence! She held herself with poise, and always gave out an air of mystery. You were hooked, and soon intoxicated. You felt like a young man again, and six months into your relationship, you proposed. To your amazement, she said yes.

Meanwhile, your military tech business was booming. You were supplementing the army's funds just enough to keep them quiet, and scraping some cream off the top for yourself. Sweaters and soda crackers were a thing of the past. Now you wore name brand suits, and dined on caviar! And now, Li Timpeh, a political party from an unstable country, was looking to buy a new military AI Drone, and they were offering serious, hard cash. What they wanted it for was none of your business.

Unfortunately, the only time the foreigners were going to be in the country was during the wedding, so you had to bring the AI prototype with you, and keep it at the Hotel Virtuoso, where you are to be married. But you aren't worried. You are the only one with a key, and no one suspects a thing.

You're not entirely sure what happened. There you were, about to marry a beautiful young woman, not to mention about to seal one of the biggest transactions of your career. Your tux fit like a glove, the paperwork was signed, everything was perfect.

You were just going in to check on the prototypes. Your key was in the door, you were about to open it, when, very suddenly, you heard an alarm ringing in your ears, and everything went black. The next thing you knew, you were lying in a cold metal box, the alarm still blaring.

You sat up, but everything was wrong. You were too short, your arms the wrong length. You looked at your hands, and they were not your hands.

You turned your head, and a horrible, half-metal, half-plastic man was sitting up next to you, and it screamed at you in the voice of your hired pastor, Cornelius. You leapt out of the coffin-like box, scattering the dust that had settled on your limbs. All about you were panels with buttons, like the cockpit of an airplane. Were you dreaming? Was this a nightmare?

The room had no door and no window. You were trapped, and you sat in your metal box next to the moaning robot for some time, before you realized that you had to do something.

You stood up and went to the wall. There, you pushed some of the buttons, desperate to find a way out, and the screens lit up with lines of some code you didn't know. You tried to recall your schooling from decades ago, and type in some lines, but the system was all different.

Eventually, the screen went blank, and the alarm stopped. A voice said, quite clearly:

EMERGENCY SHUT-DOWN INITIATED. FOUR HOURS OF BATTERY LIFE REMAINING.

Then, everything went black.

When you opened your eyes, you were in the hallway outside of where you were keeping the Drone blueprints. What happened? Did you faint? You quickly left for the bar to get something to calm your nerves.

It is supposed to be the happiest day of your life, and something has gone horribly wrong.

Goals

- Get married to Angela, according to the ceremony of your shared religion. You love her, she loves you, and you want your special day to go as smoothly as possible.
- Protect the military AI Drone from anyone who might want to steal it, save your contact from Li Timpeh.
- find out what the heck is going on.

Contacts

- Angela Robertson: This is your fiancée. You love her dearly, and have been seeing each other for about seven months
- Jacqueline Pulaski: Your old flame. You wonder what happened to her?
- Reverend Cornelius: The pastor you hired to minister the wedding. A well-respected and holy man. You have no idea why you would dream about a robot with his voice.
- Navia: Your contact from Li Timpeh. Should be showing up at some point.

Notes

- For this character, please dress in blue jeans and a white collared shirt.
- The Groom's bank account # is 20-89-59

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You see Badge Number 500
- You die.
- You get in an argument with Badge Number 438

Bluesheets

- The Prophecy

Greensheets

- Ω
- Wedding Preparations
- The Wedding Ceremony

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0101)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 3
- Ω: 8
- β: 0

Kelly Gordon

Your name is Krung. You are a scout for the military wing of a galaxy-spanning species that calls themselves the *Xenids*. Your species started off as an eight-legged race that relied upon bulky claws for fine-scale manipulation. Over the centuries your species shed its apprehension to large-scale genetic engineering and adopted a bipedal, two-armed form that you copied from several other successful species. Your civilization is very powerful, but is currently at war with a smaller but more advanced galaxy-spanning civilization called the *Idrians*. You are losing the war and some of the planets on the border stars of your civilization are being conquered — including your home planet. Although the core stars of the Xenid civilization are still quite safe, You fully intend to reclaim your occupied home planet one day.

