



An 8 Page World by Brent Wolke

INTRODUCTION

On a world much like Earth called Korsuth, humanity broke the secret of imbuing machines with their own intelligence and emotions, creating not an artificial intelligence, but an actual intelligence. While created to serve humanity, those in charge were fearful of a race of sentient machines and so never shared the secret of how the process worked to create more thinking robots, nor the location of manufacture. Despite this, robots were treated more or less as equals among men.

With the machines at their side, humanity was able to colonize the moons, putting permanent settlements on the Arest, and outposts on Unaro, and even putting robotic installations out as far as an asteroid belt. Millions of sentient machines existed among the humans for hundreds of years.

Unfortunately, as all living creatures have their time to exist, they must also pass into extinction. Humanity, already showing signs of decreased fertility, finally came to the point where no more human children were born, and the last generation of man came to pass. A select group of people numbering nearly 100,000 were chosen for genetic health, intelligence, and education, and were frozen in cryo-storage, while the machines were tasked to find a cure or some other answer to bring humanity back into the light of the sun.

Not all has gone well. More than 300 years

have passed since the last human walked on Korsuth, and the robots are no closer to solving the problem. In the meantime, a form of robotic civilization arose with it's own separate nations and factions, and much of the world has returned to the wild with such vast expanses unpopulated by man or machine. Tragically, with no way to replicate themselves, the robots are also dying off as accident, violence, or malfunction dwindles their numbers. The robots are staring down the same failed path that humanity recently trod.

Stepping out into this violent and uncertain world are robots who are finding new purpose from that which they were created originally to do. Most continue in their roles, but some have given up the old ways and seek the answers to the salvation of the two races. Some work to find a cure for humanity, and some search out for the way to create more like themselves. Others wander the planet looking for enlightenment the way the humans of old would often do. All this is to say nothing of those robots who have taken sides in the new nations and continue to fight and defend and engage in conflict over resources or perceived insults. The robots are not much different from humans who gave them life...

This is the future imperfect, where technology is both failing and the only source of survival.

Future Imperfect is a role-playing setting for use with **S. John Ross' *Risus: The Anything RPG***. Fear not, for it is free, and readily available at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>, along with the *Risus Companion*, which is not free, but you'll want it anyway 'cause it is loaded with goodies. So go spend some money at his website and tell him hello from me. Thanks!

CHARACTER CREATION

In *Future Imperfect*, the Players take on the roles of sentient machines more than 300 years old who are finding a new way of life, new purposes, and possibly the salvation of two species of life.

The sentient machines were universally built to a humanoid form (a head, two arms and two legs), although variations exist, and were generally human sized, give or take a few feet in either direction. Non-sentient robots also exist, but they were built as ‘dumb’ labor.

Use the following information in helping to create these sentient machine characters.

- Characters are built using Funky Dice with the standard 60 points for Clichés. Hooks and Tales are allowed and encouraged for an additional 6 points each. Double Pump Clichés are not allowed. If the *Risus Companion* is being used, Lucky Shots, Questing Dice, and Side-kicks and Shield Mates are also allowed.

- The largest Cliché must represent the physical form of the robot as form followed function, and as such is known as the Form Cliché. A droid can have only one. One can almost say that among the robots, the various forms were separate races among themselves. The near human size and quality of a droid designed to be a nanny for children, is very different from those behemoth giants built as war machines. See Setting Rules below.

- All remaining Clichés are the programming the droid required to do it’s job or has since picked up, or even personal interests the droid has acquired. All droids must have at least one Cliché known as the Function Cliché and must be related to it’s original function as a droid. Together, the Form and Function Clichés create a complete picture of the droids origins.

Example: The droid DR-BBNR has Soothing Medical Bot (3d6) (Form Cliché), and Advanced Surgery Techniques (3d8) (Function Cliché).

- Although all bots have official designations, and one of hundreds similarly built, most bots were given names by the humans who created them. Most have simple designations or one syllable names, but Nanny Bots and Personal Assistant Bots were usually give full, if not cutesy, names.

Examples of bots to help build a Form Cliché

Agricultural Bot: Can be either small or large depending on what task they had been given, but are generally durable, protected against the elements (especially dust and mud), and equipped with various tools for handling and retrieving food such as shears, or extending limbs to pick fruit from a tree.

Athletic Bot: Very durable with a sensitive gyroscope to keep balance, these robots were designed as personal trainers for human athletes, or else to actually perform in certain sporting events. Their size, strength and agility vary greatly.

