



EntropiaPlanets presents

ENTROPIATIMES

June 2011

Ed Robles 3rd - Creative Director Planet Cyrene

2D & 3D Concept Art
Tum and Tu, Digital Scryers

Kristafer Altergott - Digital Scryers

Sven Segerstad - MindArk

David Dobson (CEO) - Arkadia

Harold Sipe - Next Island

Sanctuary - Society Spotlight

FREE POSTER INSIDE



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Welcome to EntropiaTimes

Dear reader,

Once again, welcome to the latest edition of the EntropiaTimes. Since the March issue, it's been another 3 lively months, of which we would like to mention the following highlights for you:

- EntropiaPlanets.com underwent a massive overhaul, and is now proudly running on XenForo, what we feel is the forum software of the future.
- Frank|FPC remained a one-trophy only guy.
- Planet Calypso, with a slight of hand replaced the Daikiba with the Shinkiba.
- Spanish Planet Partner Pyxel Arts announced their upcoming planet project: Theryon Wars.
- EntropiaPlanets, always on the trail of news, secured an exclusive interview with CEO Raphael Espinoza and COO Jorge Ordaz of Pyxel Arts. Read it on the front page of EP.
- Lykke and Peter announced they were going to launch Planet Python. Unfortunately, this turned out to be an April Fools prank. A proper fish-slapping dance has been administered, and last we heard, the Spanish Inquisition was on their way over to their place with a comfy chair and fluffy pillows.
- Hangars were finally returned to the Entropia Universe.
- MindArk launched their new website, which includes a Latest Buzz section.
- ROCKtropia 2.0 was launched, allowing participants to get locked into a maximum security prison, and visit HELL, a fire and brimstone remake of the original Club NEVERDIE.
- Planet PostModerna's Alan Morgan, aka Flapman, has started appearing again after some more quiet time. EntropiaPlanets has been supporting his efforts in creating an Indy planet ever since we first heard of it, and we're all happy to see the project is still going.

Perhaps the biggest news of all though, was the launch of Planet Arkadia. Many had been looking forward to it and initial impressions overall seem to be very good. The new planet showed large activity, and now, a few weeks after launch, still seems well-occupied. From all of us at EntropiaPlanets, we send our congratulations to Dave, Cyrus, and the rest of the A-team for doing a splendid job.

In the next few weeks, keep your eyes and ears open, as there will be plenty more exciting stuff going on. Treasure Hunting on Arkadia, a major overhaul of Next Island (the first part of which was rolled out last Wednesday), and of course, Planet Cyrene is getting nearer to launch, so expect their marketing machine to kick things into gear.

Discussions about the interviews and articles can take place in the special EntropiaTimes section on EntropiaPlanets.com. To find it go to www.entropiatimes.com

We hope you will enjoy the June 2011 edition of the EntropiaTimes, with a focus on Planet Cyrene. May you have as much fun reading it as we did writing it!

Lykke, Peter, MindStar9, RAZER,
Dalas, Safara, Kalanen, TheMZ, Narfi and Marie



www.entropiaplanets.com
- First With The News



MEET THE TEAM

of Planet Cyrene



CONTEST NAME THE MOB



This lizard bear-looking creature is a massive and territorial beast. Often found alone it guards its territory fiercely and will attack anyone foolish enough to get near. Found throughout Cyrene it prefers caves and forests where it can easily find its prey but has also adapted to various climates. Using powerful claws and its stone-like tail, the creature is equally capable of crushing metal and bone. Prized for its durable and naturally tough hide, only the strongest of hunters can claim to bested one let alone live through an attack.

Unfortunately it doesn't have a name ... yet!

JOIN THE CONTEST AND WIN

Give the mob a name and participate in the contest. The winner will receive a cool T-shirt with the Planet Cyrene logo on it.

RULES

- Only one name per person
- To enter the contest, you need to post your suggested mob-name directly on EntropiaPlanets.com in the contest thread to be found in the Cyrene forum section.
- The contest ends the 12th of August 2011.

With an iPhone or android phone, you can scan the icon to the right (using a code scanner app) to get a direct link to the thread:



WIN A COOL T-SHIRT



On the Horns of a Dilemma



By Lykke & a very good friend

It's difficult to say exactly for how long they had been there, but one day they were.

Perhaps he got them in a field, perhaps at the lake. Or, maybe he bought them by accident. He really couldn't tell. One day they were there, glowing, almost whispering words to him he didn't understand.

The day he found them he quickly closed his inventory again, wondering if anyone noticed his sudden strange behavior.

When he was certain he was alone again, he peaked curiously. He was excited about them and discovered they were 'Rams Horns.'

"Someone must have had them first," he speculated without being able to get rid of that thought. "These horns must have some higher purpose," he then concluded, as he still didn't dare to wear them despite them nearly screaming for him to put them on.

And so, time went by and the horns were burning in his inventory. Often he promised himself to place them in storage – away from temptation – but an invisible force in him made him forget and therefore they were always with him – hidden and unnoticed but always on his mind.

On a sunny day, warmer and more joyful than normal, he went deep into the forest. The Chirpies were singing all around him, but other than that, everything was very quiet. After making sure no one was around to see him, he put on the Rams Horns for the very first time.

They were surprisingly light – the only thing that seemed heavy was the burden of carrying them.

More and more often he put them on without knowing their history, without knowing their fate. He searched the papers and the libraries, listened to old myths and legends but nothing revealed the secrets to him.



He snuck around the table in the pub where people were talking about them. As if they where a long lost treasure.

One day he heard by accident that The Makers made it possible to create this one pair of male Rams Horns from Umbranoid materials. So far they hadn't heard about a female part. He snuck around the table in the pub where people were talking about them as if they where a long lost treasure. He held his hand on his inventory as he hurried outside, gasping for air.

"But why," he thought to himself as he walked into the dark night – why was he the only one who had the horns? Why couldn't everyone have a pair? What was so special about them? If everyone had a pair, would his own feeling of guilt disappear? Would he be able to enjoy wearing them? The speculations wouldn't leave him.

He wore them more and more often – even when hunting and mining. He felt they brought him luck, but should he accidentally die, he would quickly unequip them again to make sure no one would see them and ask silly questions.

One day he had enough! “They are cursed,” he concluded with anger in his voice. He felt the horns ruined his life with their presence and he could not just drop them somewhere or hand them to someone because then he would just hand over the burden. “If I could only find the horn’s original owner,” he said, but no one knew anything about horns or the source.

“Lootius, take them back,” he yelled. “Release me from this burden, this pain. Do not let me carry it alone I beg you.”



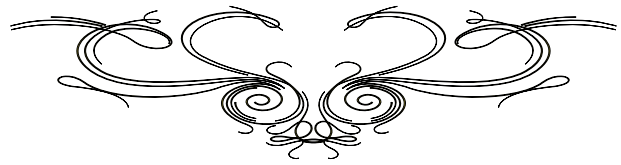
It was almost the end of the year – late October, and he felt torn apart. Furious and frustrated he struggled with the long walk to the Umbranoid lands to find an answer – but the creatures were long gone, even the orbs were not there anymore. How did they disappear from the surface so fast?

In despair he cried to the sky, wearing the horns that now felt heavier than ever, burning deeper and deeper into his skull!

“Lootius, take them back,” he yelled. “Release me from this burden, this pain. Do not let me carry it alone I beg you.” For hours he sat in the field crying, begging and hoping, but nothing happened.

The sun was strong, even though darkness was in front of his eyes and he was tired. He struggled with the long way back to the city on heavy legs. And he almost forgot to unequip the Rams Horns as he approached the town.

He also forgot it was Halloween, and he realized that he actually forgot a lot of things since he got the horns. It was as if they almost erased his mind and became the center of everything.



People around him were laughing, making fun and dancing, but what was this claptrap now?

The horns must really have gotten to him, because he was sure people around him were mentioning ‘Rams Horns?’ He looked up and actually looked at people. “Devilish!” Was all he could say because there, there on their heads, what was that?

“Rams Horns, The Makers gave us Rams Horns for Halloween,” someone yelled in front of him with a big grin before dancing out into the night.

“Thank you Lootius,” he said as he put on his horns and smiled - at last, he was free!





CYRENE

- Secrets and Covert Operations

By MindStar9

INTRODUCTION

It was revealed in the Ed Robles, 3rd interview I showcased in the December 2010 issue of the EntropiaTimes, that Cyrene is about the stories and secrets it has to share. We also learned that how the stories and secrets are revealed would be up to the players and the communities formed around Cyrene. What follows is one such story that I lived vicariously through Ed's conceived outline of a MindStar9 adventure.

It is an absolute privilege to be given this opportunity to collaborate with Ed on an in-character story that will reveal more about Cyrene, as well as a secret or two. My initial plan was to do something similar to what I did in the previous issue with another planet, but Ed took it to another dimension.

What you are about to experience is true to Cyrene storyline weaved throughout this MS9 adventure that could only be described as unique, exciting, intense, dramatic, exhausting, and revealing.

Ed felt this would be an excellent way of bringing more of Cyrene to life for the community and actually had fun creating the outline since he loves fan fiction.

The more I got into the story outline, the more details I needed, and of course, the more I wanted to know. I remained true to the Cyrene storyline in this accounting based on what Ed shared, but he also gave me creative license to develop this role-playing story in such a way that not only leaves it open to future MS9 adventures, but also introduces my own flare and flavor into the mix.

I can tell you that the Cyrene storyline is a fabric woven with intricate patterns of deceit, betrayal, unusual alliances, secrets and plots, not to mention the potential danger that lurks in unexpected places. Despite covert operations, there are good guys (and gals) of course, and the good guys always win, right? Come with me on this adventure, and also learn what role you will play in all of this.

AN INVITATION

The view from my apartment on Arkadia is breathtaking, and always serves a calming purpose, if nothing more than to provide a reflective moment or two. I've been quite busy with my media activities lately, and it's nice to just relax now and then.

However, the sound of my telecommunication device snapped me out of it. I wondered who could be contacting me at this time of the early morning hour as the sun is just about to rise above the horizon. The interesting thing is that the signal is not identifiable as anything coming from Arkadia or any other planet that is nearby.

"Hello, this is MindStar, please identify yourself."

"Hello MindStar, this is Calvin," a rather excited voice echoed, "It's been a while since we've connected and I wanted to bring you up-to-date on what's transpired since our last meeting."

"My goodness Calvin, it *has* been a while, but where are you calling from, the signal is not identifiable?"

"Well," Calvin said, "I left my Senate duties on Earth and am now a Senator of a sector on a planet known as Cyrene, and the reason I'm calling is to invite you for a visit so that we can catch up."

"Sounds intriguing," I said as I sat at my desk to check my calendar, "when are we talking about, and is this just a vacation, or do you have something more specific in mind?"

"As soon as possible if you can get away," he said with a sort of urgency in his voice that caused a bit of an eyebrow raise, "I know your media work requires you to travel, so I wasn't sure what your schedule might be at this time."

"Yes, my media coverage takes me to various planets, so if I come for vacation, you have to know that the temptation will be there to write about it."

I scribbled a note to contact my Media Manager at the Entropia-Planets Media Center as I waited for his reply. I needed to alert her of this impending trip, and that my June magazine content might be a little later than usual, but we work well together in the 11th hour, so I don't think it will be an issue. Lykke is accustomed to my spontaneity and heading out into the universe at the flip of a PED, but she still gives me free reign to go after potential stories. This could actually turn out to be something of importance.

"If your schedule is clear," Calvin inquired, "let's say for about a week, maybe a bit more, then I can send a shuttle for you that would arrive sometime tomorrow, would that work?"

"Yes, that would be perfect, and it would give me time to finish up a couple of tasks before departing."

I now felt a renewed energy, and a bit of motivation to get off my ass and accomplish some things that have needed my attention for a while. However, it was unlike the Senator to be so formal in his conversations with me, so I couldn't help but think that something was up.

"Excellent," Calvin replied with delight in his voice, "I'll send another transmission when I have everything secured and give you the details of when the shuttle will arrive and where to meet it."

"Ok," I said with an excited tone, "I am really looking forward to seeing you again, as well as exploring a new environment on yet another planet, so thank you for the invite."

"I feel I must warn you though MindStar," his voice now a bit more somber, "the entire planet is on military lockdown at this time. My Senator position is the only thing allowing me to invite you, but you must not reveal that you are a reporter or working for the media, but rather just a friend coming for a visit. I feel it's the safest approach to not bring any undue attention to your presence on the planet."

Well, there it is, confirmation that my radar is still tracking with some degree of accuracy. I knew there had to be more to this visit than just a vacation, but wasn't going to push it. And then again, I could be totally wrong. It's been a while since I've seen the Senator, and perhaps a lot has changed.



"I feel I must warn you though MindStar," his voice now a bit more somber, "the entire planet is on military lockdown at this time".

"MindStar, you still there," Calvin asks, breaking my train of thought.

"Sorry Calvin, I was thinking about what you just said. Are you sure it's safe to travel there?"

"Oh yes, you'll be fine, and you will be escorted at all times, so there's no danger to consider," he says with confidence.

"Ok then, I'll get packing and will see you soon."

"Great MindStar, I'm looking forward to it. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," I said, watching the strange signal on my telecommunication device disappear.

Let's see, old friend, new planet, military lockdown, private shuttle, personal escort – yup, this looks like quite the adventure. Now where are my suitcases? I best not take any of my media gear in case the suitcases are examined. This may be a private shuttle, but I have no idea what awaits me.

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MindStar9

THE EMPTINESS OF SPACE

I was at the meeting point at Celeste Harbour and waiting for the Senator's ship to arrive, but still questioning why out of the blue the Senator contacted me to come for a visit. We could have caught up on our activities through electronic communication. There had to be more to this visit than he was letting on, and perhaps the electronic communication wasn't as secure as it needed to be.

Whatever the case, the Senator and I go way back and I couldn't help but wonder if this was one of those times again where he needed some discreet investigating done. If that's the case, then it makes sense that he was so straightforward and formal in the conversation. I'm sure I will find out the real motivation for my trip once I meet up with the Senator, but if it is just a vacation, then I'm going to totally enjoy it, I've been working way too much lately.

I was startled out of my daydreaming by someone alerting me that the Cyrene ship had arrived and offered to escort me. As I approached the ship, my first thought was, if this is one of the perks of being a Senator, then how lucky am I to be his friend. The exterior of the ship was incredibly beautiful for being a piece of metal. Ok, more than a piece of metal, but the royal blue and shiny silver gave a presence of regal power that held my vision captive, but enough ship gazing, all aboard and off we go.

The trip to Cyrene was rather lengthy and uneventful, but really couldn't expect much else with just me and two shuttle pilots. I tried to engage them in conversation to see if I could find out why Cyrene was on military lockdown, but they weren't biting. Gotta love the flyboys, but this wasn't an ordinary flight.