The majority of the Xenids, although not strictly xenophobic, prefer to stay on Xenid-controlled planets and do not interact with other species. Although you would prefer to remain among your own species, you realize that to overcome the Idrians you will need the help of species more advanced than your own. Towards this end you joined *Contact*, the exploratory and scouting branch of the Xenid hierarchy. Contact's primary goal is to gather data on new species: "How technologically advanced are they?"; "How does their government work?"; "Are they a military threat?"; "Are they a potential ally?". There are hundreds of billions of stars in the Milky Way and only some support life, so there are always plenty of uncharted stars out there.

Your current contact assignment is to investigate an unknown energy signature detected at a planetless blue dwarf star. You are in a two-person vessel, and your partner is Quarth. She is a scholar from the Xenid home world. Although very intelligent, she sometimes seems to forget your civilization is losing an interstellar war and, when encountering new species, focuses too much on understanding the minutia and misses out on the bigger picture. She is also overly concerned with the "rules" of first-contact: these are noble ideas in peace time, but while at war some risks have to be taken to ensure the survival of the species.

On your way to the blue dwarf, your sensors picked up what you believed to be an unknown ship traveling at a very high fraction of the speed of light. You and Quarth debated for some time what action to take. You argued that the potential benefits outweighed the risks; a cursory material analysis suggests that whoever built this ship is technologically comparable to, and might even surpass, the Idrians. Quarth argued that the unknown ship was not emitting any signals and was clearly not interested in being discovered, so might destroy your small scout ship to maintain its stealth profile. While you were busy debating this, the ship's main power supply seemed to falter and die, and it started emitting a string of sequential binary-coded prime numbers. Quarth took the sequence of primes to be a distress signal of sorts, and finally agreed to get closer and investigate the ship.

The ship consists of four main components: a solar array, a battery system, an ion engine, and a massive computer. The solar array and battery system are superior to anything your civilization can manufacture, with an almost 100% energy conversion ratio and almost no passive battery loss, while the ion engine is mediocre at best. The computer is the part that fascinates you the most, as it clearly surpasses both Xenid and Idrian design. It consists of a wide array of subatomic packed memory cells tightly intermixed with equally small-scale processing units. There is no atmosphere on the ship, but there are three robot bodies wirelessly hooked up to the computer system.

After some analysis, you determine that the computer seems to be designed to run a giant simulation. The odd powering down of the ship's system you witnessed recently seems to have caused all but a very small part of the computer system to shut down, but fortunately has also opened up a simple debug layer to the simulation. This layer contains a rather lengthy tutorial clearly designed for contact with other species that starts with basic mathematics and works forward into the basics of science, culture, and language. The species that built this system refers to itself as "human", and if this tutorial can be trusted, this simulation and the ship that houses it, called the *New Eden*, is most of what remains of their civilization.

For your own reasons, you and Quarth are both eager to learn more about these humans. Unfortunately the information contained in the tutorial is not nearly sufficient. If you want to learn more, your only opportunity seems to be to try and interface with the simulation directly. Fortunately, the newly exposed debug layer and corresponding tutorial provides a simple way to do

this; these humans seem to have been masters of the mind-machine interface, which only reinforces how important it is to learn more about them. Before you dive into the simulation, you take a moment to learn all that you can from within the ship.

You are not sure what caused this mysterious power-down of the ship's systems, but you do know that there are only four hours of battery life remaining on the functioning part of the simulation. Based on the ship's design, you are confident that these humans could tip the balance of the war in your favor. Towards that end you will go to any lengths to make sure that you secure the aid your race needs, either by convincing the humans to help you directly in your war or providing you with the technological superiority you need.

With a rudimentary knowledge of human language, the two of you wirelessly interface with the computer simulation. The first thing you notice is that the simulation is totally immersive and an effectively perfect recreation of reality: you are not sure exactly how to disconnect yourself from the simulation and return to your body. The tutorial claimed this would be easy, but the "escape console" it said would materialize in front of you upon connecting is nowhere to be found. You seem to have been put in control of one of these fleshy human bodies, what they refer to as a female. The tutorial was not very specific on what the phrase "gender" actually means or what the difference between the two sexes are.