Forestry Bot: Similar in most respects to an Agriculture Bot, Forestry Bots are extremely well protected against the elements (second only to a Military Bot), and are equipped with tools to manage forests and wild life, such as chain saws and tranquilizer darts.

Industrial Bot: Where ever there was a hazardous condition for humans to work in, you can be sure an Industrial Bot was created for it. Being immensely durable, usually tolerant of extreme temperatures and protected against caustic chemicals, industrial bots vary the most in shape and size among droids and are equipped with whatever tools were needed for their tasks.

Medical Bot: These droids were universally built light and delicate with long thin limbs and fingers and a comforting look; all the better to put sick people at ease and perform invasive surgeries. They are equipped with a vast array of medical tools.

Military Bot: These bots came in all shapes and sizes depending on their assigned tasks, but were all generally well armored, protected against the elements, heavily armed with an array of weapons, and menacing.

“Nanny” Bot: These bots were built to have the greatest similar appearance to humans in order to perform tasks with heavy human social interaction. They came equipped with warm, life-like synthetic skin, hair and eyes.

Office Bot: Built roughly to human form, but with no attempt at making them look human, these robots were created to simply perform simple office tasks which still required sentience to make decisions.

Personal Assistant Bot: Existing somewhere between a “Nanny” Bot and an Office Bot, these droids performed functions similar to a secretary, maid, chauffeur, butler, or similar service to the wealthy.

Security Bot: These bots served as bouncers, body guards, actual security detail, or even police. They were all generally durable and equipped with non-lethal weapons such as stun batons, tasers and so forth. They were built to look impressive and commanding, but not necessarily threatening.

Tech Bot: The brother to the Industrial Bot and Medical Bot, Tech Bots come in a variety of shapes and sizes, usually on the smaller end, and are equipped with a variety of tools to perform repairs on electronics, machines, or even other robots.

Robots, Bots, Droids?

Although their technical name is Actual Intelligence Machines (or AIMs), common use among humans at the time and the robots still today have them called a number of other names, such as Bot and Droid,

COMBAT

When a robot is engaged in any physical conflict and loses dice, the player may choose to remove lost dice from the Form Cliché (if they weren't already using it) which represents actual physical damage to the structure of the robot.

Lost dice to the Form Cliché cannot be recovered without access to a mechanical shop, working tools, and a droid with the know-how to make those repairs. A droid with zero dice in their Form Cliché is essentially destroyed and dead, but can be brought back to "life" so long as any other Cliché still has dice left.

REPAIR

Assuming proper gear for repairing a droid is on hand, the repairing bot rolls his appropriate Cliché against the damaged droids full (not harmed) Form Cliché. Every success repairs one lost die and takes 1 day of work.

If substandard gear for repairs are only available, the GM may assign penalties to the fixing droids roll as he sees fit.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Unless otherwise noted, one can assume all the Tools of the Trade are built in equipment, either obviously connected or hidden behind panels. As such, droids cannot have these intrinsic pieces of equipment removed without first dismantling the robot. All gear is assumed to run on the robots internal power source, except for weapons which expend actual ammunition and need to be resupplied on occasion; GM's call

UPGRADES

Robots do not advance their Form Cliché per the normal Risus rules. Instead they must be upgraded. Make the normal rolls at the end of every game session. If successful, the next time the droid enters 'civilization', it learns the local whereabouts of an appropriate upgrade to Form and must spend 1 day in repairs for every die in the Form Cliché, including the new one just received to make the increase.

Every Function Cliché may increase as normal, and the droid may even add new functions. These are learning, sentient machines after all.

Function Clichés

Function Clichés represent knowledge, not physical form, so cannot add physical qualities to the droid. They can, however, reinforce the physical form. Example: *Military Tank-Bot with a Huge Arsenal* (4d10) (Form Cliché) takes a Function Cliché of *Ridiculously Redundant Weapon Controls* (3d8), thus allowing the droid to keep on fighting using the Function Cliché even if the Form Cliché has been reduced to one die.

As mentioned elsewhere, every droid must have at least one cliché related to their original function. The trick to original Function Clichés is in making something possibly irrelevant, relevant, by careful selection (examples given below). The remaining Clichés can be anything the droid has since picked up or pursued.

Agricultural Bot: *Ranch Management* – Knowing how to raise, manage, and cull cattle herds; Veterinary medicine techniques; Minor combat techniques (to fend off predators); Tracking; Land Navigation

Athletic Bot: *Hockey Player* – Knowing the rules of hockey; Knowing how to move on ice; Knowing how to use one's mass as a battering ram; Brawling; Hitting things with sticks; Knowing how to put one through the five hole.