"Can you at least tell me what part of Cyrene we're headed to," I asked, now annoyed at what seems to be an escalating level of secrecy surrounding this trip.

"We will be landing at the City of Janus," was the reply, "the main city I guess you could say, and where the Senator lives."

"Well thank you for *that* much," I responded, still somewhat annoyed that I hadn't really learned much since the Senator's call. It seems that information is being kept on a need-to-know basis, but all that's doing is making me more curious, and thinking that I'm heading into too many unknowns that speak volumes to me that all is not right with this planet Cyrene.

The ship was rather minimalistic from a decorator's perspective, but quite impressive with all the gadgets and what not you might expect to find on a spacecraft. So much so it made me want to push buttons and pull levers just to see what would happen. No, I wouldn't have done that, but it sure was tempting.

There wasn't much else to do but sit quietly in my thoughts and contemplate what might take place after arriving on Cyrene. I was asked not to use my laptop for security reasons. What? That is the *last* thing you want to say to a journalist, are you kidding me. I guess I shouldn't complain since this was a free flight and I was about to be introduced to a new planet, but I also knew better than to ask for an explanation from the flyboys, so I'll save my inquiries for when I meet up with the Senator.

I had so many questions floating around in my head, and no one at this point in time to answer them, so I decided to write them down. I don't think that could be considered a security risk. In between jotting down a question, I would peer out the window at space. It's really an amazement of how far we have advanced with technology and travel.



"Holy CRAP," was the first thing that came to mind at what I was seeing out the window, "what the HELL is all of THAT?"

"Holy CRAP," was the first thing that came to mind at what I was seeing out the window, "what the HELL is all of THAT?" No sense asking myself that question, so I immediately engaged the intercom to connect to the pilots to ask if we were in trouble. There was a fleet of spacecraft off the right side of our shuttle in enough proximity to make out and it just made me WAY too uncomfortable. "Are those our guys," I asked hopefully.

"Not to worry MindStar," the pilot came back, "it's just a fleet of Medium Fighter V's running maneuvers over Calypso. Intel says there is one leader and the rest are ghost ships, so at this point in time they are not hostiles."

City of Janus



Settling back down in my seat from a bit of relief I could see the fleet moving farther away from us. In all my travels I had never seen anything like that. Sure, the occasional ship now and then, which was normal intergalactic traffic, but not a whole freakin' fleet. I decided to get back to jotting down my questions for the Senator. Next thing I know, I'm being tapped on the shoulder.

"MindStar," the co-pilot said in almost a whisper, "we'll be starting our descent to Cyrene in about 30 minutes if you'd like to take some time to freshen up."

I sat straight up in my seat and realized that I had fallen asleep.

"Thank you. So where exactly is the ladies room?"



Imperium Transport

ARRIVAL ON CYRENE

Space trips like this aren't out of the ordinary, and very much a part of my journalism travels. Shuttling around the universe comes with the job, although this was the longest flight to a planet I've had so far. However, I feel rather refreshed from the snooze, and I'm ready to meet up with the Senator to get the scoop on what's happening on this planet.

I took my seat and buckled up as instructed after returning from the ladies room and got back to reviewing the questions I had for the Senator. Right after the announcement that we'd be landing on Cyrene in about ten minutes, I happened to gaze out the window and noticed something rather spectacular. I wasn't quite sure what it was, but despite my apprehension to ask the pilots any further questions, I just *had* to.

"Hey, can anybody up there tell me what that is off the right side of the ship, please," I asked, wondering if the City of Janus was somehow a floating city off the planet itself, because I could very clearly see the planet behind this floating structure as we were approaching it.

"That's the Skylabs MindStar," the pilot came back, "where research and development take place," offering nothing more than that. Perhaps I'll learn more during my visit.

As I disembarked from the shuttle, thanking the flyboys for their service, I was approached by a woman who said that my transport to the Senator's home was waiting. I followed her to the vehicle and immediately took my seat. I almost felt as if I was being rushed. One thing I *did* notice though, is that people from Cyrene (so far) aren't too quick to offer their names. I figured since I'm not familiar with customs, I wouldn't push it.

The route to the Senator's home wasn't very scenic, and so far, I hadn't really seen anything too impressive except for the ship and the transport. Since Calvin said that it was best that no one knew I was a reporter or worked with the media, or even that I was on the planet, I had a feeling that this route was intentional.

I hope I get to see more than the back woods, but just as soon as that thought crossed my mind, we pulled up to a beautifully-landscaped home with brilliant-colored flowers that looked fluid enough to brush across a canvas. It was then that I saw the Senator exit his home to greet me.

"MindStar, it's so good to see you after all this time," the Senator said as he walked briskly to the transport with his arms outstretched. For a man of 60, his 5'8" frame was still looking as strong as ever. I've always known him to pride himself on keeping fit, and he certainly doesn't look his age.

"Hello Calvin," I said as I reached to accept the hug that had become so customary with our greetings, "it's great to see you as well."

"Please, come in, we have a lot to catch up on," he replied as he held the door.

"Yes, we do, and I have a lot of questions that I hope you'll be able to answer, or at least be able to share some information about this planet that seems to be hidden in the back of the universe." I watched his facial expression to see if I could detect anything that would give a clue as to his level of comfort in doing so.

"Ever the reporter," he smiled, "but I don't blame you, this is new territory for you, and I didn't help by making it seem rather ominous in my communication with you yesterday."

"No, you didn't," I said, giving him the over-the-eyebrow look, "and you have to know that my antenna went up, so what can you share that's fit for consumption?"



GETTING DOWN TO THE NITTY GRITTY

As the Senator and I sat down on the veranda with a nice glass of fruited tea, I was tempted to pull out the list of questions I had for him, but that might have been too forward a move, so I decided to allow the conversation to take its course before I hit him hardcore. However, the Senator surprised me when he got into the nitty gritty right from the start.

"I'm sure you have a lot of questions about Cyrene," he said leaning forward, "but perhaps I can give you a bit of information first that may answer some of those questions, and then we can go from there."

"Thank you," I nodded graciously, "I am very curious about this planet that I hadn't heard of until you called me, so yes, as a reporter, I'm chompin' at the bit for sure, but I do understand that I have to keep my credentials off the record and play my presence as a visitor."

"Yes, so everything must be kept in the strictest of confidence," he said as he sat back in his chair.

"Agreed," I smiled.

Continued page 14

Senator Calvin Neff shared with me that he oversees the City of Janus and Cyrene City for the Imperium, but also mentioned that he was in charge of the Inner Sphere, Sector 79 for the Imperium as well. I almost interrupted him to ask about the Imperium, but he didn't skip a beat.

He shared that the Imperium is led by Supreme Commander Will Winters, and that they are the guardians of humankind in the universe. The Senator stated that while he was a huge champion of Will's in the past, he now doesn't fully trust him due to some recent behaviors.

It was my turn to lean in closer, because his last statement raised a red flag for me. I know the Senator quite well, and if this was just an ordinary visit, then he wouldn't feel the need to share his mistrust for the Supreme Commander, or anyone else for that matter. I knew that there was more to my trip than he alluded to, and I wondered how long it would take him to admit to it.

"To be honest MindStar," now speaking with more urgency in his voice, "I am really concerned about the state of affairs of our planet."



"To be honest MindStar," now speaking with more urgency in his voice, "I am really concerned about the state of affairs of our planet. I just don't understand what the Supreme Commander of the Imperium would be doing on a remote planet like Cyrene, and his behaviors have been quite questionable."

"What exactly has he been doing that concerns you," I asked, taking another sip of the delicious fruited tea. I really need to find out what this is, and if I can get some to take home to Arkadia.

"He has detached himself from the Senate," continues Calvin, "and seems to be using his powers a bit overbearingly, which is something the old Will would never have done. He hasn't been the same since terrorists killed his wife at Cyrene City."

As I sat taking this all in, I sensed a planet in turmoil. However, I also sensed that I was about to learn why I was really summoned to Cyrene, and I have a strong suspicion that it wasn't to vacation.

"I'm also worried about how quickly Will came to power," said the Senator, "and that his lockdown of Cyrene City after his wife's death seemed rather excessive, along with all of the new restrictions he placed on Cyrene. It is now guarded by the Sons of Remus, a military force of the Imperium."

When I first talked with the Senator prior to coming to Cyrene, the military lockdown was my first clue that something wasn't right. I could now tell that there was great concern, but I also knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that I wasn't here just for a vacation and a visit.

"Calvin," I said looking him straight in the eyes, "will you now tell me what my real purpose is for being here, because we could have communicated any number of ways to catch up. I get the feeling that there's something more here that you aren't telling me. Am I right?"

"I have to confess and say you're right MindStar," as he leaned in closer, "I just couldn't be more revealing in our telecommunication because I don't trust that I'm not bugged."

"Ok then," I said, "how can I be of help to you. You must have had a plan in mind to make the trip seem necessary."

"Yes," Calvin uttered almost in a more shallow voice, "it was necessary as far as I'm concerned. With things as they are right now, I needed someone I could trust to be aware that something strange was going on. The Zekkonians are now friendlier, which is odd, but more information is needed. I've lost trust in everyone on Cyrene and it would just raise suspicion if I were to visit them."

"So, are you asking me to do a little investigating for you," I asked with a tone of excitement in my voice, "because if you are, you know I'll do it?"

"Yes," he said with an exhale, "I need to know what's going on with the Zekkonians, and I just can't do it myself. I trust you MindStar, and I would greatly appreciate your help, so thank you."

At this point, I was already beyond pumped. With a head full of Imperium, Sons of Remus, Zekkonians, the Supreme Commander's dead wife, military lockdown and restrictions on the planet that have the Senator concerned – I was ready for a super sleuth adventure. Danger is my adrenaline of choice.

"Let's enjoy the rest of the day," offered Calvin, "and we can discuss particulars with the Zekkonian trip in the morning. So how are Moonie and your brother Jet doing?"

The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent in small talk, even though I had looming thoughts about the covert operation to the Zekkonian Island. A vacationing guest of the Senator is a nice cover, and if the Zekkonians are friendly, then what's there to worry about.



MISSION ITINERARY

As morning broke and the sun's rays began peeking through the bedroom window, I had already been awake for about an hour. My chat with the Senator the day before left me with so many unanswered questions, and I'm hoping that over the course of my stay they will be answered.

This trip to Cyrene is turning out to be a rather unexpected involvement, yet unique and exciting, but I also sense a level of intensity in perhaps perceived potential danger expressed by the Senator's concerns.

As the sun's rays now illuminated the entire window, I removed the bed covers and headed for the shower. I've always known the Senator to be an early riser, and I didn't want to waste any more of this day lost in my thoughts. I was feeling excited, yet a bit apprehensive about my trip to the Zekkonian Island, but the Senator's request seemed urgent, and as in the past when I've accommodated his need for investigative activities, he assured me that there is no concern for my safety. There is nothing left to do then but to get on with it. Feeling refreshed, even though sleep was minimal, I headed toward the kitchen as I could smell the aroma of brewing coffee, a staple the Senator would not be without.

"Good Morning MindStar," the Senator said as he rose from his chair, "did you sleep well?" I didn't want him to think his accommodations were uncomfortable just because my brain wouldn't shut down after our chats the day before, so I just gave him the thumbs up and grabbed some coffee.

"I have everything prepared for your trip to the Zekkonian City," he said, "but we'll need to chat about it quickly because I'm due at the Senate for a meeting." I wanted to take notes, but I knew that I would never be able to carry such on this trip given the nature of the mission, so I just listened and asked questions if I needed to.

"First, let me give you a bit more information about the Zekkonians," he started, "because it will give you a better foundation for your assessment of their behaviors. Your psychology background should be of benefit in detecting any veiled attempt at hiding something they may be keeping from general knowledge."

I have to admit that my extensive psych background prior to switching careers to journalism has definitely given me an advantage at times. There are many ways that people can be deceiving, either verbally or in print, and often behaviors can be quite predictable given the circumstances. However, it seems I'm not dealing with humans here, so this might be a bit tricky. This was also not a writing assignment, but rather an investigation into something potentially more sinister, and revealing that I was a reporter seemed to come with a level of danger attached to it. Whatever the case, my curiosity deepened as the Senator was sharing more information.

"The Zekkonians are bee-like humanoids who are the most technologically advanced species on Cyrene," began the Senator "and are not the only advanced race on Cyrene, but are the friendliest toward the humans. There are different factions of them, but not all are friendly." Ok, now I was wondering whether there was a chance I could run into some of the unfriendly kind during my trip to the Zekkonian Island, but the Senator continued with further information before I could ask.

"They are also capable of using some mystic-type magic with the crystals that are native to Cyrene," he went on, "which they use to power their machinery. The Sons of Remus seem very keen to unlock their secrets." I had heard of crystals used on the Next Island planet for time travel, but not as a power source for machinery. I was very curious at this point if the Cyrene crystals had any other properties other than what they were being used for.

"Just a power source," I asked, "because it seems quite curious that the Sons of Remus have such an interest, and I also find it curious that you used the word secrets. Is there anything further you can share regarding these crystals?"

"All I know is that the crystals are used as a power source, but it seems rather mystical in nature, and one can wonder just what further use they may have."



"No, MindStar," Cal replies, "all I know is that the crystals are used as a power source, but it seems rather mystical in nature, and one can wonder just what further use they may have."

This was going to be an interesting trip to say the least, but I still wasn't exactly sure what the Senator wanted me to be on the lookout for, and thus the questions began.

"When I reach Zekkonian," I asked, now curious as to what the mission details were, "is there anything in particular that you would like me to be mindful of as I vacation?" I took it for granted that posing as a vacationer was rather top priority as to not draw attention to myself per the Senator's earlier instructions, but I also needed to know to what extent I was to infiltrate the environment.

"Try to blend in as much as possible," he replied "but be highly observant of behaviors from those in positions of authority who might approach you to ask the nature of your visit. Even the most subtle gesture or interaction could be telling." I was so ready for this trip I couldn't contain my energy, and asked the Senator just how soon I would be leaving.

"I've arranged a hover transport to take you off the island of Janus across the ocean to Zekkonian," states the Senator "and it's actually waiting out front when you're ready. I have to leave shortly myself for the Senate meeting, so when you finish your breakfast you can get started."

I was too antsy to linger any further and asked if I could get breakfast to go. The Senator's housekeeper packed up what seemed an over-sized vegetarian biscuit along with a covered thermal mug of more coffee. I figured by the time I arrived at Zekkonian, the caffeine would kick in and I would be off and running.

The Senator grabbed his briefcase and mentioned that I should be sure not to carry anything on me that would give rise to unnecessary questions should I be stopped. I already thought of that as I left my laptop in the guest room and carried only personal belongings in my bag. What I need for assignments such as these are some of those high-tech gadgets like a hybrid multi-function watch, or a spy cam pen, but then, not knowing the technology on this planet, those may be totally useless.

