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## Ignorable Theme for #381

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### Zine Titles

This was a question I asked away back in the early 200's when I first joined A&E (the first issue I read was #199). Personally, I suck at making titles and have been changing mine erratically as my moods change.

My current title is taken from my (no dead) Savage Worlds campaign, *Small, Sinister Things*. I also changed my website to sinisterthings.com at the same time. I just liked the sound of it.

### Character Names

My character names are very important to me and finding the right name can take a while, especially if I need a non-Anglo name. Even for American names, I use the internet (people.yahoo.com) to verify the (family) name really exists. I tend to avoid fanciful names. Even with fantasy characters, I usually try to draw names from the same sources used by the SCA.

My current PC is Dr. Soo Sun, which is a legitimate Korean name as far as my research told me. Yes, it is a tad silly, doubly so when written with her family name first.

My previous PC in a 1920's Changeling campaign was Charlie Maria Marlena Flores. She was an eshu of mixed Hispanic, native, black, and Irish descent. I like gender-bender names for girls and women, which is good that I never had a daughter in real life. My PC before her was a slough named Cleveland (real name Daniel Carpenter).

In the last D&D campaign, I played a gnome witch<sup>1</sup> named Orris Anuran, chosen because I wanted a name taken from nature. Orris seemed like the male version of Iris and Anuran went with his toad familiar (named Wort).

I had a superhero character named Zoya Sobchak. As a teleporter and proud Russian-Canadian, used the codename Мерцание, which was a pain given that it was a play-by-email game. I usually just typed Mercanie (though the pronunciation is something like *mer-stan-yeh*).

Other favorite character names include:

- Vladixlav: Castle Falkenstein dragon
- Stillness: D&D monk
- Zhu "Lola" Ling: Feng Shui bruiser
- Samar Roshni: V&V techno-mystical-psy-chic abomination/teenager

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1 Insert "gnomewich" jokes here.

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## Voyages: Crew

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The crew consists of 36 individuals. The PCs represent the 6 command officers. All subordinates and any unfilled command officers will be NPCs. The command officers (including NPCs) are Wild Cards; subordinates are Extras.

- Captain
- Executive Officer: oversees a bridge crew of 3 and day-to-day operations of the ship
- Medical Doctor: oversees 3 nurses
- Chief Engineer: oversees 3 technicians
- Security Chief: oversees 18 security officers (3 Lieutenants, 15 ensigns)
- Lead Scientist: oversees 3 other scientists

In addition, there are 1 or more robots for manual labor, heavy lifting, and turning on their creators. These are not available for PCs and technically are not even NPCs.

The crew is a mixture of ethnicity and gender. All are human, with one exception made for a token alien who is either a PC or NPC, but not the Captain or Security Chief. All command officers are healthy adults. There may be 1 (and only one) NPC junior crewman on the bridge or in the science department.

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## Voyages: Genre Tropes

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### English

Every civilized alien culture speaks English. When English is not spoken, one or more of the following may apply:

- The aliens are *primitive* and *backwards*
- The aliens are speaking secretly amongst themselves
- The aliens are *exotic* and *alien*
- The plot requires it

### Away Teams

The command officers handle things personally. No matter how reasonable it would be to delegate away teams and missions to the appropriate subordinates, the command officers did not gain their position by sitting back on the ship.

### Calling Home

Exploration ships are on their own. Communication with Earth or one of the few established outposts is simply not practical. Command officers

are expected to make their own decisions and utilize their self-reliance, ingenuity, and chutzpah to solve problems.

## Wounds

Access to the sickbay grants a +2 bonus to Healing rolls.

All wounds and any incapacitated PCs recover naturally between episodes automatically.

“Permanent” injuries (which only apply to PCs) persist for the remainder of the episode. They may be removed between episodes on a successful natural healing roll.

Command officers (PCs) characters can die, but it is unlikely. Other crew (all NPCs) are far more likely to be killed, especially members of the security detail.

## Skills

Investigation has been renamed Research to avoid confusion with Streetwise. The later involves investigating by finding answers from people. Research deals with finding information from libraries, books, databanks, and similar sources.

## Aliens

That there are aliens in the universe is taken as a given, even if no one has met one yet. Whether someone approaches aliens with fear and suspicion or optimistic friendliness and openness is a matter of personal disposition.

There is no directive preventing the interacting with and manipulation of alien cultures. In fact, demonstrating the moral superiority of western Earth culture may be a recurring theme.

Most aliens are human-like in appearance, physiology, and culture except for minor superficial or plot-derived differences. There may be a Big Secret about why this is or it just may be the limitations of the make-up department.

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## Voyages: Technology

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### Atomic Rockets

For fifty years, the traditional ship thrusters used for intra-system transport and maneuvering have been atomic-powered rockets. These thrusters have become highly refined and do not create nearly the environmental destruction they did in the early years. Even so, their use within Earth atmosphere is restricted and most interplanetary ships launch from a space station or moon base.