You take a look at your surroundings. Your genetically-perfected memory comes in handy here, as you start mapping pictures to vocabulary. You are in a room with one window, there is a bed, a lamp, a small desk, a closet, and a small side room containing a toilet, a shower, and a sink. You have a key in your pocket with a small magnetic strip. After some looking around you conclude that you are in what is called a "hotel room". Distressingly, you are alone and Quarth is nowhere to be found. The technology level of whoever built this room also appears to be absurdly primitive compared to the civilization that built the ship currently housing your body. This deeply concerns you — whoever built this "hotel" can probably not even manage to go into space, much less help you in your war. Nevertheless, you are determined to find someone who knows what is going on and who can help you in your quest. Why are the humans that built this ship so advanced while those in this simulation so primitive?

Even if you cannot find someone to teach you human technology, your leaders can benefit from interacting with even these primitive humans to gain a better understanding of the military tactics and ideas of other species. Try to bring as many willing participants back with you as you can; your analysis of the computer system suggests these simulated humans should be able to inhabit the robot bodies on the ship.

The biological composition of new species can also prove quite valuable. Your species often incorporates superlative features from other species into its own genetic makeup, and in extreme situations you can use genetic knowledge about a species to develop biological weapons to target similar species. Towards that end, you want to collect blood samples from several humans; the tutorial you interfaced with suggests that blood contains the entire genetic blueprint for the species, which you find a most exciting property.

The disconnection of your consciousness from your body poses an additional problem. Your species does not require sleep, but periodically your brain requires conscious maintenance to its memory network that you cannot provide. You are not sure what the consequences will be within the simulation, but you would like to find a way to avoid it.

You seem to have what is called a sticker adhering to your shirt. At the top is neatly printed "Hello, my name is" and at the bottom, in black ink: Kelly Gordon. You have wasted enough time getting yourself situated. You set out to find out exactly what is going on with this confusing yet potentially quite powerful species.

Goals

- Find Quarth in the simulation. She's likely stuck in a human body as well.
- Your overriding reason for entering the simulation is to find allies or military technology to help your species.
- Convince humans to leave the simulation with you and return to the Xenid homeworld.
- Collect blood samples from up to five different humans.
- Find a way to prevent the mental degradation of your body back on the human ship.

Notes

- The number combination to re-enter your ship through the air lock is 13-26-4

Contacts

- Quarth: A fellow Xenid and your primary partner within Contact.

Memory/Event Packets

- if you see an item whose number starts with “77”
- Ω Packet
- You die.
- Δ Packet

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- Ω

Abilities

- Psych Lim: Mental Degradation
- Collect blood sample
- Possess an Alien Body

Items

- Military Sketches (0294)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 2
- Ω : 12
- β : 0

Billy Pulaski

You are seven years old, and just started school. What a drag. At least you still get plenty of time to color, one of your favorite things to do. Your really favorite thing to do is spend time with mom, Jacqueline. She's really busy with her work though, so you don't get to hang out very much. Mostly you spend time with your nanny, who is fun too, you guess. When you get to spend time with mom, going out for ice cream or something, it's always great. It's nice to get away from all those noisy computers.

You've been feeling kind of lonely lately. You don't get along very well with anyone at school. They all make fun of you for your clothes, and they don't understand how smart your mom is. Your mom has been worried about a lot of things too. Her work has been kind of stalling, and she spends an awful lot of time at the doctor's. She gets sad and cries at night. You wish she wouldn't because it's scary. You are really worried that something is wrong. Since you rarely see her anymore, when she told you that the two of you were going to a hotel together, it made you very happy.

Today is going to be especially great. You are on vacation with your mom at this fancy hotel, and you are going to meet your dad! You got off school, and get to spend enough time with mom. Your nanny is nice and all, but you love your mom. And just last month she started telling you all about your dad. A dad. A real dad. All yours. How exciting! You have never met your dad, in fact you didn't even know you had one until mom told you. You've grown up seeing other kids with their dads and seeing people playing with their dads on TV, and you've always wanted to have a dad too. So when your mom told you that she's going to take you to meet your dad, you got really excited.