The Senator also mentioned that he made accommodations for me in a local establishment since I would most likely be on the Zekkonian Island for a couple of days or so, but to be careful not only with what I may say, but also with anything that I write down. This told me that anything I decide to write in my journal had to be in code as well. This was going to be a challenge, but I was up for it.

As we walked out the front door, there were two transports waiting. One with the two pilots who had flown the Senator's spacecraft that picked me up from Arkadia, and another that had a few more formidable-looking gentlemen who I surmised might have been comprised of pilots and bodyguards.

The Senator pointed me to what I had guessed was my ride, and bid me a farewell. He said he would meet up with me back at his home when I returned, and a debriefing would take place at that time. In the meantime, there would be no contact with the Senator in an effort to dissuade any questioning.

As I entered my chariot, I said hello to the flyboys, thinking to myself that this was going to be yet another one of those interesting trips where I would have to amuse myself. Since laptops were not allowed, and writing down anything conspicuous is out of the question, I wondered just how many variations of thumb-twiddling I could come up with.



MISSION UNDERWAY

As we departed, we seemed to have taken a different route than the one after landing, and everything looked quite brilliant in color and architecture to my amazement. Dare I ask what everything was, or would I yet again be shot down because of some sort of secrecy. I was pleasantly surprised.

"If you look on your left, MindStar," said one of the pilots, "you can see the Colosseum." Looking out the left side of the transport, I was able to see a huge circular structure that looked rather similar to something I had seen on Earth.

"What takes place there," I asked, half hoping for a solid response, and not just a reply that would intimate yet more cloak and dagger drama I seem to get from these guys, but nope.

Continued page 16

"Stuff," he said, "and sorry that I can't go into more detail, but security and all, you know, especially since you're a visitor from another planet."

Why am I not surprised, but stuff? You would think that they would be more intuitive as to not raise even more questions, but that seems to be the order of the day for me, so I guess I'll have to live with it for now.

Heading toward the Shore of Janus Island, I saw shopping areas and beautiful waterfalls, which was quite different than my ride from the shuttle to the Senator's home the day before. The hover transport looked more like a tank than what might be considered a normal ride, but then, nothing about this trip seemed normal to me up to this point.

As we reached the Shore, the hover transport made the transition from land to water quite effortlessly, except for the occasional wave that rocked us a bit, but it wasn't startling or anything to be concerned about. At least I didn't think it was, and the pilots were just going about their business, so I decided to relax.

"We will be traveling through the swamp area that leads to your final destination, which can be a little bumpy at times, so you may want to make sure your seatbelt is secure."



"We will be accessing land on Zekkonia shortly, MindStar," one of the pilots hollered back, "and we will be traveling through the swamp area that leads to your final destination, which can be a little bumpy at times, so you may want to make sure your seatbelt is secure."

Roger that I replied back, checking my seatbelt. Swampland didn't sound too appealing to me, and only made me think again about the unfriendly Zeks that the Senator said existed, hoping that we would not encounter them along the way. I've had my share of travels on other planets where we had to fight our way through a faction of unfriendlies, and if that ends up being the case here, then I sure as hell hope these flyboys have enough of an arsenal to take care of business, because I'm totally unarmed. For security reasons, remember. I couldn't use a laptop let alone be caught with some weapon that would potentially land my ass in lockup somewhere.

The journey through the swampland continued uneventful until all of a sudden there was a large noise that sounded almost like a roar, and a hard thud against the transport that shook it quite extensively. It scared the living hell out of me, and before I could ask what was going on, the pilots said to stay away from any windows and get on the floor in the back, covering myself with the blanket on the seat next to me.

I'm sure my adrenaline was off the charts at that point, and I don't think I could have moved any faster, but as I lay huddled in the corner at the back of the transport, I could hear gunfire, and more loud roars and growling, until the gunfire stopped. There was silence for a moment, and my racing thoughts soon turned to what I was sure could be considered prayer of some sort, even though I'm not a religious person, but I so needed whatever this was to be over and done with. I love adrenaline-pumping fun as much as the next thrill-seeker, but at this moment, this was no cheap thrill, and smacked of danger.

I heard rustling of footsteps outside the transport, thinking it was the flyboys and would get up to greet them, but I was paralyzed from fear. I then heard one of the doors on the transport open and someone calling out my name, but it was an unfamiliar voice, so I didn't respond.

"MindStar," the voice now insistent, "it's ok to come out, we aren't here to hurt you, but we need to move quickly, because the Imperium will be sending a squad out to look into what happened when you don't arrive at your destination at the estimated time."

The Senator said that he didn't really trust anyone any more on Cyrene, so I had no idea what to think of this situation I found myself in, but what choice did I have, really. I found the strength to raise myself from under the cover and stood face-to-face with an armored individual reaching out to me.

"We must leave immediately," he said, "time is of the essence. We will move on foot to a nearby camp where you will meet with our Leader and learn more." Considering what I just went through from an auditory perspective, I wasn't too keen on experiencing anything like that up close and personal, so I followed the individual out of the transport where I found an incredibly grisly scene, and one quite disturbing.

There on the ground were the flyboys, apparently killed by the creature that to my surprise, was standing next to one of my captors as calm as could be. It was one ugly-ass dude, and no way was I going anywhere near it, nor interested in meeting up with one of those anytime soon. I was incredibly sad about the flyboys, and the Senator is not going to be happy when he hears about this.



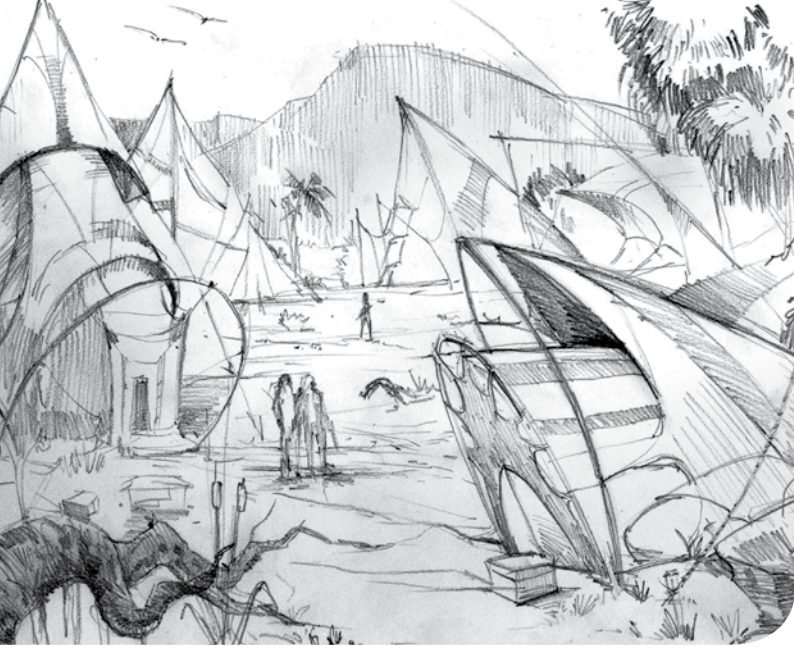
The Korok Creature

That's if I ever see the Senator again, or even be able to travel home. So many questions, but whoever these people are, I'm not going to potentially irritate them with an inquisition, and just see where all of this leads. Ideally, it will all turn out ok and I'll have more than the Senator expected in a debriefing, or – I end up lost in space and held captive by a band of armored aliens, or whatever they are, to do their bidding.

"There's no need to fear, MindStar," as if reading my mind, "the creature is under our control and will not harm you. We will be at the camp shortly and all of your questions will be answered." Ok, this was getting more weird by the minute, but just when I thought I would try asking just one little question, we arrived at what looked like a makeshift camp where many more people were involved in some sort of activity. I was escorted to the larger of the tent-like dwellings where I was introduced to the Leader.

Zekkonian Swamp





Sketch of the makeshift ARC camp

THE TRUTH BE TOLD

"Hello MindStar," a female voice said, "I'm Zorra Winters, the wife of Will Winters, Supreme Commander of the Imperium." Startled at what I was hearing, I could only respond in one way to this woman outfitted in what could only be described as intimidating, yet regal armor.

"But I was told by Senator Neff that you were killed at Cyrene City by terrorists," I uttered in a rather shallow voice, not knowing what to think, "I'm incredibly confused right now, and quite frankly, I'm not sure who to trust at this point."

"I completely understand your concern, MindStar," she responded as she removed her helmet, "but if you would kindly have a seat I'll explain everything." I was directed to a chair at a small table in the corner, and as Zorra took her seat, everyone left the dwelling. After pulling up her chair, she began sharing some details that she said were incredibly sensitive, and highly confidential. Oh great, more secret stuff, but maybe this was just what the Senator ordered and I would either be able to squelch his concerns, or confirm that indeed there were strange things going on that fed into his intuitive nature.

"I'm sure this is all more than you bargained for, MindStar," she said, "but when we learned of your presence on the planet from the Turrelions, it was urgent for us to get in touch with you despite the drastic measures we took."

"Wait," I interrupted, "Are you telling me that the attack and capture in the swampland was all staged?" As my head was spinning from horrible thoughts, I just couldn't wrap my brain around what I was hearing. I immediately thought of the flyboys and their deaths as the most tragic part of these drastic measures, and why it seemed so necessary in order to get my attention. Also, who are the Turrelions, and how did they know I was on the planet.

"Yes, MindStar," she responded, "sometimes drastic measures are warranted given the nature of the circumstances, and I am sorry for the loss of the Senator's pilots, but perhaps you'll have a more critical view once I explain the urgency in removing you to a more secure location."

"You see, my husband doesn't know I'm alive," she continued, "nor does he know anything of what I am about to share with you, but it is of critical importance that the Senator learn of this information, and perhaps in some way be able to assist us in our efforts to stop some potentially devastating disaster from occurring. This is where you come in MindStar."

"With all due respect," I asked, "what does the 'us' represent – who are you, and what are these efforts you speak of?" I was now sufficiently freaked out, and certainly didn't expect anything like this, but then it looked as though the Senator didn't either. Here I am again, a messenger in space, but I knew when I signed up for my position at the EP Media Center that it wouldn't always be reporting on mediocre news and personality profiles. Sometimes my work comes with an element of risk, but nothing the likes of this I must admit.

"Fair enough questions," she responded, "We are known as ARC, the Acacia Rebirth Corps. The Acacia have the symbolism of purity, the endurance of the soul, and also symbolizes resurrection and immortality. The ARC started as Turrelion recluses, and individuals who were scheduled to be destroyed by the Sons of Remus. We now need help to be reintroduced back into Cyrene."

I was not naïve to the fact that other planets existed, nor that there were other races and factions in our expanding universe. While I've had my share of fighting off robot invasions on Calypso, I never thought I would find myself involved in a clandestine operation on an unknown planet in the back of the universe. I couldn't at this point in time fathom what my role might be in all of this, but I didn't have to wait very long to find out.

"Time is of the essence," Zorra broke in, "and I must finish giving you information as quickly as possible, because we need to get you back to the disabled transport before the Imperium guards arrive. They know nothing about ARC, and we can't risk being discovered." At this point, I was in full investigative reporter mode and ready to collect whatever information I could in an effort to report back to the Senator. However, there was more I wanted to know before we moved on.

So, I asked, "who are the Turrelions, what is their connection to ARC, and how did they know I was here?" I figured if I was going to be a part of an undercover operation, I need to know as much information as possible, but I also knew that there was the possibility that some questions wouldn't be answered, and considered a need-to-know situation. I had to try, because I was fully in it now, and a willing recipient to gain as much intel as possible.



"The Turrelions are not human, and no human has ever seen what they look like because they keep themselves covered in armor."

"I can only give you brief input," Zorra said, seeming a bit agitated at my question, "because we need to move this along. The Turrelions are not human, and no human has ever seen what they look like because they keep themselves covered in armor. They are helping to smuggle out the reclone DNA that has been scheduled to be destroyed by the Sons of Remus. I think you already know that the SoR is a military force of the Imperium, and act as a protector of the Supreme Commander, who happens to be my husband, Will Winters. However, what you don't know..."

I sat intent on Zorra's every word as she continued in an effort to absorb the information she was sharing because I was prevented from recording or writing down anything for fear of discovery. I had a feeling I wouldn't be told how the Turrelions knew I was on the planet, but something else was missing in the grand scheme of things. Why wasn't her husband here, but then I received the answer to my question almost immediately, as if once again my mind had been read.

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"My husband tried to kill me," Zorra continues, "and it was he who ordered the section of Cyrene City hit with a mini-nuke because he thought that's where I was. I had stolen his Fenris power armor and escaped, but barely made my way through Cyrene City before it was hit." My immediate thought was, why was she escaping, but I didn't need to wait long to get my answer.

"I discovered some disturbing information," she went on, "and I just couldn't stand by and allow it to happen without making an effort to stop it. My husband has a means to bond people to his will without them realizing that they are under his control. It is a drink that seems to be so powerful, that if he were to say to a person 'die' – that person would have a heart attack."

This is one disturbed planet I thought, and now I'm right in the thick of it. All I was doing was coming for a vacation, or so I thought, but still, it was just to be a discreet visit to the Zekkonians to collect some information for the Senator. Never in my wildest adventures did I ever think that I would be involved in DNA smuggling and mind-control drinks, but I have a feeling this isn't the end of it.

"My husband discovered that the drink doesn't work on everyone," Zorra said, interrupting my thought-wandering, "and that some are immune to it. As such, my husband is now out to kill anyone it doesn't work on. I was one of those people, but I didn't let Will know so that I could make my escape." Now it's all beginning to make sense, I think, but I still wanted to know exactly what it is that I need to do so that I can get the hell off this planet back to Arkadia where I'm sure I'll feel less threatened.

"Will is branding these immune people traitors," Zorra continues, "and wrongly accusing them of being associated with the so-called terrorists that supposedly killed me when they blew up Cyrene City.

Zorra escaping in the stolen Fenris power armor



He is planning genocide of these people and all traces of DNA. We just can't let this happen, and why ARC was formed to fight against it. The DNA the Turrelions have smuggled out has become a part of our growing army, but it is slow going. We need the Senator's help to reintroduce our members back into Cyrene society in order to be more effective, but there's one more thing we need as well."

I don't think I budged an inch since Zorra began briefing me on the state of affairs that have her leading a band of what I would call freedom fighters to stop her husband from destroying population in order to have everyone under his control. If I had a flag, I would have raised it.

"What I would like for you to do MindStar," Zorra said, "is take this information back to the Senator and solicit his help on our behalf. We cannot approach him directly, and have no contact with the outside world or universe since the Sons of Remus are monitoring everything."

There it is, almost a direct order, but a mission nonetheless, and I could only think about the shock on the Senator's face when I share all of this with him. At this moment, I couldn't help but think about the flyboys, but I also couldn't dwell on it, because probably for the first time, I think I may now understand the urgency of the drastic measures taken during my capture. However, I no longer feel that I am being held captive, but rather an integral part of this covert operation that will hopefully stop Zorra's husband from what could potentially become a devastating tragedy.