Forestry Bot: *Jungle Conservation* – Recognizing flora and fauna; Spotting dangerous terrain; Knowing how to traverse dangerous or difficult terrain; Land navigation; Wildlife management.

Industrial Bot: *Demolition* – Knowing how to weaken structural integrity; Understanding material strengths and weaknesses; Spotting and avoiding dangerous structural conditions; Hitting things really hard.

Medical Bot: *Psychologist* – Understanding motivations; Being able to tell when someone is lying; Manipulating others emotions; Planting suggestions; Providing therapy; Calming a dangerous situation

Military Bot: *Sniper* – Shooting, shooting, and more shooting; Deadly accuracy; Knowing the weak spots of targets; Being stealthy and unobserved; Military tactics; Basic melee combat knowledge; Ambush tactics.

"Nanny" Bot: *College Professor* – Having an immense amount of knowledge of human history, mathematics, linguistics, geography, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, pretty much everything; Being pedantic

Office Bot: *Computer Hacker* – Breaking into secure computer systems; Covering your electronic tracks; Taking over remote computer systems; Reprogramming dumb-bots; Data pillaging; Destroying computer systems

Personal Assistant Bot: *Security Chauffeur* – Defensive and offensive driving; Stunt driving; Knowing the best short cuts; Ramming for effect; Losing tails; Keeping passengers unharmed from external attacks

Security Bot: *Body Guard* – Defensive tactics; Spotting suspicious activity; Spotting traps; Shooting; Advanced melee combat; Shielding others from being hurt; Intervening; Being menacing

Tech Bot: *Weapon Smith* – Building weapon systems; Inventing new weapon systems; Jury-Rigging temporary weapon systems; Repairing and cleaning weapons; Improving weapons; Dismantling weapon systems

TECHNOLOGY

The following is provided to give players and GMs a primer on the state of technology in Future Imperfect.

COMMUNICATION

All droids were equipped with the ability to vocalize in some manner, even if only from an electronic speaker, and the majority of droids use this to communicate with each other, especially strangers.

Most droids are also equipped with transceivers and receivers and can privately or publicly broadcast their 'voice' to others within range (typically miles unless the droid was some form of communication robot) like a radio transmission.

Curiously though, droids which have spent a great deal of time (months) with another begin to (what the humans called) Attune. Each droid can privately 'speak' to the Attuned over any distance – even between planets - without any apparent use of technology. Droids have no explanation for how this works, and humans when they were around seemed just as surprised.

PARTICLE FLAYERS

The most advanced weapons use ambient particles in the atmosphere. They are drawn into a coil and expelled at tremendous force in a continuous beam for as long as the trigger is depressed or the energy source holds out. These particles cause microscopic explosions on impact, and to the average eye it appears a target hit by a particle accelerator begins to turn to dust.

SCREAMERS

An extremely rare weapon of the resource wars, a Screamer caused neurological damage to human targets by targeting the nervous system, and was so named because of the effect it had on humans. It has no effect on dumb-bots or other electrical devices. Droids, despite not having any organic tissue, suffer temporary loss of awareness (they lose their next possible action) while they have memory flashbacks or hallucinations when struck by a Screamer. They are not harmed otherwise.

STORM GUNS

While technology has advanced at an outstanding pace, fire arms are still fairly basic in that they hurl ammunition at an enemy. The most common method is an electromagnetic rail accelerator that 'pushes' bullets out of the barrel with a resulting crack of lightning. The

ammunition itself can vary greatly from hard-foam for crowd control, explosive rounds, armor piercing needles, or just a common metal slug.

TITAN PROJECTORS

Titan projectors are short range electro magnetic fields with a pool of titanium molecules which can be ejected from the device and manipulated into fixed shapes such as shields or blades. Since the pool is usually far smaller compared to the size of the field, the appearance of a titan projector appears as a hazy blue glow in the rough shape of the blade or shield. When the field comes into contact with an outside force or object, the pool is instantly hardened into a molecular blade upon the point of interaction, or when used in defense, an instant shield upon the point of impact. Titan projectors can be turned off when not in use. The practical size and use of a titan projector limits them at this point to hand-held weapons and shields.