But today isn't going the way you thought it would at all. You arrived at the hotel, and mom had to run off immediately, muttering something about some man named Seth. You've been running around by yourself, which is not very much fun, and you just found out that your dad is getting married to SOMEONE ELSE! This is horrible. This is not what you were thinking at all. You thought that meeting your dad meant that he'd get back together with your mom and be like a real dad to you, like the dads you've seen on TV. Maybe if you stole that wedding ring that the horrible woman your dad is about to marry has, you could ruin the wedding. Then surely your dad would see that he really should get back together with mom instead.

At least one good thing has happened though. As you were wandering around, you found a teddy bear sitting all alone on a bench. He looked so lonely and in need of a hug, so you picked it up. Whoever abandoned the teddy bear must have been very mean, it was probably an adult. They don't seem to care about stuffed animals at all. It's like they don't see that they have feelings too. You won't let any grown up take the teddy bear because you are sure they will just mistreat him again. You found the teddy, which makes it rightfully yours. No one is going to take him away from you.

All these grown ups are running around, busy with things. It's kind of funny to watch them run around like that. It's the perfect situation to use your special talent. It's super special and also a big secret because people yell at you when they find out. You are really small and sneaky, and you can steal almost anything if you really try.

Goals

- Keep your teddy bear safe.
- Play with your dad.
- Steal the wedding ring away from your dad's new fiance. THEN he won't marry her and will get back with your mom instead, and you'll have a real dad.
- Figure out what is wrong with mom.

Contacts

- Jacqueline Pulaski: Your mom. You love her so much!
- Lindis Curtis: Your dad. You've never met him but you love him too!

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet

- You die.

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- Ω

- Play With Your Dad! (in-game notebook)

Abilities

- Pick Pocket

- Puppy-Dog Eyes

Items

- A Card Key (0103)

- Teddy Bear (0126)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 1
- Ω: 12

- β: 2

Jacqueline Pulaski

Thirty days. That is the expected length of your life. You have an inoperable brain tumor, and there's nothing you can do to save yourself. You've researched every case recorded on any database of medical records, even the databases that required some hacking to access, and you haven't found word of a cure anywhere. All you've found is cold, hopeless statistics. The standard deviation of the length of your life is twenty days. You had better make the best of the days you have.

You are a world-renowned artificial intelligence researcher. You specialize in creating simulated worlds that are incomparably more realistic than any previous game or simulation. Twenty years ago, a breakthrough in custom circuit design allowed researchers to start making neural networks with a trillion simulated neurons, ten times the number there are in the human brain. Of course this terrific hardware is useless without the machine learning software to run on it, and that is where you came in. You received your PhD 22 years ago for creating a revolutionary new approach to machine learning on this custom hardware. Ever since then you have been working in the largest research lab in the world improving your ideas and making them a reality. Your most recent project is the Mental Amplifier, a machine that can 'read' brainwaves and translate them into images.

One of the goals of your life has been to win the Cottle Award, the world's most prestigious computing prize, for your work. You had thought that you had decades to win this award, but with your brain tumor you realize you will either win it this year or you will never experience that achievement. The two serious contenders for the award are you and Dr. Seth Ashford, whom you have a bit of a history with.

You and Seth became enemies when he was still in high school. You were proctoring the International Computing Olympiad, and caught Seth sabotaging another competitor's computer, attempting to fail them. You quickly disqualified them, but to your amazement Seth's sponsoring school gave them nothing more than a slap on the wrist. Years later, you read Seth's papers, many of which bordered on plagiarism of your colleagues' unfinished work, as well as your own. How is this punk kid finding out about the work of senior scientists? Unable to fight back, you have tried to discredit Seth's work whenever possible, even when it models your own. You have learned to back up your work, encrypted, on several different servers, to always carry an extra laptop in case the first is hacked into, and to never turn your back on Seth when you are at conferences together.

But that's professional misconduct. Seth's latest insult was far more personal.

Six months ago Seth hacked into your doctor's computer, learned of your disease, and forwarded the details to several blogging sites. That was too far. At least Billy hasn't found out yet. You are sure it would devastate him. You dove into Seth's past, and unearthed his political affiliations. He had frequent correspondence with radical political groups, and often visited websites with radical content. None of this was illegal, but you're sure that if this were made public, it would ruin Seth's budding career.