"The other thing we need," says Zorra, "is for the Senator to contact our friend Vida, who is a scientist at the Skylabs, and fill her in on everything that is happening. We need to see if she can research and develop an antidote to the substance that Will is giving people to put them under his control. I must warn you though MindStar, that there's also the possibility that the Senator is already under Will's control, in which case, it would put your life at risk to even inform him of what I have shared with you."

Normally I would have shuttered a bit at that last comment, but all sense and sensibility was now tied up in accomplishing this mission successfully. I now felt the urgency of moving this information along as quickly as possible and hoped beyond all hope that the Senator was not already influenced by Will.

In the course of the briefing, Zorra also shared that she has not told the Turrelions about the mind-control drink because she feels it would be far too dangerous for all humans, keeping in mind that the Turrelions are not human.

"We must keep ARC a secret, MindStar," Zorra stated, "especially while we expand our numbers. We need anyone and everyone to join our cause, because at the moment, the resistance is too new and too weak, and if the Sons of Remus knew of this, we would be found and removed immediately. I must also warn you, that if the Imperium or Sons of Remus find out that you spoke with me, you too would be permanently erased."

I love the underdog, and at this point, I was beginning to get the picture of what the full scope of this mission was, and suddenly realized that it extended far beyond my debriefing of the Senator. It wasn't directly stated, but rather intimated that recruitment involved engagement of other planets to join the fight against the Supreme Commander of the Imperium, as well as the Sons of Remus. I can see now that my work doesn't end here.

"We must leave, MindStar," Zorra said with urgency, "the Imperium guards are sure to find the disabled transport soon, and we need to get you back there. Do you have any questions before I have you escorted to the transport?"

"I think I'm ok, Zorra," I responded feeling rather anxious to get back to the Senator, "I believe I have everything well in hand and able to accomplish what you have asked."

"I realize we are putting a lot of faith in your efforts," she replied, "but it's crucial that we have a fighting chance, and are grateful that you will support our cause. Once you reach the transport and the Imperium guards arrive, they will most likely question you, but since they know nothing of ARC, they will think that the random creature attack was plausible enough to dismiss it, so you should be fine. Your escorts back to the transport will be just inside the forest with the creature watching in case anything goes wrong."

Oh nice, the ugly-ass dude again. Maybe one day I can get one of my own. I'll call him Brutus, he looks like a Brutus, and any time someone gets up in my face, I'll unleash him. Oh, the deliciousness of that thought, and how fun it would be to show SoftHart my new pet. She wouldn't be so quick to show me hers any more that ultimately results in a death/revive cycle.

As Zorra and I rose from our chairs, she shook my hand and reiterated how important this mission was, and that I take all caution for safety. We left the dwelling and met the escort outside, along with the creature, which I now understood to be a Korok. He still looks like a Brutus to me, and interestingly enough, I no longer am feeling intimidated by his presence or what seems to be a catatonic glare. It's all good if it gets me to where I need to be.

We set out on foot to the disabled transport, and upon arrival, a couple of the ARC escorts scouted the area to make sure it was safe. I was directed to enter the transport and wait for the Imperium guards to arrive, but I noticed that the bodies of the flyboys were missing. I turned to ask of their whereabouts but the ARC escorts had already retreated into the forest. This was a strange day.

THE INQUISITION

Even though the wait in the disabled transport was relatively brief, it felt like forever. Most likely because my thoughts were coming one after the other without stopping, and I could feel my pulse increase. Despite my excitement of being part of a covert operation turned full-blown kick ass, take names later mission, I was feeling a bit heavy with responsibility. I realized that I so needed the Senator to not be under Will's control, and willing to do his part to thwart the intended genocide of those immune to the mind-control drink that continues to increase Will's power.

Getting lost in my thoughts can be exhausting, but they were interrupted when I heard the sound of what seemed like multiple transports arriving, and it wasn't long before the door of the transport opened and an armed guard entered. He identified himself as a guard of the Imperium and that several of them were sent out to investigate why I hadn't turned up at my appointed destination in the Zekkonian City. Looks like more than the Turrelions and ARC know I was on Cyrene. I had to play this smart.

"We were attacked by something that rocked the transport pretty hard, and the pilots went out to take care of it, but they never came back."



"Well, I was on my way there," I said, "but we were attacked by something that rocked the transport pretty hard, and the pilots went out to take care of it, but they never came back. I've just been sitting here waiting, and of course scared half out of my mind." "Have you seen them," I asked as I got up and moved toward the door."

I could tell the guard was watching my every mannerism, especially my eyes, probably trained to do so to sort out the enemy, but I felt I played my role well. They weren't going to get anything out of me, and I was feeling pretty fearless at this point, but as I exited the transport the questions began again.

"So you didn't see anything at all," the guard asked? I now noticed that there were several transports present, which I'm sure accounted for the noise I heard earlier, and all eyes were on me. Now is where I step into the *clueless visiting friend of the Senator* role and somehow get my ass back to the Senator's house ASAP.

"I guess I was paralyzed with fear," I responded almost in an annoyed tone, "and there was no way I was leaving the confines of that transport to see anything. I just came to this planet to visit the Senator, who's an old family friend, and I am now not interested in continuing this vacation after what I just experienced. So would you please take me to the Senator's residence," I asked almost pleading.

The Imperium guards continued to stare at me for a moment, but they must have thought I was pathetic enough in my plea to be believable, because they finally escorted me to one of the transports. We immediately left the area and were in transit to the Senator's home, which I was very happy about. As the hover transports left land and began navigating a direct route across the ocean back to the City of Janus, I could only think about how I was going to break all of this news to the Senator.

I actually began to feel sad again about the flyboys, but I was rather exhausted from the day's activities and closed my eyes as I rested my head against the back of the seat. I had no interest whatsoever in engaging these guys in any type of conversation. The less I had to interact with them, the better. I realized I had fallen off to sleep when an Imperium guard tapped me on the shoulder and said that we had arrived at the Senator's home. As I exited the transport, the Senator greeted me with a look of surprise.

"I sent you out with two," he said laughingly, "and you come back with a dozen, what gives?" As comical as that may have seemed, I could barely crack a smile let alone a chuckle. I wasn't relishing the fact that I now was charged with filling the Senator in on all that happened, and then make an effort to convince him to join the cause for ARC. However, to keep it light and unsuspecting, I continued to play the Senator's clueless guest, and offered my own humor in response.

"Oh, you know me," I said, "I love men in uniform," as I turned and blew them all a kiss, thanking them for the escort to the Senator's home. I thought I even saw one of them grin. "See you guys again maybe," I said as I smiled and waved, "it's nice to know that you're looking out for everyone."

Now how good was that, eh? Those boys didn't know from nothin' – and as they got back into their transports and sped off, the Senator and I walked into the house. Now began the task of breaking it all down, but where to begin.

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Senator Calvin Neff

DEBRIEFING THE SENATOR

We sat again on the beautiful veranda, and I was so ready for the fruited tea that the Senator's housekeeper brought to us. After a sip or two, I began my accounting of the day's activities, but ever mindful of not knowing whether or not the Senator was already under Will's control. The moment was tense. The Senator sat in horror, but relieved to hear that Zorra was still alive, and I saw no signs of behavior that would indicate that continuing the debriefing would be a risk - thus, full disclosure ensued.

The Senator certainly had many questions of his own, some I could answer, some I could not, but at the end of the day, he was on board and ready to do his part for ARC and their cause. I felt incredibly relieved, and a sort of peace rushed over me that allowed the tenseness in my body to release. The Senator understood full well the urgency of my desire to get back to Arkadia, but suggested that I take the evening to rest up and not invite any undue attention as a result of a quick departure.

That actually sounded good to me after the intensity of the day. Perhaps a good night's rest will give me even greater clarity with where I go from here. The Senator was fully informed, and now I needed to formulate a plan for how I was going to engage citizens of other planets to join the ARC cause. We chatted a bit about that at dinner and it gave me at least a place to start, but now it's time to get some much needed sleep before departing in the morning for Arkadia.

**THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME**

The smell of fresh brewing coffee in the morning is invigorating. After my shower, I joined the Senator in the kitchen for a bit of breakfast before leaving. I loved the vegetarian biscuits that his housekeeper made, and she packed up a few for me to take on the trip home. I could get used to this, and often wondered why the Senator didn't have a Mrs, but I've known Calvin to be a career politician with very little time for extracurricular activities, so I just accepted his choice and left it at that.

The time drew near for me to leave, and I thanked the Senator for his hospitality. I wished him success in his efforts to get Vida on board, and to please keep me in the loop with how things were progressing. We both felt it would be too risky for me to come back anytime too soon, and we accepted the fact that it may be a while again before we see each other.

As we walked out the front door to the transport, I couldn't believe my eyes. There stood the flyboys in all their crazy-ass glory. They smiled, and as I looked at the Senator, he smiled too, but with a look that said don't ask. At this point, I didn't need my mind cluttered with more unbound mystery, and as I bid the Senator goodbye, I joined the flyboys in the transport. We traveled the back road once again to the Senator's spacecraft where we boarded and readied for departure.

Leaving the planet and passing the Skylabs, I wondered how Calvin would do with Vida, and whether she would ever discover an antidote for the mind-control drink. I also wondered how the smuggling of the reclone DNA from the Turrelions to Zorra would continue - successfully I hoped. I was pulling for Zorra in the expansion of her ARC army, and reaffirming in my own mind the commitment I made to help in her efforts.

I took out my journal and began writing a few notes, as I felt safe enough to do so, giving thought to the next task on my agenda. I had more questions than solid actions. Who do I tell, and how do I engage the citizens of the other planets to join forces with ARC on Cyrene to battle a power hungry Supreme Commander of the Sons of Remus? One thing is certain, it must be done, and without fail, or we may be facing our own challenges should Will's far reaching arm of power invade our sector of the universe.

"MindStar," the pilot said, "we have begun our descent to Arkadia, please buckle your seatbelt and prepare for landing."

There's no place like home.





Kristafer Altergott

Assistant Creative Director at Digital Scryers

Kristafer Altergott

- has been involved with Planet Cyrene since almost the beginning. Having studied and learned under Michael Licht (a veteran Lead Game Level Designer who has shipped multiple triple A titles for EA) Kris has embarked on quite a mission himself.

His day-to-day work on Planet Cyrene involves creating and testing meaningful mission content along with coordinating meetings and schedules that involve the Level Design team. He is also in charge of reviewing the game design beat docs (level and mission master plans) as well as creating his own.

Kris is an avid MMO player and RPG fan. He enjoys web comics, game and tech blogs, and game modding on different game engines. Kris was also the Lead Systems Designer on the iPhone game Sons of Remus Lone Wolf.



By Lykke

Question

It was not that long ago since missions were implemented in the Universe, and we can already tell that the missions on the different planets are not the same. What thoughts have you given to the quests and missions on Planet Cyrene?

Answer

I really think that people will enjoy and remember the missions on Cyrene. We have been given quite a unique tool (the CryEngine2) to help us create some really immersive missions. I know that doing missions isn't for everyone, but these are crafted and cater to the expanding storyline as well as the journey that players will embark upon to discover Planet Cyrene.

Question

Will the missions be lavishly built up, like the ones we see on Calypso where you have to kill x amount of mobs in one quest and then a larger amount the further you get, or will your quests be different?

Answer

Ideally, all the missions will lead to an area with something special going on. You can then assess the situation, and make your decision to carry on or interact. One of the things Ed stressed to our team is to make sure there are no "filler" missions (e.g., having missions for the sake of having missions). Everything should be focused on that particular arc of the storyline you're engaged in. Some missions may seem simple or redundant but if done and repeated by other players, changes will begin to happen in those areas. This has been Ed's vision for years now and we feel we have accomplished this.

Question

Tell us more about the newcomer's area and the tutorials. What will Planet Cyrene do to make new players feel welcome and enjoy the game from the start (give examples if you can)?

Answer

When you start on Planet Cyrene you're given a bit of back-story as to how you came to be on the planet, as well as your place in it now. After that you're thrust into action but in a way that guides and focuses. After a while the Player will complete the beginning area and move on to the real challenges Cyrene has to offer. There will be multiple paths a Player can choose and each will lead to a unique experience.

Question

Tell us more about the term 'world events' and what that means and how it works.

Answer

"World Events" are special things that only happen during a certain time or on a certain day or in a certain area. For an example, there could be an event that might lead to a real change on the planet, or it could be as simple as a Holiday that is being celebrated on Cyrene. These World Events are a fun way of changing things up for a small time and they also help build the history of the Planet, or the areas that they involve. This history is all made possible by the Players so it is what we love most. Personally working on and planning for these events are my favorite days on the job.

Question

The quest and mission system on Planet Cyrene is obviously a great part of Planet Cyrene/player interaction with the system, and will have both consequences on the storyline but also on the players. Will the player's consequences also affect other planets too? And will you give an example of a player's consequences in game based on the path he/she takes?

Answer

To start: no, nothing that you do on Cyrene will have any effect on other planets. As for the consequences, there are many different sentient aliens on Cyrene, some of which have splintered into different factions or tribes. Not every faction gets along with other factions, and there will come a time when you will have to choose where your allegiance lies. Who you choose to fight with and whom you choose to befriend will define your avatar in distinct ways. It will dictate what storyline you receive and whom you receive it from. There are not many choices on Cyrene to be taken lightly. You can always change but the roads you have to take are long. Trying to convince a former enemy that you are now a friend is a tough thing to do in real life, and it is also difficult on Cyrene.

Question

How do you come up with the missions and quests since they are such a big part of the storyline? And how do you ensure they are connected to everything on the planet?

Answer

Every mission that is created is done so from the storyline, not the other way around. Ed has this entire world planned out, and he knows what he wants, so everything is funnelled through him. It sort of seems sometimes like we are making a game based off a book or movie because of the variety and complexity of the characters and locations. Everything has a place and everything tells a story. It's a challenge but we love it.

Question

We have been told that there will be a great deal of team work with others concerning the quests on Planet Cyrene as it relates to societies, friends, etc. in order to reach goals and developments on Cyrene. Also, that some require much higher skills. How do you make sure newcomers, freelancers and the lesser skilled aren't left out?

Answer

There are fundamentally two types of missions: Solo missions and Group missions. Solo missions are missions you can do by yourself but vary by location and skill level. If you're in a higher skill area, then maybe that isn't the best place to go, or to go by yourself if you are low skilled. Most Solo missions involve the particular storyline of that area and are to be enjoyed at your leisure. Group missions are designed to take a small team to complete. The skill we are referring to here as well is the level of teamwork that is required.