### Atomic Power Plant

The atomic power plant is highly radioactive and shielded from the rest of the ship. In the event of an overload or a breach of the shielding (conditions usually caused from external damage, but overdriving the engine can also cause them), the power plant can be ejected into space and clear the ship before it poses a danger to the crew. It does leave the ship incapable of maneuvering and with minimal life support reserves. Thus, it is only used as a last resort. Power plant ejection, and the subsequent atomic explosion, has been used as a weapon on at least three documented occasions, but such action is not condoned.

### Mansfield Drive

The Mansfield Drive (named by its inventor, Dr. E. L. Mansfield) forgoes the use of atomic rockets in favor of gravo-magnetics. Running off a standard atomic power plant, the drive creates artificial gravity fields that propel the ship. The drive offers finer control, greater acceleration, moderate inertial compensation, reduced structural stress, and negligible environmental impact compared to traditional atomic rockets. Developed only in the last ten years, the drive's higher cost has so far limited its deployment. Ships using the drive are easily recognizable by their saucer-shape compared to the cigar-shape used with atomic rocket ships.

### FTL

When pushed to its limits, the Mansfield Drive is capable of faster-than-light travel. Relativistic effects are bypassed/ignored and while there is no discernible difference between “warp speed” and normal sub-light speed. While some people swear they find traveling at trans-light speeds disorienting, the popular medical opinion is that they are must imagining things.

### Unavailable Tech

Technology not available to PCs (but may be encountered on alien worlds and may serve as plot devices) include:

- Teleportation
- Matter replicators
- Regeneration pods
- Cybernetics
- Hands-free communicators
- Holograms
- Disintegration rays
- Artificial intelligence
- Powered armor

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## Comments on Issue #380b

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### Oops Deux

I guess my comment issue numbering was fine after all. I give my A&E's to a friend after I finish my zine for the next month, so I didn't have the backlog to notice the #379/#380 problem.

### Ty Beard

Welcome! I've always been drawn to Traveller, but knew no one else in my gaming circles who was. I ran one game for a friend and I have played in one game at a convention.

The problem with bearer documents is that, as we've seen with DVD encryption, credit card fraud, etc., keeping the technology truly secure is a very tall order. I don't disagree with your conclusions for the Traveller universe, but I lack the imagination to come up with something better.

As a player, I enjoy character interaction. The threat of death can be exciting, but it can also be boring. I certainly can be perfectly happy without it. As I said once in these pages, there are more interesting to do with my characters than try to kill them. As a GM, I enjoy watching character interaction over trying to kill PCs.

Journalists, who probably have more liberal-leaning opinions of civil rights and sticking up for the little guy, may skew Democratic. However, media content and slant is not controlled by journalists, but by editors, pundits, and advertisers.

Global cooling was covering up the greater global warming problem. Now that we've actually managed to clean up the atmosphere of particulates that was reflecting sunlight back to space, the greenhouse effect is left unchecked. But since those same particulates were responsible for acid rain and other nastiness, it was worth cleaning up. And even if you ignore all the solid evidence for global warming, melting polar ice, etc. it is still very worthwhile to find alternative, non-polluting energy sources and reduce the need for energy by making more efficient technologies.

Suppose it takes 400 sq. kilometers of solar arrays to power an average U.S. city. How much area of roofspace is available? What if every factory, strip mall, warehouse, office complex, apartment building, and home was equipped with solar panels? If every building became an energy producer (which also minimizes transmission loss), how much would it cover the energy demand? Surely it would not provide all the power needed, but it could take a huge chunk out of daytime

power consumption. And homes could use battery systems to store daylight energy (when the residents are not at home) for nighttime use.

Go to Google maps (or equivalent) and look at Ontario, California.<sup>2</sup> Zoom until you can get a good view of the airport runway. Now scan around and look at all that wasted rooftop space. Find the buildings labeled "Ontario Mills" or "J.W.Mitchell." The "environmental damage such a project would entail" would be minimal.

### Myles Corcoran

At least a good Charisma helps clerics with turning undead (assuming there are any around).

### Robert A. Dushay

For me, the lack of material drifting/falling down from below kills the ocean-based dungeon ecology model you proposed. Also, many of the largest predators (whales and sharks) migrate between the surface and the murky depths.

### Spike Y Jones

Congratulations on zine #250. You're nearly twice the man I am. ;)

So, you've "heard of one fantasy author..." but don't want to tell us the name of this author? Tease. ;)

Miranda sounds like a real smartass, sassing her mother like that. I approve. ;)

Yes, I'm being a bit smiley-happy. :P

### Lisa Padol

*Forbidden Planet* is exactly what I am envisioning, but for no good reason, I wanted to avoid directly referencing it.

### Brian Rogers

I appreciate the desire for niche protection, but as more classes are added and the lines of distinction are blurred, the protection is lost. Really, niche protection must be handled on a group-by-group basis. If the party Rogue doesn't want to take Bluff, why does my Fighter have to pay double? What is being protected?

The *Fudge* mailing list had too many people trying to complicate the system for my tastes. I have also heard of the same tendency on the *Truth & Justice* list.

### That time already?

Comments to be continued next month, or maybe just a big ol' RAEBNC.

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<sup>2</sup> Not to pick on Ontario, but I get the same thought every time I fly into the airport for business.