You have done some contracting for the military in the past. Using your artificial brain, they have created drones that can follow high level commands like "Find and capture a person who looks like this picture and lives in that village." You are very pleased with the models, and are sure that it will perform famously. A blueprint of your drone is actually being stored in a high security room at this very hotel. When you were doing your investigation into Seth, you read an email that suggested that he is planning to steal your prototype. To secure your drone blueprint and show the world once and for all what a delinquent Seth is, you have a plan to install a camera in the room where your prototype is stored. You hope to catch Rival in the act of stealing it.

You've never been a social butterfly, usually dedicating yourself wholeheartedly to your work. But you have allowed yourself one romantic relationship. Nine years ago, you fell in love with Lindis Curtis when you met him through your military consulting work. You are not usually sentimental, but your research had been going poorly at the time and your hormones took control. For two years you spent almost all your waking time (and all your sleeping time) with Lindis, even spending less time on your precious research to spend more time with him. You became pregnant and were planning to raise a child with him. You were

just about to tell him, when you discovered his betrayal. He was selling your drones to authoritarian dictators to help them track down dissenters. How could he abuse your work like that, using elegant ideas for evil? You left him the next day. You mentioned the child in your womb, but you decided you didn't want anything more from this man.

Well, at least your relationship with Lindis did produce one remarkable result, your child Billy. You had never pegged yourself as a motherly type, but you have loved Billy since the first moment you laid eyes on him. You're sorry to say that Billy has probably spent more time with your nanny than with you, but the times you have shared have been truly special. It is essential that he has a good home after you pass away, and since you have no close living relatives, you have decided to forgive Lindis and transfer custody of Billy to him. You've been telling Billy about his wonderful father for the last month, and you're sure Lindis will melt and accept Billy when he sees how excited he is to be with his father.

You have always been a strong atheist. Ever since you learned of your tumor you have vaguely wished there were a life after death, or some supernatural way to cheat an untimely death. But you value truth far too highly to entertain wishful thinking. The cold, hard truth is that this universe and this life are all you have.

Goals

- Convince Lindis to take care of Billy once you're gone.
- Make sure Billy doesn't find out about your disease. You couldn't bear him to know he's going to lose his mom yet.
- Catch Seth stealing military secrets.
- Complete your Mental Amplifier. You still want to win the Cottle, after all!

Contacts

- Seth Ashford: That hooligan, who seems to slip through all the cracks and steal your credit! You're going to bring them to justice this time.
- Lindis Curtis: Your old flame. His dealings were shady, but he really was a decent fellow. He's getting married, but with so little time left you don't have a choice but to confront him now.
- Billy Pulaski: Your beloved son, 7 years old. He's a rascal, but you adore him.

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You die.

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- Ω
- Hacking

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0102)
- Research notes on mental amplifier technology (in-game document)
- Incomplete mental amplifier (0773)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 2
- β: 1
- Ω: 12

Angela Robertson

“Her power has been made to derive from her sexuality. It has always been preferable to attribute a woman’s success to her beauty rather than to her brains, to reduce her to the sum of her sex life.”

—Stacy Schiff

You look out of the window in your hotel room, only to find... Nothing. There is nothing there. No sky, no clouds, no beautifully manicured garden. Not even the other tower of the Hotel Virtuoso. You stare for a heartbeat, then dive for your Testament. Flipping frantically through the pages, you find *The Prophecy*. Your heart beats faster and faster as you read the familiar words again. There is no mistaking that the time talked about in the prophecy is now. You try to catch your breath as you spin around and stare at the wedding dress hanging in your closet. It’s you. You are the one talked about in the prophecy. Destined to save the world.

A bitter laughter wells up inside you. How could you be destined to save the world? You don’t feel like anything special; your father made sure of that when he left you and your mother. You were just eight years old when he absconded with your mother’s fortune. Your mother was heartbroken, and had taken to shooting heroin to dull the pain. She died from an overdose when you were just 14.