Much like in sports and competitions, teams that work together for a while are able to develop a level of skill that exceeds teams who do not. Some missions are set to challenge those who are willing to put in the time and effort to really work together as a cohesive unit. There will be missions for every type of player, from newbie, to skilled, to casual, to veteran, to hardcore. Everyone gets a piece of the storyline, but your involvement is purely up to you.





TUM

Team Leader - 2D

When creating a piece of concept art we refer to any reference art provided to us from the creative director and the beat doc provided by the game design team.

We then come up with a quick set of sketches for review.



Merfolken Hunter Sketch



Once the Sketch is approved we move on to a color rendering of the model and if that is approved we move on to what we call the ortho stage.

In the ortho stage we prepare the concept art in a way that shows the views and angles needed so that the 3D team can create the creature without having to do too much guess work. If all is approved then it moves over to the 3D team.

Continued page 26





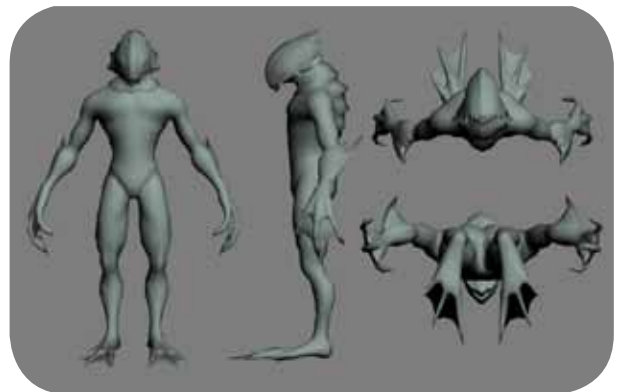
TU

Team Leader - 3D

3D involves many different stages. I have prepared for you here a view of some of the common stages in the process of making a 3D character.

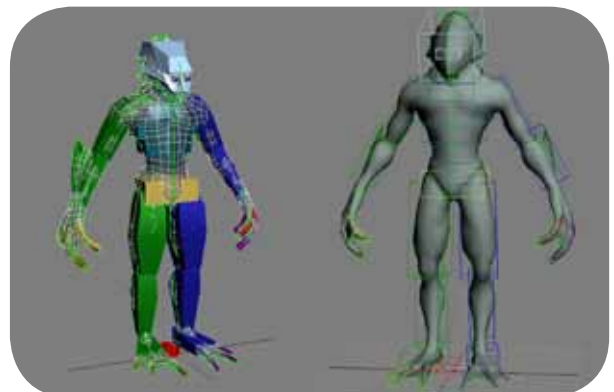
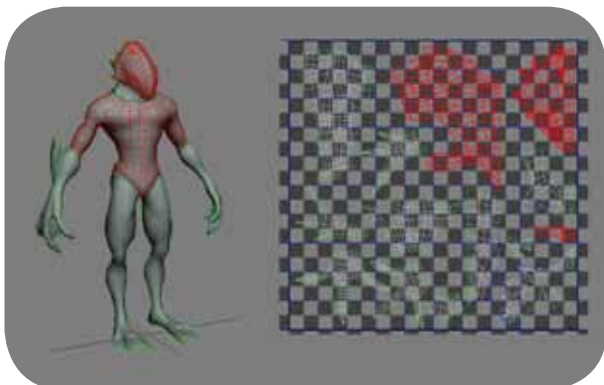
First we start it all with what is called a low poly model. This is when we create a low polygon model and this will be used as the final model as it is not a heavy model for the graphics card to draw on the monitor while you play the game. The more polys the more the graphics card has to do and as a result there is a decrease in performance.

We then move on to what's called a high poly model. We make a much more detailed model from the low poly one. It is meant to have as much detail as possible because we will create the skin which we will wrap the low poly model with.



The next step is the mapping. The mapping process is the set of maps that will wrap the model such as the specular, color, UV maps and each serves a purpose for displaying the model correctly in the game engine. After the maps are made we transfer them over to the model to be textured and colored.

We then create the rig which is like creating the skeleton and muscles of the model. Setting up physics is what we do next, we do this so that the engine knows how to handle the model. Finally, animations are created for the model. We create all the needed animations for the model including movement attacks, death, and idles as per requested by the game design document known as the beat doc.





PLANET CYRENE



Ed Robles 3rd



In the EntropiaTimes magazine December 2010 issue, we presented an extensive interview with Ed Robles, 3rd - the Creative Director of Planet Cyrene. This is a follow-up interview to the first one, as many questions were unable to be answered at that time.

There will still be some unrevealed answers due to the Planet Partner Agreement about not discussing anything MindArk system-related.

By Lykke

You told us earlier that there will be unlockable areas on Planet Cyrene. How will this work? Is it unlocked to the individual or to the whole planet by team work in the community (like we have recently seen it on Next Island with the Time Crystals)?

Some areas on Cyrene are on what is called military lock-down. It means that players will need to accomplish certain goals in order to move the story along on Cyrene. Certain places need to be secured, forts need to be established and confidences must be gained.

Certain Alien races are not as trusting of Humans as we would like. They need to be made friendly in order to have a free pass on their domains. These will be at every level.

Some can be done solo, some need team work and others still may need a planetary effort. How fast all this will happen will depend on the Players and what areas they deem the most important to discover.

In December you told us more of the great storyline of Planet Cyrene will follow. Can you reveal to us when we can expect to hear more?

Well as you can read in this very magazine, more storyline has been released (see page 10: Cyrene - Secrets and Covert Operations). Our website will also feature the Chronicles of Cyrene which are a collection of short stories that give a lot of great exposition on Cyrene and its rich history.

You also told us that the story is already created for the planet, but also that the players through events can change the world. Can you elaborate on that?

Cyrene is in a way like a piece of clay. The clay is what it is when you receive it. Its elements are what you have to work with, but it's the Players who will mold it. Their decisions are what will affect the look and feel of the Planet the most.

If areas are guarded then communities will flourish, if areas are left unexplored then they will remain in shadow and perilous to any who would be brave enough to venture through.

Some areas are static and will not change unless there is a major event, so these are more of a safe zone for the Players. Others that are new will be overrun or lost if there is no one there to meet the needs. Much like real life it will be survival of the fittest on Cyrene.

This has meant a lot of work for us in the missions and story department but I must say it has been a very rewarding challenge for us. It brings a great dimension to our Planet and one we feel will cater to our player base.

A set of blueprints will be available when Cyrene releases – and blueprints are very important for the in-game economy. Will there also be blueprints to loot while crafting? What kind of blueprints will be available through missions?

We understand how important the Blueprints are to the economy. As of now we plan on having a wide variety of Blueprints, and many of these will be earned through missions or found while performing such missions. Some of these include different weapons, armors, and clothing.

Continued page 30

The Zekkonian nobility prefer to live high in the clouds and in safety. Using powerful crystal magic and machines they have managed to make these large islands float in the air away from dangers below. It takes a massive amount of crystals to recharge their machinery and the Zekkonians of Tanhok'Zis are in constant warfare over the rights to these precious commodities. Although the elite do live high up above, most Tanhok hives Zeks live on the bottom of the city and protect the lands below.

Zekkonian Royals



Last time you replied ‘yes’ to a question about the availability of an in-game social environment, and world music streams etc. Is this something you can tell us more about? How will the music work? What ‘other’ social environments on Planet Cyrene do you have in mind?

It is still a little too early to discuss as we are currently still looking at all the options. We can definitely say we will have these features and that the social aspect of Cyrene is an important one. MindArk's deal with Ericsson I feel is a very positive move and it shows some of the potential of what can be done within the Entropia Platform.

Are there any professions other than those already available on other planets that may be unique to Cyrene?

This is still too soon to reveal, and once again, it is because we are reviewing our options. We do however feel MindArk has provided us with many of the options we wanted when we first began; Vehicles being a major one along with the Avatars being improved.

Outside of the usual professions like hunting, mining and crafting, will there be Cyrene-specific clothing and perhaps accessories available for tailoring, coloring and texturing?

Yes, we plan a complete line of unique clothing, uniforms and items for Cyrene on launch. Keep an eye out on our Website. We will reveal some of these as time gets closer and closer to release.

What will make Cyrene uniquely different from other planets in the Entropia Universe, and how many of those aspects will be present at launch?

Well, first and foremost, I feel every planet brings something unique to the platform and this is a great thing. For us, we plan on growing the player base in the Entropia Universe and we feel our storylines, graphics and world will be enough to get these new players excited about their virtual time on Planet Cyrene.

We want to create a world that will help the Player grow with their avatar and explore many different types of philosophies and emotions in a safe environment. I feel every Planet is able to do this because every Planet has its own unique culture. Cyrene will be Unique and it's up to the Players to find out just how special it is.

Will Cyrene have both unlimited and limited items, or will they all be limited?

Cyrene will have both Limited and Unlimited items and although MindArk has final say over all things economy we can make requests and set things up to make sure there is content available for everyone. It just depends on how much time and cost is involved on the Planet Partner's end.

When proposing a new feature for Cyrene, do you as a planet partner have any opportunity to invest with MindArk to hire more workers to get the feature fast tracked? If not, is it a ‘take a number and wait’ scenario?

This question is best asked to MindArk directly. Offhand, I am unsure what we are allowed to discuss on these matters and would not want to break any rules I might be unaware of at the moment.

Will there be any newcomer kits or promotions at the time that Cyrene goes live?

We are working on something like this and will have more information as time goes on. Many factors will come into play, and although it may not happen upon release, they may appear soon after.



A Lance craft on the way to the Zekkonian lands. One must travel by air or sea to reach the Zekkonian lands from the Gate City of Janus. Enroute one can see the Zekkonian Royals as they are called. A set of large floating land islands that house the Tanhok Zekkonian elite.

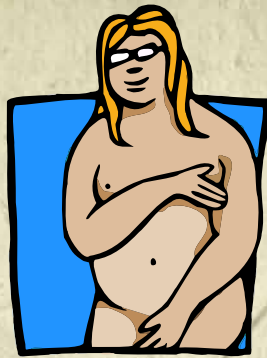


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Marco

August 23 - September 22

The mythological sirens lured sailors onto the cliffs with their enchanting voices. We heard you sing though, so we know you don't qualify as one. In fact, if you were to try and make a living with singing, you'd be getting even less than you get in loot!



Boorum

(September 23 - October 23)

You really ought to consider stopping your public club swinging, as obviously some folk got upset with the exposure leaving you to wake in a no-way-out prison. While you try and convince the dude in the 8 foot armor suit that he dropped his soap, some little bugger picked your pockets and ran off with all your loot.



Pop Dragon

(October 24 - November 21)

Dragons have always been popular. Well, if people being scared of you means being popular, then by all standards, dragons were immensely popular. That's until brave knights came riding along looking to protect damsels in distress, and to collect treasure. Judging by your loot, knights are now removing treasure before you can hoard it. Curse them!



TskTsk

(November 22 - December 21)

Sized like a Hobbit, you prefer to be left to yourself. Unfortunately, that hardly ever happens, as battle seems to always end up raging on your home ground with you being caught in the cross-fire. Bad luck, really. That also applies to your loot by the way.



Merp

(December 22 - January 19)

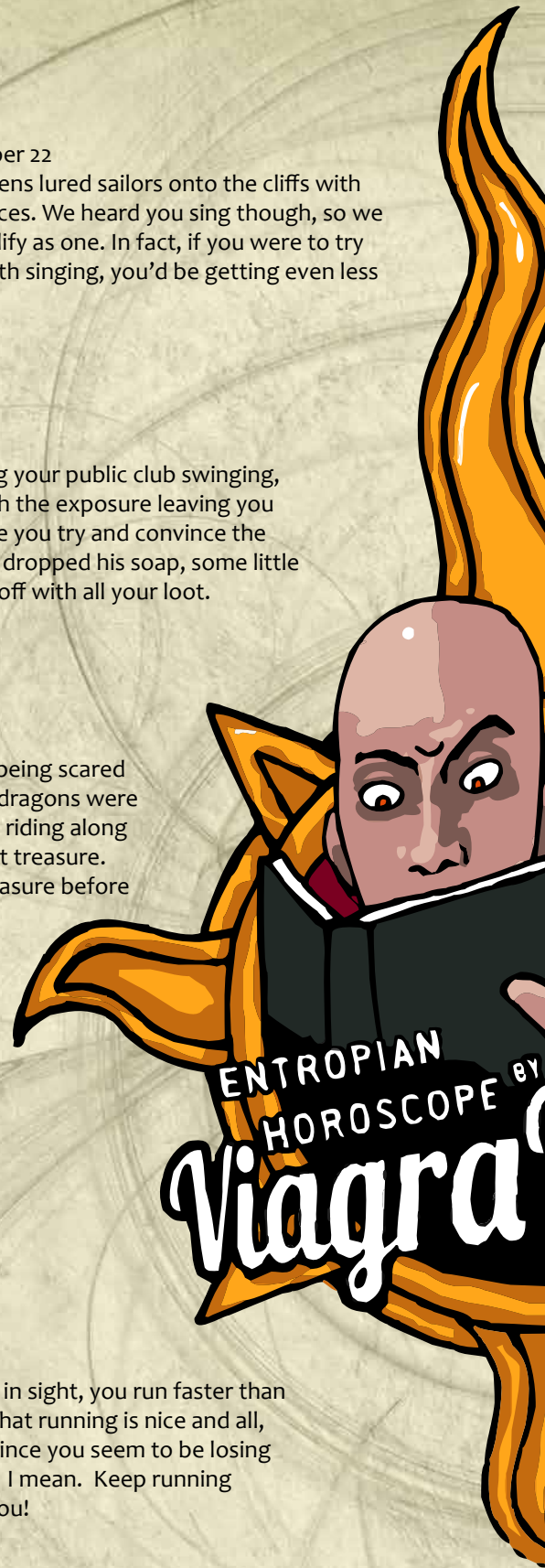
Meep Meep. Even without a Coyote in sight, you run faster than a Frenchman from a battlefield. All that running is nice and all, but do pay attention to your wallet since you seem to be losing loot with every step you take. Uhm. I mean. Keep running Merp. Lead the way! I shall follow you!



Thorafoid

(January 20 - February 18)

With your runny nose and shabby dress, you could have walked right out of the medieval days. But before you whip out the torches and pitchforks and go witch hunting, have a look at your loot, which is currently being burned at the stake. Not much left over I would say.



Falls

RipperSnapper

(February 19 - March 20)

You may consider yourself to have depth dear RipperSnapper, but on the surface, you are nothing but an easy target. That's why your loot sucks. Ever think of trying the bait and switch trick?



Merfolken

(March 21 - April 19)

You may slither from your deep abyss in search of riches, but the much sought after crystals are out of your reach. Know why? Because your algae-soaked scales are nothing more than a slippery slope and loot escapes your grasp yet again. So sorry, your hit and run tactics are pointless, and there is no magic in your future.