TRANSPORTATION

Wheeled and tracked vehicles were still common place in the wilds or remote places of Earth, but within cities, antigravity engines made floating cars a reality. Large aerial transports (Carriers they are called) that have more in common with zeppelins than jets were, and in some places still are, the fastest method of travel. Bullet trains are another method of rapid transport with most continents being crisscrossed with their tracks. Ocean going vessels are still typically huge and serve primarily for hauling cargo.

Between Korsuth and the moons, rockets using ion particle engines are the main method of getting from point A to point B, with a trip from Korsuth to the Asteroid Belt taking a couple of months of travel.

SAMPLE CHARACTER

XG-38r "Gee"

Form Cliché: Hulking Military Droid (3d10)

Function Cliché: Redundant Weapon Controls (3d6), Military Protocols and Strategies (2d6), Philosopher (2d6)

Tools of the Trade: Particle Flayer, Storm Gun, Plasma Flame Projector, Explosive Cell Launcher, Titan Blade Projector, A Book About Socrates

Tale: Gee was a top of the line infantry-tank and saw action in the final resource wars before humanity vanished. He struggles to find his place in the world now that the wars are over and his purpose seems to have come to an end.

Hook: Gee is ever mindful of finding a new purpose and usually attempts to disarm a conflict through discourse before resorting to violence.



WORLD DATABASE

The following is intended to give the players and GMs an overview of the various places in the world and what adventuring possibilities exist in those locations.

ARCHIPELAGO

The many island chains of the Archipelago are home to only a handful of droids, and only marginally more dumb-bots. This relative privacy and peace though is exactly what appeals to many droids who are looking for someplace to conduct research, pursue their own affairs, or just retire from the rest of civilization.

AREST

The large moon is positively teeming with robotic life of the uncontrolled dumb-bot variety. When humanity started to colonize this planet, they constructed large scale manufacturing facilities to produce dumb-bots to aid in the heavy labor of building structures. Humanity faded, but the robots kept working, building cities for ghosts. The hundred or so sentient droids on

Arest keep mostly to themselves, rarely talking to others. Rumors persist that the droids keep to themselves because they discovered something on the moon and are either guarding it, or protecting everyone else from it...whatever it is.

ASTEROID BELT

Scattered throughout the belt beyond the moons are small self-sustaining outposts, small research stations, manned by a handful of droids each. With no way to return to Earth, and no other tasks to occupy them, they continue their original purpose of monitoring signals from probes sent to the outer planets. Recently, these outposts, one by one, have shutdown without warning with no further communications. It is unknown what is quieting these lonely and far off droids.

ERASUA

Due to human religious laws of this region which banned droids, it never saw any droid use, and even today there is a certain stigma among droids which makes them uneasy about traveling in the area. As such, there are no droids residing in Erasua...only those passing through or looking for something. Still, rumors persist

of a large droid community in hiding. Since humans are no longer around to enforce the laws, it is curious why droids should remain so, but perhaps it has to do with those droids who frequently go missing in the area...

Dumb-bots are plentiful in the capital cities, but otherwise the region is remarkably devoid of activity.

GYPTER

Outside of a few hundred droids located in the south, and a few dozen within the north, the continent of Gypter has returned to its wild origins, devoid of any sign of civilization as jungles, sands, and grass lands have taken back nearly everything. Persistent rumors among robots place several droid mercenary units hidden within the jungles who await further orders.

KORSUTH ORBIT

There is no more than handful of droids stationed in satellites orbiting Korsuth. However, several of those satellites are weapons platforms that could rain destruction down on the planet if the droids were so inclined. Many factions on Korsuth have made offers of alliance with these droids, but so far, none have accepted.

NORTH MORRAKOR

North Morrakor, especially the former United Colonies is heavily populated with droids of all kinds, even dumb-bots. Even the so called barren expanses of the plains, mountains, and eastern deserts are populated with droids. Badika has a large number of droids, but Ixil (outside of Ixil City) is mostly overrun with dumb-bots. North Morrakor has close to one million droids.

Similar to Valkanor, the North Morrakorian droids have formed many social, political, and military associations, even secret ones, all focused and pursuing their own agendas (though typically they get along much better than their Valkanorian counterparts), and it's not all that uncommon to find a Byzantine web of alliances and enemies among those associations. Navigating that web can be treacherous, and many a droid has found themselves in a dire situation through no real fault of their own.

SIAN

At one time it was joked that Sian contained more droids than humans, and while obviously not the case, it should give evidence to the sheer amount of droids (nearing 2 million) inhabiting this region, primarily in Iokko and Eastern Kiana.