You snap out of your painful reminiscing. You are not a sob story. You are strong. Independent. Beautiful. Oh yes, you are so beautiful. After your mother abandoned you, just like your father before her, you turned to Virtuism for comfort. What you found there brought you great clarity. You embraced the tenets wholeheartedly, particularly the ones about being self reliant and true to yourself.

In college you met Seth, with whom you became fast friends. He was a nice boy, though not very religious. He didn’t seem to understand Virtuism the way you did. It explained so much of the world to you. His refusal to follow Virtuism closely led Seth astray a couple of times and you had to rescue him. In particular, he got himself mixed up with a girl who eschewed Virtuism in all its manifestations. She made your friend miserable. When she started hitting on you as well, you saw a golden opportunity to teach her a lesson. A few dates and a dramatic break-up in front of half of the sophomore class left her world shattered, and you drunk with power.

After that, it was like a drug. Leading men on, taking whatever you could from them, and leaving them broken—it was fun. Your conscience never bothered you. The men you targeted deserved to be exploited. They didn’t practice Virtuism, or they were hypocrites about it. They lied, stole, cheated—everything your father had done. You ruined reputations, extorted money, and climbed the social ladder yourself. Through it all, you justified it as staying true to yourself. You really were a wealthy girl. You just lacked a fortune at the moment.

You of course donated some small portion of your money to the church, which quickly gained you power and connections within Virtuism as well. It was not until a few years later that you met Cornelius, one of the most prominent pastors of Virtuism. He has always been at the forefront of religious theory, and you have always admired him. His ability to resist your feminine charms, which you tried just for the hell of it, only increased your esteem for Cornelius.

After college, you stayed in touch with Seth as he quickly rose to prominence in the sciences. Whispers began to reach you however that Seth might be employing rather unsavory methods to succeed so quickly. You hired some outside help to set up a camera in your friend’s apartment. You couldn’t believe what you found when you reviewed the tapes. Seth was on tape hacking into Annals of The National Academy of Sciences website and rigging it so their paper would be published. When you confronted him about it, he tried to brush it off. When you made it clear that you wouldn’t just let it pass, Seth became distressed and begged you to keep it quiet. What else could you do? You agreed to keep what you had found to yourself for the time being. You have since thought it over however, and are not so sure you are willing to keep Seth’s secret any more.

Up to now, you have lived the life of a rising star. You were the queen bee in a busy hive of social networking. But one night,

one of your lovers went too far. Lindis proposed to you. He was nice enough, though rather older than you. Spending time with him was oh so boring, but he was oh so wealthy. At least he was a practitioner of Virtuism so you always had something to talk about. You thought his proposal over, and were about to say no, when he produced a gorgeous, and very expensive, ruby wedding ring. You couldn't resist the temptation of money, and said "yes".

And now, here you are. Just a month later, about to get married. But you aren't about to give up the lifestyle you have worked so hard to earn back your whole life. The freedom, the money, the power. No, you intend to poison your husband during the wedding ceremony, and inherit all of his money. Then you can return to your life of freedom and glamour. The only piece you are missing is his bank account number.

The fact that the world seems to be ending is not such a big deal. *The Prophecy* explains that a wedding ceremony will save the world, and a wedding is exactly what you are determined to see happens tonight.

Goals

- Ensure that the wedding ceremony occurs at all costs.
- Persuade your husband to give up his bank account number to you.
- Poison your husband, preferably during the wedding ceremony.
- Get a hold of Seth's stocks, possibly in exchange for your continued silence.
- Find your next lover/victim.

Contacts

- Lindis Curtis: Your very wealthy husband to be.
- Seth Ashford: Your old room-mate, now a prominent scientist.
- Reverend Cornelius: The pastor who will be performing your wedding. He is one of the

Memory/Event Packets

- Ω Packet
- You see Badge Number 500
- You see Badge Number 321
- You die.