Cornoantarion

(April 20 - May 20)

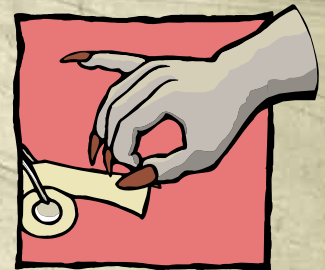
You may have your eye on the enemy, but you won't have any luck hornning in on loot. Fact of the matter is, your efforts to out-stealth even the most noob opponent is thwarted by your reckless diet habits that even a small mountain can't hide. Give Jenny Craig a shot?



"Lizard Bear"

(May 21 - June 21)

Hiding in caves and forests isn't helping your social life any, and growing a tough hide only means your vulnerability is shielded. Let down your guard and visit a salon to get those claws clipped, it's easier to hang on to your loot that way. Oh right, you don't know what that is yet – nevermind.



Gokibusagi

(June 22 - July 22)

Try soaring with the eagles instead of waddling with the turkeys, because being so low to the ground, your radar is warped. The only thing you're likely to see with those beady eyes is dirt, which is why your loot is probably off the radar. It's been tough times, I know, but maybe spreading your wings more will give some hope, but I doubt it. Sorry!



Kerberos

(July 23 - August 22)

Loot might not be so elusive if you weren't in exile so much. Come out into the open and learn what treasures await you. However, there's no guarantee that digging up the goods will bring you anything but heartache. The coffers have been rather sparse lately, so on second thought, it may be best to stay where you are and enjoy less frustration.





“Every Saint has his past, every Sinner has his future!”

By MindStar9

Part of the bustling social scene within our universe has to be the societies comprised of members that hail from diverse parts of the world. Whether based on culture, commonality, real life family and friends, level of skills, or even time zones, one thing is certain, there's a camaraderie that underwrites many of the activities that take place. Teamwork is the order of the day in most cases, whether on the field or not, and promotes the level of success and notoriety a society attains.

One such society is Sanctuary, and a society not only with a respectable longevity, but one who has seen some changes over the years. They have evolved into a rather cohesive group with a wicked sense of humor. I spent some quality time with 8 of the more active members out of the 24, both on their TeamSpeak channel, and inside our universe. I have learned in my own six years of experience with members of our community to expect the unexpected – and that still holds true today.

SANCTUARY HISTORY

Most of the Sanctuary members started out as members of another society called The Knights of Calypso (TKoC). Over time, and with a better understanding of their experiences within the universe, they found that part of the society was more bonded than the rest, and these are the individuals that eventually helped to form Sanctuary as it is known today. However, prior to becoming known as Sanctuary, there was another transition that took place first, and current Leader *Alan Mo Malcolmson* gave me some insight that clarifies the transition.

As members of TKoC, they participated in the common theme of helping new players, which is incredibly admirable, but after a while, this bonded group began focusing on trying to help each other evolve their characters. They had become more skilled and were now interested in creating a Top 50 society. The suggestion was made to establish a TKoC HQ, but there was initial resistance, and a concern that they would be looked at as a different society.

One day, there was a big meeting on the top of the Copper Building at Treasure Island City on Calypso, with everyone in TeamSpeak to make it easier. Mo said there was a lot of arguing going on, but then he blurted out with something he says was probably the smartest thing he could ever have said ... *“We’re like a plant in a small pot. We need to move to a larger pot so we can spread out and grow.”* He shared that TeamSpeak went silent and the arguing stopped. He also stated though, that he’s not sure if it was the winning line that encouraged the formation of the HQ offshoot society, but for him it counted.

Ericarrie Saoirse Saoirse was the founding member of TKoC HQ, created December 5, 2007. The society also achieved their goal of becoming a Top 50 soc, for which they received many congratulations from the members of the community.

Mo said he wasn’t able to transition immediately to TKoC HQ because he needed more skills, but he was able to accomplish that within a few months and ultimately became a TKoC HQ member and feeling great that the hard work paid off.

Often with change comes a bit of challenge and this held true between TKoC and TKoC HQ. Not being in the same society channel in the universe made it difficult, and as Mo shares, even though TKoC HQ played a backbone role to TKoC and helped with people stuck in land areas, ran most of the Beacon Missions, as well as teleporter runs, he said that it seemed that TKoC looked at them as a different society, rather than an extended part of the same social entity.

With any growing social entity, the perceived need to be more organized and perhaps rigid in certain respects isn’t always received favorably, and therefore, a meeting of the minds isn’t always successful. It was the ever-increasing differences in perspectives that ultimately led to a parting of the ways after two years, and the name change from TKoC HQ to Sanctuary. Mo shared that the original General of TKoC has since left Entropia, and that Sanctuary and the current TKoC with new General and new members enjoy a good relationship.

SOCIETY OBJECTIVES

There is a common theme as it relates to society and personal objectives, and it all boils down to just two words – *have fun!* Sanctuary as a collective group enjoys hunting, mining, and crafting, and has a shop inside the Medusa Mall on Level 2 (Shop 4), which is a large shop right next to the televisor. It seems there has also been discussion with regard to another investment of some sort that would generate a revenue stream for the society, but nothing has been decided as of yet.

PERSONAL AMBITIONS

Alan Mo Malcolmson would like to see Sanctuary as a Top 50 society, as well as personally unlocking Commando and increasing his total skills, but adds something that appears to be an ongoing competition – *stay ahead of Radio in attributes*.

Chris Chopper Chopster has been an Entropia participant for 5 years now, and while his primary objective is to have fun, he shares that it would be nice to get an All Time High (ATH) that was at least half the size of his biggest deposit, but doesn't disclose just what that figure is. He also shares that it's definitely a personal ambition to continue having fun despite frustrations at times with regard to how our universe is delivered to us by the overseer of the universe platform, MindArk.

Eddie Malky Malcolmson is interested in increasing his skills and trying new things, but – having fun doing it is also important. He enjoys hanging out with the society and just having fun.

Hugh Rusty Hofner shares that for a while, he was skilling a lot, and had good gear, like an ML-35 and DOA Loudmouth while chasing HoF's. He said however, that he got to the point after completing the Longtooth missions within a couple of days where he realized he was spending an insane amount of money. That's when he stopped having a whole lot of fun in EU, and shares that he is kind of on an extended break at the moment.

El SpAssY SpAsTaRdO has logged in 4.5 years since joining Entropia in November of 2006, and shares that most of the society members have been playing together for about 4 years. They got to know each other pretty well and echoes the same sentiments as the others that they just like to have fun together.

Givendale Chevrons Skelton, who has been participating in Entropia Universe since June of 2006, says that his personal ambition is to play the longest for the least cost, and eventually being able to withdraw some PEDs as a result of his investments.

As we got closer to Medusa proper, I noticed a landscape of stone arches that were simply amazing. Mo was flying rather low at that point – probably because he wanted to antagonize the fish – and I was wondering if he was going to attempt to go under one of those archways. As we approached the stone archways, I was wondering if he was paying attention, because it didn't seem like it would be possible to navigate under them, so I decided to ask. I was promptly told, *no problem*, and after Mo successfully made the first pass, he continued on course where I could see we were coming up on Medusa's Head itself.

Continued page 36



PHOTO SHOOTS ARE ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE

There's always that obligatory photo shoot that comes with interviewing an individual or society as a group, and it always leads to some interesting activities, as well as unexpected behaviors. When asked where they liked hanging out, or spending some of their time, Medusa's Head came up, where I mentioned earlier that they have a shop. Therefore, a trek to Medusa's Head was in order, especially since I had never been there before.

It was quite the excursion, not only because those present at the time hopped into Mo's helicopter, but also because we were all on the Sanctuary TeamSpeak channel where a high-level of hilarity took place. I have to say, that these guys definitely know how to bring the fun, but overall, they were pretty cooperative.

We all met atop the Port Atlantis Mall where we boarded Mo's helicopter and headed out over water towards Medusa. It was quite the trek, and after we passed the islands off Port Atlantis that I was familiar with, the scenery became even more breathtaking, especially with the beginning of the sunset across the water.



Mo continued to fly around Medusa's Head so that I could have an aerial view of it, and I have to say that it was rather impressive. Prior to landing and doing a bit of exploring, Mo decided he would test the code ceiling, and even said that it was part of a quest I believe. I said sure, why not, I was along for the ride and would enjoy wherever the adventure led me.

However, what I wasn't expecting, was for the helicopter blades to stop once he hit the code ceiling, nor for the helicopter to make a fast descent to the top of Medusa's Head. I think some were bailing out, or at least that's what I *thought* I heard in chat on TeamSpeak, wasn't sure, but apparently it was so everyone would revive in the same place and we could go from there.

Dumb-ass that I was, I went down with the ship, and seemingly was the lone survivor once it landed near a teleporter – at least I *think* I was – or perhaps I was thrown from the helicopter and just laid there splattered all over the ground, it's hard to tell since my memory is a bit sketchy.



After our Medusa's Head excursion, someone suggested heading to a colder region of the planet, perhaps all the frenetic emoting heated things up a bit, who knows. Once we arrived at Solfais Crater, we moved away from the teleporter near the uniquely-designed building, but in doing so, it put us in a PvP zone. It worked out fine though, because at the time, no one else was around to bother us, but – for some strange reason, the guys decided to disrobe.

Not sure what type of activities they engage in behind closed society doors, but Chopper and Mo in their royal blue briefs were ready to whoop some ass, while Malky stood in the middle of them in his yellow-colored shorts with scythe raised above his head as if to say – *I can hurt you*. I had to ask myself – how seriously do I take these guys?



At any rate, we all met up again and were able to do a bit of exploring prior to getting together on a little piece of sandy land surrounded by those stone arches for a photo. There were only 4 of the Sanctuary members along on this trip, but others met up with us later on. I find the stone arches landscape quite awesome, and they make a splendid backdrop for a photo. In the line-up (from left to right), you will find Chopper, Saoirse, Mo, and Malky.

I'm afraid this was the best photo, because the rest taken in this particular spot were a result of their frenetic emoting, and was quite the symphony of – well, I haven't quite figured that out yet.



These nutbars continued with their antics, and while I took photos, they are not suitable for public consumption. Let's just say – that the package could have been delivered empty.

The photo shoot continued without incident until a green dot showed up. Mo and Chopper decided to engage in a little PK fun and took off after the green dot, while Malky seemed to have been mesmerized by his shadow. Needless to say, the green dot retaliated, and yours truly also got caught up in his revenge. No problem, wasn't the first time I've had my lights turned out from a PK'er – it's all good, and all in fun.



As a result of the little PK'ing incident, I learned that a few of the guys like to engage in a little ring action at the Twin Peaks Octagon, so we headed over there. It didn't take long before Mo, Chopper and SpAssY were going toe-to-toe with Heap from Hunters Unlimited and others - (ok, maybe head-to-head the way the bullets were flying).

There were quite a few Uber weapons being used, and the death/revive cycles were pretty swift. Heap was sportin' an ML-35, as well as a DOA Rockjacker and holdin' his own (now and then), while SpAssY retaliated with a DOA Strikehammer and Urban Stalker. Mo brought his own flavor into the mix with a little something extra. Besides the DOA Loudmouth and DOA Rockjacker, he also whooped some ass with his B.A.M.F. -ZK10. They certainly all put on a great show, and while I really like these guys a lot, I don't think I would want to end up on their dance card – even though you can see in the photo (from left to right – Chopper, Mo and SpAssY) that they were all trying to entice me to tango.

Continued page 38



As the PK fun was ending, we were joined by a couple more members of Sanctuary. I can only say, that it gave me pause to further question the sanity of this motley crew. Seems Mo, and now SpAssY, were seriously engaged in playing with their balls while flanking a whip-happy Chopper. It seems I also discovered that Saoirse, who also joined us, had a drinking problem. I have a feeling that Malky is still trying to determine what weapon will suit the occasion best.



ENTROPIA UNIVERSE REFLECTIONS

As participants in our ever-expanding universe, we all have our perspectives as a result of our experiences, and I asked a few Sanctuary members to give me their impressions and reflections.

Alan Mo Malcolmson (Society Leader) – Mo is a nickname I was given by a friend almost 8 years ago, and now, all my family members call me Mo – it's pretty cool. I'm from Scotland and I'll be 25 in June. I've also been playing EU for almost 5 years.

I've had a good run so far, and while loot hasn't been that bad for me, I guess everyone says it could be better. I love EU for the people we meet. I've been to visit a few people of the World of Firepower (WoF) Scotland Team in real life, and over all, there are great people both in and out of the game. As far as what I would like to see improved, how about an update that doesn't need 5 patches to fix the update that was full of bugs. I'm also waiting for the Beacon Missions to come back.

I get involved in some events, but we really don't have too many society events these days. Everyone isn't a hunter, but there's a diverse mix of hunting styles with those who are, and I have a group within the society that I hunt with all the time. I also like to PK in the ring at Twin Peaks, and kick some ass with my B.A.M.F.-ZK10. Popeye loves his gun! There are times when I like to noob-out with some mindforce skilling too, and listen to the Rock Show on Atlas Haven Radio. I love the mission system and have done plenty of them, although I haven't completed any of the 10k missions yet. I get bored too quickly.

With regard to what I think about the EU platform and planets, it's a great idea they have, but they need more advertising from the outside world to help them out with cash flow. Might be good to bring in some Coca Cola-sponsored T-Shirts. Think of the possibilities they would have if they brought in some outside advertising. I'm not saying it has to look Tokyo or New York with billboards plastered everywhere, but something to promote an increased player base.

As an Entropian, I've had some pretty memorable moments. I was hooked at the newbie stage when my brother paid my way to the then Club Neverdie on the asteroid. I had a Trade Terminal finder, and was a total noob wearing a combination of Goblin, Gremlin, and Shogun armor. I got a 3k Melchi HoF, and ever since that day, I was destined never to leave Entropia. I was able to purchase my Ghost armor after that as well. I didn't have a mentor, although my brother pretty much filled in, but we didn't have a clue about all that stuff back then.

If I had to give advice to new players, I would say to not expect an ATH on day one, it doesn't work like that. Play for fun, and never play above a level that you can't afford. Oh ya, and once you pop, you can't stop! Skill implants are the devil – lol.

Chris Chopper Chopster – I'm from New York State in the US, but have been in Colorado for the past 13 years. I am an instrumentation tech for a municipal water company, and married with no children. I've spent 14 years in the US Army Reserve with one short deployment to Turkey during the first Gulf War. One of my other hobbies is remote controlled nitro powered 1/8 scale cars.

As far as Entropia Universe is concerned, I've been doing a lot of lower-level hunting with mindforce lately, but I also routinely swing by the popular noob spots to keep an eye out for scammers, or people stuck at outposts (free rides out of course). What I'd like to see improved is support, old systems re-introduced, the cost to play more balanced, ADVERTISING, community representation by MindArk, and addressing long-time bugs just for starters. I'm also looking forward to Beacon Missions coming back. I've done a few of the system missions, but the 5k and above missions are way too grinding for me. It's just not fun or economical for me to do those when my return % is so far below the popular average.