Iokka, especially the city Okyt, is largely intact as the droids have spent considerable effort in keeping up appearances. Okyt has also become the robot paradise where only the most strong or well connected may enter to obtain the very best in spare parts, information, or make alliances. It is even said there is a gladiatorial arena where enslaved droids are forced to fight for the amusement of others.

Kiana has reverted to the days of warring nations, as military droids have created factions, states, clans, and all other manner of inclusive groups, all entangled in precarious alliances or bitter battles. Sides switch constantly. Droids must be very careful when traveling here, for if not attacked, they may be forcibly drafted into a fighting force.

SOUTH MORRAKOR

The south Morrakor continent saw enormous action during the resource wars. The oil and minerals hidden in the mountains, and the timber of the jungles, coupled with open space to provide food for the worlds hungry masses were in high demand...and paled in comparison for the demand for the massive bio-sphere which provided medical breakthroughs. As a result, this continent remains devastated, and a lot of civil and military hardware was left behind.

It is dangerous place to visit for any droid, for many military dumb-bots are still on the prowl for intruders. Still many come to South Morrakor hoping to reclaim those rare resources or hardware. The few thousand droids on the continent clinging to the ruins of the larger coastal cities, can sometimes be convinced or paid to provide professional guidance through the dangerous territory in search of those lost resources.

TARKADIA

There are only a handful of droids at the South Pole, spread out between various arctic research bases. They remain in solitude for their own reasons, but many have speculated that the humans in cold sleep are located on the frozen continent and those droids are in fact guards.

USTERLAND

Like most technologically developed countries, this one has had its fair share of droids, mostly concentrated on the East Coast with some on the West Coast, all totalling nearly 2000 sentient droids. The large interior desert remains largely devoid of robotic life except for the few ecological bots or a lone drifter following

in the footsteps of humanity; on a spiritual journey of self-discovery to determine if droids have souls.

UNARO

Korsuth's smallest and closest moon is actually, for the most part uninhabited. Most bases were destroyed in the resource wars, and the functioning few are manned by dumb-bots who shoot at everyone who cannot provide proper authorization (and no one has that).

The only base operated by droids is Titan Center, a neutral, heavily armed base which ensures peaceful travel between Korsuth, Arest, and the Asteroid Belt.

VALKANOR

The 300,000 or so droids in the many former countries of Valkanor have given way to thousands of different droid associations claiming membership anywhere from a handful of droids to hundreds. Each association has its own agenda with clearly marked territories and domains and can get rather violent about any transgressions. Rarely do they work in friendly association, and when they do, it rarely lasts. Many of these associations have cells located on other continents, most notably North Morrakor.

The agendas of these associations are the source of many discussions across the world, because nearly every lunatic idea has droid supporters.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

I am indebted to the following droids for their playtest:

Colin "Psy-325 Philomon" Amato

Adam "Ak-Ak 001011101" Boring

Becky "Sally Guns" Boring

Ken "DDS 32/4 'Doc Lockjaw'" MacLennan

Rachel "Tennis Pro 2400 - Cindy" Steussy

The Secret Behind Future Imperfect

Note: If you are a player, please do not read further.

The reason no more humans are born, the source of the droid intelligence, and even the similarity of Korsuth to Earth, has the same root issue. Humans were able to trap the human soul of a person who just died and house that spirit in an electronic matrix. That soul gave real sentience to the droid. However, as the souls were trapped, they could no longer return to the spiritual source, the Great Wheel of Reincarnation. Like a mill wheel that does not turn with a dried up stream, the river of souls returning from Earth dried to a trickle and could no longer turn the Great Wheel.

As a result, souls could not return to Earth: Babies were born dead, and eventually humans could no longer even conceive. This happened once before, and resulted in the reincarnation of the entire planet Earth into Korsuth.

In order for both humanity and the droids to thrive again, to avoid the reincarnation of existence once more, the droids must give up their immortality, set limits to their age, and let their souls return to the Wheel in due course.

Ideally, a series of adventures in Future Imperfect should consist lots of situations that test what it means to be human. Humor, anger, heroics, compassion, fear, and ambition are excellent themes to focus on. Whether the issue of reincarnation ever comes to light or not depends on the focus of your adventures. A game played for action and adventure in the war zones of Kiana may barely touch upon it or even not at all, while introspection may be the central focus of droids isolated on Arest.

Finally, the locations presented in the world guide drop hints at many adventure possibilities without explanation. This is deliberate to let you, the game master, change or add to this world to make of it whatever you wish.