Bluesheets

- The Prophecy

Greensheets

- Ω
- Wedding Preparations
- The Wedding Ceremony

Abilities

- none

Items

- A Card Key (0100)
- Wedding Ring (0129)

Stats

- Combat Rating: 2
- β: 0
- Ω: 12

Patricia Smith

Your name is Quarth. You are a prominent scholar of a galaxy-spanning species that calls themselves the *Xenids*. Your species started off as an eight-legged race that relied upon bulky claws for fine-scale manipulation. Over the centuries your species shed its apprehension to large-scale genetic engineering and adopted a bipedal, two-armed form that you copied from several other successful species. Your civilization is very powerful, but is currently at war with a smaller but more advanced galaxy-spanning civilization called the *Idrians*. The latest reports suggest you are losing the war and some of the planets on the border stars of your civilization are being conquered. This doesn't concern you too much; you are not a soldier and have little interest in the war, and the border stars are really just small colonies that are easily evacuated. You were born on the Xenid home world which is quite far away from the war front and not likely to be threatened anytime soon. Your passion is learning and studying new things from outside the Xenid civilization and bringing them back home.

The majority of the Xenids, although not strictly xenophobic, prefer to stay on Xenid-controlled planets and do not interact with other species. Depending on who you ask, you are either blessed or cursed with a personality that has no trouble interacting with foreign species. This gives you a clear advantage in the Xenid academic circles — while others tend to sit around analyzing and debating data collected by others, you actively reach out and gather new knowledge. Towards this end you joined *Contact*, the exploratory and scouting branch of the Xenid hierarchy. *Contact*'s primary goal is to gather data on new species: "How technologically advanced are they?"; "How does their government work?"; "Are they a military threat?"; "Are they a potential ally?". There are hundreds of billions of stars in the Milky Way and only some support life, so there are always plenty of uncharted stars out there.

Your current contact assignment is to investigate an unknown energy signature detected at a planetless blue dwarf star. You are in a two-person vessel, and your partner is Krung. She is a soldier from one of the border star systems. Her home planet is currently under siege and has possibly already fallen. In your previous encounters with her, you have found her to be very focused on finding allies or military technology from other civilizations to help with your war against the *Idrians*. Occasionally you find her overly zealous: she often violates the first-contact conventions that are designed to prevent a diplomatic miscommunication from developing into large-scale conflict. As she constantly reminds you, thus far nothing disastrous has happened, so you haven't had cause to formally censure her.

On your way to the blue dwarf, your sensors picked up what you believed to be an unknown ship traveling at a very high fraction of the speed of light. You and Krung debated for some time what action to take. You argued that the unknown ship was not emitting any signals and was clearly not interested in being discovered, so might destroy your small scout ship to maintain its stealth profile. Krung argued that the potential benefits outweighed the risks; a cursory material analysis suggests that whoever built this ship is technologically comparable to, and might even surpass, the *Idrians*. While you were busy debating this, the ship's main power supply seemed to falter and die, and it started emitting a string of sequential binary-coded prime numbers. Your curiosity now peaked and taking the sequence of primes to be a distress signal of sorts, you both decided to get closer and investigate the ship.

The ship consists of four main components: a solar array, a battery system, an ion engine, and a massive computer. The solar array and battery system are superior to anything your civilization can manufacture, with an almost 100% energy conversion ratio and almost no passive battery loss, while the ion engine is mediocre at best. The computer is the part that fascinates you the most, as it clearly surpasses both Xenid and *Idrian* design. It consists of a wide array of subatomic packed memory cells tightly intermixed with equally small-scale processing units. There is no atmosphere on the ship, but there are three robot bodies wirelessly hooked up to the computer system.

After some analysis, you determine that the computer seems to be designed to run a giant simulation. The odd powering down of the ship's system you witnessed recently seems to have caused all but a very small part of the computer system to shut

down, but fortunately has also opened up a simple debug layer to the simulation. This layer contains a rather lengthy tutorial clearly designed for contact with other species that starts with basic mathematics and works forward into the basics of science, culture, and language. The species that built this system refers to itself as “human”, and if this tutorial can be trusted, this simulation and the ship that houses it, called the *New Eden*, is most of what remains of their civilization.

For your own reasons, you and Krung are both eager to learn more about these humans. Unfortunately the information contained in the tutorial is not nearly sufficient. If you want to learn more, your only opportunity seems to be to try and interface with the simulation directly. Fortunately, the newly exposed debug layer and corresponding tutorial provides a simple way to do this; these humans seem to have been masters of the mind-machine interface, which only reinforces how important it is to learn more about them. Before you dive into the simulation, you take a moment to learn all that you can from within the ship.