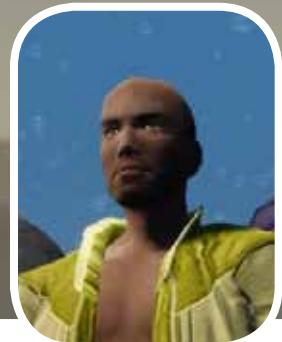
Alan Mo Malcolmson
Leader



Ericarrie Saoirse Saoirse



Chris Chopper Chopster



Eddie Malky Malcolmson

As far as the EU platform and planets are concerned, I think overall it's great fun, and the planets are going to bring in enough variety to keep me from getting bored for a long time. I have hope that the cost to play will come down if the player base is increased.

One of the most memorable moments I experienced in EU had to do with an event that Simon the Guide was holding for noobs. He gave coordinates to where he was going to be waiting, and the participants had to come find him. No TP'ing was allowed – running only, but they could get help from friends.

Simon's position happened to be at a Beacon location that was in a PvP zone, so my soc mates and I decided to help a soc member out by PK'ing all the noobs just before they could reach Simon (I know, a rotten trick). Simon finally had to move into a non-PvP land area. We were TKoC HQ at the time of the event, and Thaddeus (General of the starter soc) had a mental meltdown on our forum after he found out what we had done – I will never forget that.

One piece of advice that I would give to newbies is – get into a reputable noob-friendly society as soon as possible – the TKoC is still a great soc.

Eddie Malky Malcolmson – I have been playing in EU since November 2007-ish, and as with any social thing, you get both good and bad people, but it's a fun experience 85% of the time. There were a few memorable EU moments that I recall. One when I graduated as a disciple – I had proven myself and I wasn't a noob any more – lol. Next, was when I got a 12.3k HoF, but probably the one memorable moment that edges the others out at the top is when I PK'd Chopper.

What I would like to see improved is having more group-oriented events, like the Beacon Missions that were available in the past, and have yet to be re-introduced. These types of events bring societies together, and also helps to promote working together as a group. This in turn makes the experiences more of a social activity. What I would also like to see is the return of my pets.

The missions from the system in game were fun in the beginning, but it's just a grind fest now. There are too many, so I just do the ones that fit my normal pattern of play. However, overall, I think the EU platform and planets are growing well, but I'm concerned that the player base is getting stretched too thin across the planets.

Hugh Rusty Hofner – I'm in North Carolina in the US, and married with an 8 year old son. I grew up surfing competitively on the East Coast of Florida, and now spend my time playing guitar and being a husband and father.

I participated in Entropia Universe back in 2004-05, but then ended up quitting because I was all alone at the time. Then I put a call out and joined TKoC. I made some great friends there, but was looking for something more. I saw Mo at the Twin Peaks ring and started poking him about joining Sanctuary. Before long, I was out on a Scipulor hunt and gearing up in Sanctuary. My activities today are comprised mostly of trash talk, and when I'm in the universe, I'm always happy to help noobs out with TP runs and the like.

I have a few memorable moments for sure. One was swimming to all the TP's when I first spawned on the planet. Also, the first day I played in the ring at Twin Peaks. I was getting owned over and over and over, but I still went back for more. Joining TKoC ranks right up there as well, and Casper and Rick are two of their members who are awesome, and everyone should get to know them.

Probably the most interesting experience was joining Sanctuary and getting on TeamSpeak with a Belgian, an American, and a bunch of Scotsmen. The first thing I said was, "I hear a bunch of English accents!" – I caught so much hell I thought they were going to kick me on the spot, but it's been awesome ever since.

My one piece of advice to new players would be – don't break out the credit card when you've been drinking – you'll regret it in the morning.

El SpAssY SpAsTaRdO – I'm from Belgium, and that's all you get. I've never really been comfortable sharing any real life information over the internet, and even my Facebook page has a fake name – lol.

I've been playing EU since November of 2006, and I really like the community a lot – it's very strong and supportive. My most memorable moment was my first trip to CND, it was so exciting seeing new mobs and trying to kill a Daspletor.

Continued page 40



El SpAssY SpAsTaRdO



Hugh Rusty Hofner



Adriana Collette Nicollette



firestud gohan goku

As far as improvements go, I think everyone would like to see the loot improve, but I'm also waiting like the others for the Beacon Missions to return, along with the interactive space flight. I'm mainly a hunter, but occasionally I'll pick up a couple of ore-amps and go out mining, or craft some basic stuff.

I have completed several of the in-game missions, and I think it enhances the game play. It adds to the game in a way that you're not just mindlessly killing creatures and hoping for something good. In the end, you'll be rewarded for your hard work.

I think I would have to say to new players to deposit and hunt uneco – fill my loot pool! No, seriously, play the game to have fun, and be ready to pay for it as well. Don't expect to make money because you'll only end up disappointed.

Givendale Chevrons Skelton – I'm from London, UK – married, and have been playing EU since June of 2006. I joined Sanctuary after the split from TKoC. I am a level 56 Swordsman, level 36 Prospector, and a level 16 Longblades Engineer. My most memorable moments were my HoF's with a 1400 PED Narcanisum, and a 9600 PED Equus Old as a relatively new player. However, it was also exciting to win a Longu Event in 2008 with an 1100 PED HoF with 3 minutes left to go.

With regard to what I would like to see improved, definitely MindArk's response to player views, as well as the Beacons re-introduced. However, I've been campaigning for over 6 months for them to fix the bug in the mining system when crossing server boundaries (it cost me 130 PED the first time). I actually decided to stop mining because of this.

As far as the mission system is concerned, the missions on Calypso are either too easy or just grinding. The new prison missions on ROCKtropia are more interesting, but only for good players. The rewards of Attributes on Calypso seem to be too high, and can now be regarded as a mistake as a result of the number of missions that give them. Also, the Achievements system seems pointless so far. Overall, I'm rather pessimistic about the EU platform and planets. I don't see how there will be enough players to sustain more planets.

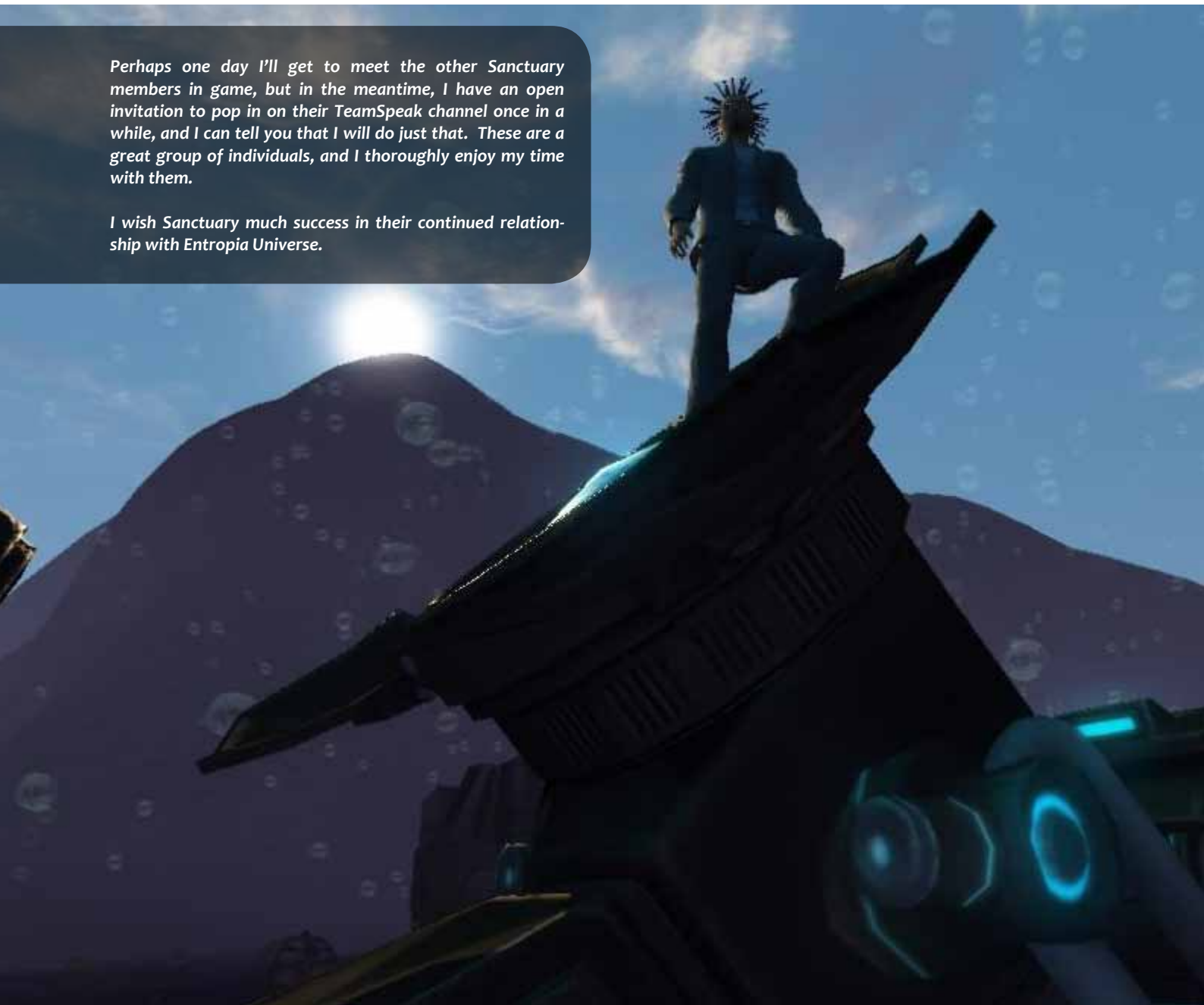
AT THE END OF THE DAY

After all of the fun that took place at Medusa's Head, Solfais Crater, and Twin Peaks, we headed out to Oshiri Hearts for a change of environment and some individual screenshots. I was only able to capture 8 out of the 24 Sanctuary members, but I'm sure it may have been due to time zone differences.

Once the screenshots were complete, I said my goodbyes and turned to the teleporter to make my exit, but caught Sanctuary's Leader (Mo) in a most reflective pose. A seeming shadow atop an arm of the teleporter amidst floating bubbles and a setting sun was just too reflective a moment not to capture.

Perhaps one day I'll get to meet the other Sanctuary members in game, but in the meantime, I have an open invitation to pop in on their TeamSpeak channel once in a while, and I can tell you that I will do just that. These are a great group of individuals, and I thoroughly enjoy my time with them.

I wish Sanctuary much success in their continued relationship with Entropia Universe.



Next Island

ANCIENT GREECE is open for visitors

Meet the locals



Explore the colorful market



Enjoy the fantastic art and sculptures

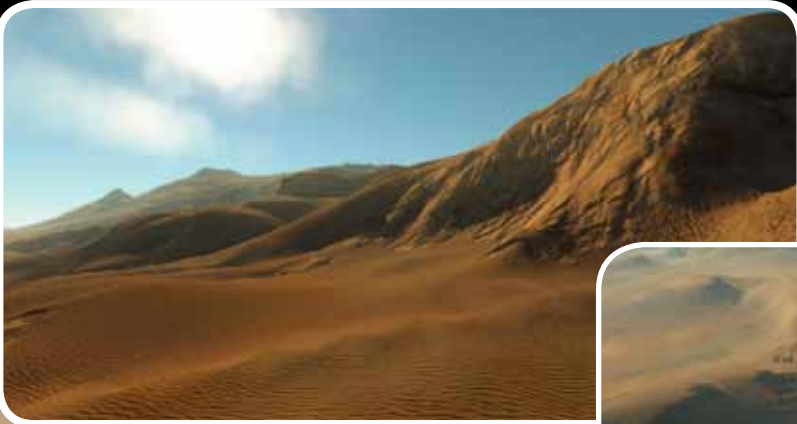


Experience the incredible architecture



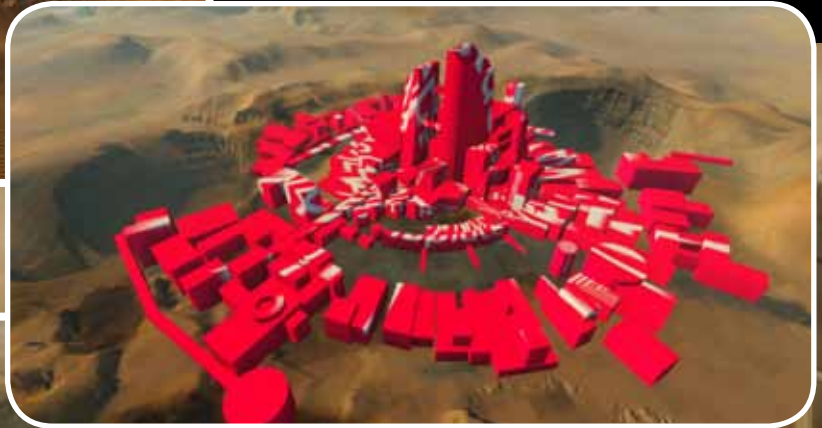
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When we start we start with the terraforming and set up.

We try and set the areas up with Landmarks and try and keep everything to zones within zones.



After that we make mockups of the cities using low poly shapes to define the areas.



We then add the textures and work to make sure we do not over do it and go over our preset limits.



We use reference maps and concept art to make sure we stay as true as possible to the vision and in the end we think the Players will enjoy what my team and I have created.



World Building

Head of Sandbox - Mr. Poi

Hello,

My name is Poi and I am Lead for the Cyrene Sandbox Team.

Working with CryEngine has been a great experience to me, especially when creating the Cyrene Planet.

I lead a team of five other guys and together we work to bring the vision into reality. We are in charge of forming the lands and placing all of the assets into the world.

Using the CryEngine saves us a lot of time as we are constantly making adjustments. It gives us the ability to change things fast and control what we do with great precision.

When building the planet we must take great care to make sure the players will be able to find their way and not get lost.



Cyrene Survival Guide

PART 1

Planet Cyrene is a planet teeming with life, and many creatures on Cyrene fight the daily struggle to survive. Along with the multitude of indigenous fauna, Cyrene is also host to multiple intelligent races that have thrived and evolved on Cyrene. In this Survival Guide we will expose some of the prevalent creatures and races on the Zekkonian Lands west of The Gate City of Janus.

First, it is important to be able to tell friend from foe. Although not many races are friendly on Cyrene, we are lucky in that one of the strongest and technologically advanced races are the Zekkonians. There are many different types of Zekkonians and each belong to a hive with a distinct culture. Not all are friendly and most are actually very territorial and suspicious of the Humans.