You are not sure what caused this mysterious power-down of the ships systems, but you do know that there are only four hours of battery life remaining on the functioning part of the simulation. What greatly interests you is that there appears to be a very high-density entity within the subset of the simulation that is still active. This appears to be a backup copy of the operating system. The system seems to be designed to prevent you from accessing the backup copy externally, but you are fairly confident that if you could access it, it would serve as a perfect testbed for safely understanding and interacting with these humans. Your overriding goal upon entering the simulation is to find a way to secure this backup copy.

With a rudimentary knowledge of human language, the two of you wirelessly interface with the computer simulation. The first thing you notice is that the simulation is totally immersive and an effectively perfect recreation of reality: you are not sure exactly how to disconnect yourself from the simulation and return to your body. The tutorial claimed this would be easy, but the “escape console” it said would materialize in front of you upon connecting is nowhere to be found. You seem to have been put in control of one of these fleshy human bodies, what they refer to as a female. The tutorial was not very specific on what the phrase “gender” actually means or what the different between the two sexes are. You make a mental note to investigate that further.

You take a look at your surroundings. Your genetically-perfected memory comes in handy here, as you start mapping pictures to vocabulary. You are in a room with one window, there is a bed, a lamp, a small desk, a closet, and a small side room containing a toilet, a shower, and a sink. You have a key in your pocket with a small magnetic strip. After some looking around you conclude that you are in what is called a “hotel room”. Distressingly, you are alone and Krung is nowhere to be found. The technology level of whoever built this room also appears to be absurdly primitive compared to the civilization that built the ship currently housing your body. Why are the humans that built the ship so advanced while those in this simulation so primitive?

Just from studying the tutorial, you have decided that these humans are a most fascinating and unique species. Ideally you will simply return to your home planet with the backup copy of the world, but you are a very practical person, and know this may not be possible. You intend to find out as much as possible directly from the source. You have taken mental note of a list of the most important questions pertaining to human culture and behavior.

You’re not sure exactly how to find the backup. But you do know that it and anyone very close to it will be able to resist any corruption that you suspect might be present in the local environment. You have devised a way to test the corruption level of others, and suspect that someone who has little to no corruption is likely in possession of the backup copy.

The disconnection of your consciousness from your body poses an additional problem. Your species does not require sleep, but periodically your brain requires conscious maintenance to its memory network that you cannot provide. You are not sure what the consequences will be within the simulation, but you would like to find a way to avoid it.

You seem to have what is called a sticker adhering to your shirt. At the top is neatly printed “Hello, my name is” and at the bottom, in black ink: Patricia Smith. You have spent enough time getting yourself situated. You set out to find out exactly what is going on with this confusing yet potentially quite powerful species.

Goals

- Find Krung in the simulation. She’s likely stuck in a human body as well.

- Find the backup copy of the world, and somehow extract it from the simulation and back to your ship for analysis. It represents a perfect and pristine copy of the world, without being influenced by your presence or the recent power-down.
- Obey Contact's first-contact principles whenever possible. Avoid physically harming humans unless attacked. Do not divulge specifics about your species unless necessary. Do not interfere with local political or religious beliefs. Try to keep Krung in line regarding these principles, although you rarely have much luck with that.
- Find the answer to as many of the questions in your mental research journal as possible.
- Find a way to prevent the mental degradation of your body back on the human ship.

Notes

- The number combination to re-enter your ship through the air lock is 13-26-4

Contacts

- Krung: A fellow Xenid and your primary partner within Contact.

Memory/Event Packets

- if you see an item whose number starts with “77”
 - Ω Packet
- You die.
 - Δ Packet

Bluesheets

- none

Greensheets

- $$-\Omega$$

Abilities

- Assess mind-state corruption
- Psych Lim: Mental Degradation
- Possess an Alien Body

Items

- none

Stats

- | | | | |
|------------------|----|-------------|---|
| - Combat Rating: | 2 | - β : | 0 |
| - Ω : | 12 | | |