The Zekkonians of hive Tanhok can be clearly identified from the more hostile hives by looking closely and recognizing the differences. Tanhok Zeks wear a golden armor and are brown colored. The Tanhok Zeks have molded the local crystals into an amber-like material which they use in their constructions. Everything from their weapons, tools and even homes are made from this crystal amber.

They therefore protect their lands fiercely from any who might intrude. Highly intelligent, the leaders of the Tanhok hive quickly recognized the Human Aliens who landed and decided friendship and cooperation would be in their best interest. They have sought to make treaties with the humans in exchange for technologies and knowledge.

The Tanhok are welcoming to all Humans but they can be further influenced by helping them in their missions to rid their lands of both their rivals, Zek hives and the Merfolken invaders from the seas. The Capital City of Tanhok'Zis is one of the many cities and camps that protect their resources and people.





The second strongest hive of Zeks is known as the Zik. They can be distinguished by their red and gray coloring and aggressive nature. Not as evolved as the Tanhok hive, the Zik make up for it in numbers and sheer brutality. They attack swiftly and steal what they can in order to reuse anything gained to further their advancement into the Tanhok lands.

Already capturing much of the Southwestern Swamplands, now known as the Zik'Zis swamplands, the Zik are merciless. Also using the crystals to mold their armors and weapons, the Zik are not settlers and would rather travel from area to area becoming parasites on the already established cities of the Tanhok or other Zek hives. Zik are always found in packs and are extremely aggressive.



The Empis is one of the most hated creatures on Cyrene. They have a quick spawn and birth cycle and exist only to consume. Their main food source are the different types of native crystals found on Cyrene.

Once they have found a field of crystals they quickly swarm and begin to inject the crystals with their saliva-like liquid and then consume the melted crystals. Although not very hostile the Empis will attack if it feels threatened.

The Zeks from hive Tanhok have no use for these pests but other races use the acid-like saliva in their mystic potions and for construction methods.

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Swamplurkers are reptilian swamp-dwelling creatures. They roam the swamplands looking for prey. Unfortunately for everything in the swamps, anything and everything is on the menu.

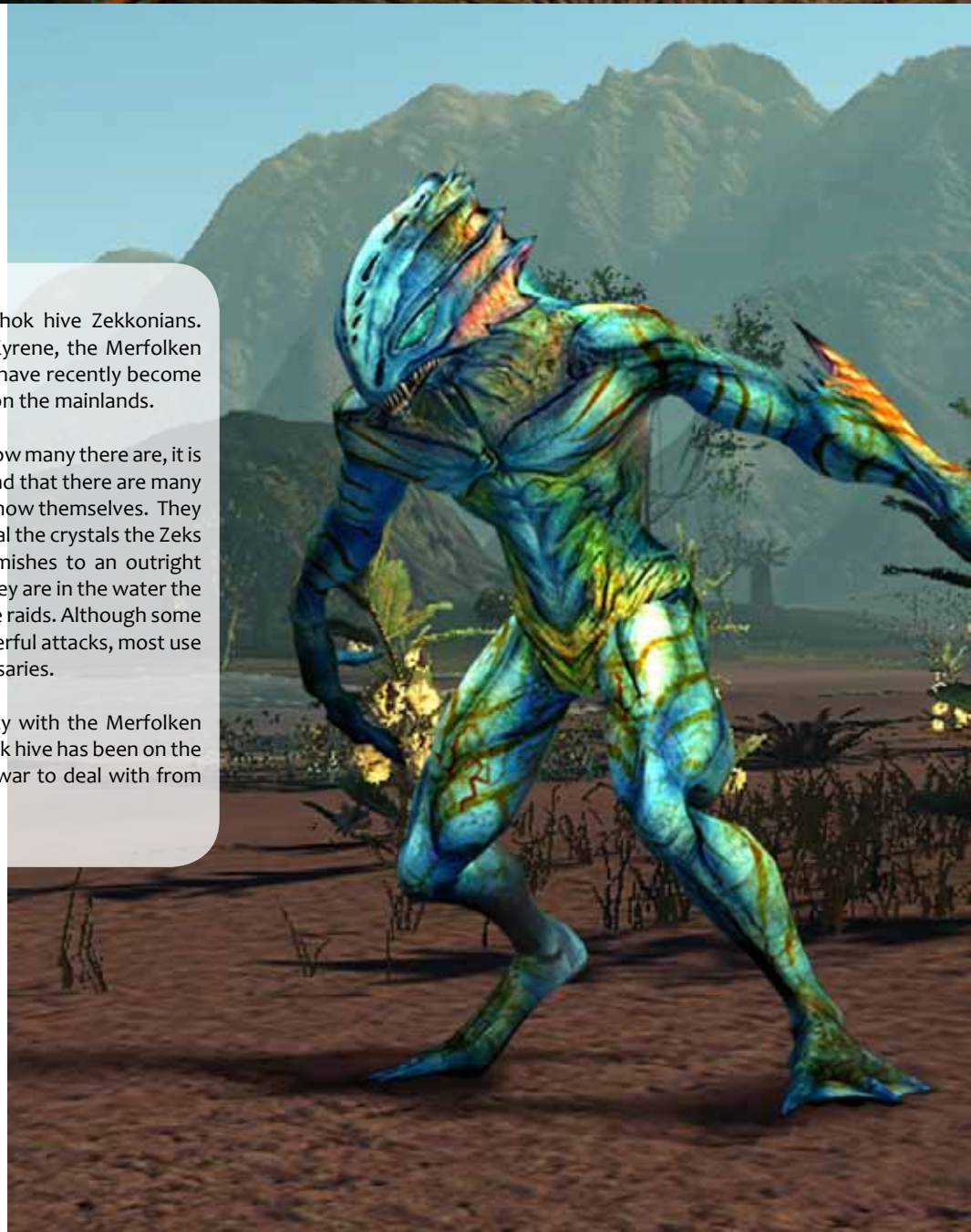
Having huge jaws in their midsection with abnormally powerful teeth, the Swamplurker tastes first and decides if it likes it later. They tend to gather and hunt in packs but may also wander the swamps alone looking for a new pack.

Highly poisonous, the Swamplurker uses neurotoxins to paralyze its prey as it consumes it alive. Luckily, these creatures have little by way of defense so it is best to be offensive when confronted with the Swamplurker attacking.

Merfolken are the bane of the Tanhok hive Zekkonians. A humanoid race from the seas of Cyrene, the Merfolken (as they are called by the Imperium) have recently become more and more bold in their attacks on the mainlands.

Although not much is known or just how many there are, it is rumored that they control the seas and that there are many types of Merfolken who have yet to show themselves. They send scouts and raiding parties to steal the crystals the Zeks require, and prefer hit and run skirmishes to an outright assault. Not as powerful on land as they are in the water the Merfolken risk much to attempt these raids. Although some are capable of strong magic and powerful attacks, most use brute force to overpower their adversaries.

All attempts to broker a peace treaty with the Merfolken have ended badly. For now the Tanhok hive has been on the defensive, as they have a two front war to deal with from the Zik hive.





As a reclone, or a visitor heeding the call from ARC for help, you are constantly in danger in the wilds of Cyrene. Not just from the many creatures or races but from the Sons of Remus as well.

Many acolytes are sent into the Zekkonian lands to prove themselves and are under order to cleanse the lands of anything they deem a threat to the Imperium or the Supreme Commander. As such most of the planet is on lockdown and any human found outside the designated areas on the planet are to be quickly terminated.

The acolytes are equipped with the Fenris power armor and the Fenris Assault Shotgun. Some are also equipped with a special shield made of extra tough materials that add to the already high defense of the power armor.

If unlucky enough to be found by an acolyte in training, then it is best to run. Unless you are with a large group and ready to take heavy casualties, you are best advised to steer clear of any of the Sons of Remus.

The Fenris helmet is modeled after the symbol of the Sons of Remus which is a fierce looking Wolf. The powerful automatic assault shotgun is capable of firing a quick payload of explosive rounds that are devastating to anything that is struck by them

THEYRON WARS



TWO BITTER ENEMY FACTIONS STRUGGLING FOR THE
UPPER HAND...

WHICH SIDE WILL YOU TAKE?

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SVEN SEGERSTAD - Key Account Manager

"I am an old EverQuest geek, 500+ days played, and this is what made me apply for a job here at MindArk. It was a dream come true to work with what at that point was my main passion in life, MMO'S.

Of course I have played Entropia quite a bit, since 2003. I was so happy when I breached 200 health last year, health is king! Everybody knows that! =)



Sven Segerstad
Key Account Manager - MindArk

Things have changed a little, since I finally grew up, so I can't play Entropia Universe as much as I did earlier (took a good while =)), but I still try out the big titles that come, so I know what the competition is!

At the bottom, I'm a computer geek. I started with computers-91, programming, hardware, etc., and after 15 years of computer geeking, I wanted to aim more for the business and management section of the IT industry, and that's what I'm doing now. I'm a Key Account Manager here at MindArk nowadays.

I take care of our partners, so when a partner decides to jump onboard the Planet Partner Program, I lead them through the process of launching a planet. There are quite a few steps to go through, matching visions against what's doable with today's technology, it's a challenge!

On a more personal note, I look at myself as an easy going guy. Pretty funny actually, even though I take my work very seriously and bring it home every day! I recently discovered gardening, and I am planning to establish my own kitchen garden this Spring. Other than that, it's mainly tech stuff going on at my place.

This is a picture of me when MindArk visited Konami a couple of months ago in Tokyo."

ED ROBLES 3RD - ON SVEN SEGERSTAD

"Sven Segerstad is a very unique individual and a great person. Just like everyone who I have met at MindArk, you can tell he is passionate for the Entropia Universe. He is both charming and unnerving at the same time.

He has an ability to make people uncomfortable with his topics while at the same time keeping a hundred percent cool. He is definitely a great person to work with as he has a lot of knowledge of MMO's.

We have sidetracked more than a few times getting into MMO philosophy and tales of boastful adventures. I must admit that he is much more hardcore of an MMO gamer than me. The proof I have is from one time I compared EverQuest characters and although I had one of the top 3 shaman on my server, Mr. Sven not only had a better character than mine, his secondary one was also better (I felt true shame that day)!

Sven is the type of person who knows who he is and it does not seem like he is about to change for anyone. This of course is not a good or bad thing, just something one must know when dealing with a straight shooter like Mr. Sven. To say he has a passion for MMO games is then definitely an understatement.

What he brings to the Entropia Universe is that same passion, and I can see it has been paying off well for all of us planet partners. Many great new features that have been added are a result of Mr. Sven fighting for them to be implemented. Features in Entropia are a delicate subject; everything has to make sense time-wise and cost-wise. I know they are working hard to improve the game and I feel that MA has been working hard on not just the new ones but the classic ones as well.

Sven's main role is to ensure a Planet Partner's first line of communication. He has to handle all of us and is always willing to travel to help set up or assist us in any way he can. His knowledge is something you quickly find out about, as he is able to help in so many key roles of development. He is also the guy you go to who will point you in the right direction if he cannot solve the problem. I would say if MindArk had to clone someone, the first person they should clone is Mr. Segerstad."



PLANET ARKADIA

DAVID DOBSON (CEO) ARKADIA AFTER LAUNCH REFLECTIONS

By MindStar9

Many of us waited impatiently as Planet Arkadia made her final approach into the Entropia Universe solar system. However, from the day of announcement of this planet on November 3, 2010 the CEO of Arkadia Studios out of Singapore (David Dobson) has kept us updated with progress on development.

This was accomplished via the Arkadia Website, the Arkadia Forum, and detailed articles in the EntropiaTimes magazine, with a full-on Arkadia focus in the March 2011 issue.

The Entropia community was also invited to participate in certain aspects of Planet Arkadia development, such as new player areas. All questions have been consistently responded to at the level allowed, with continuing insight into what to expect once the planet arrived for our exploration.

Arkadia launched on Wednesday, May 25th, and I caught up with Dave in an effort to get his after launch reflections, as well as what to expect going forward. The following is a summary of his thoughts based on specific questions that were presented.

Now that Arkadia has launched, what are your initial thoughts?

The launch of Arkadia was a fantastic event. We went live without any game play-related bugs, which was a great achievement and a credit to the team. The few bugs that were discovered were rectified in the first patch. The feedback has been amazing, and definitely keeps the team here at Arkadia Studios motivated to keep pushing to deliver quality content.

What is your immediate focus for Arkadia?

Further expanding the economy is the biggest priority. Currently in production and due for future release is: A full clothing range, new mobs, the 8 Coins Underground area, environmental design (points of interest), a replacement to the current map, getting the new textures working, and more. Treasure Hunting is also in development, although I can't say yet when it will be released.

Was there anything in particular that you were disappointed with?

We certainly weren't perfect, so yes, I was disappointed we didn't get the planet launched perfectly. Maybe that's a bit unrealistic, but that was the aim. The Arkadian loots took some time to come through the system, which I know frustrated some. I'm sure they are happier now though.

I really wanted shops and apartments available for sale within 2 weeks of launch, so that was disappointing to not have ready as well.

Also, we put a lot of work into having the textures ready with some really cool textures. It was a disappointment to have a last minute issue where they weren't able to be applied to anything, and we decided to hold back the blueprints until the application issue is resolved by MA.

What are your long-term goals for Arkadia?

Our number one priority is to grow the player base. The whole planet runs better with more players on it, as the economy gets much more vibrant. There is still so much to come in the development of the planet that will make it more and more interesting.

You have already implemented the AsiaSoft marketing plan, and attended the show the weekend after the launch – do you have any feedback that you can share with us?

The show was a big success in officially launching the planet. Shows like this are not really expected to see thousands of new players come in immediately; it's a chance to get seen by the media and to get the name out there.

What do you feel was the most challenging part of the process?

The team had to learn how to use the development environment provided by MindArk. It is very powerful. However, it is still being refined, so the team had to work with MindArk to push through systems to ensure they were available at launch.

Is there any further information about Treasure Hunting that you can share?

It's a work in progress, and we'll share more information as soon as we can. I can say it will be a big update when it comes, with lots of new items and blueprints.

Everyone is patiently waiting for the Treasure Hunting feature to kick in – as such, can you share if the dig sites are specifically related to this activity (which makes sense), and if the dig sites are mining only, or will include treasures found from hunting in those areas as well?

The dig sites certainly relate to the Treasure Hunting - the ruins located near each dig site surely show activity in the past by the Arkadians. The Archaeological Society is keen to learn more about those sites and hope to one day rebuild the ancient ruins. Expect events in the future involving the dig sites and ruins.

With the Alienware event that is currently going on, is there a set period of time when this will end, or is it until all items are looted? Also, you said that there will be an ongoing partnership with Alienware – can you tell us how often there may be an event where real life items will be looted?

The Alienware event will run until all items are looted. We expect them all to flow through within 2 months of launch. I can't say when the next event will run. However, we'll use feedback from the promotion to fine-tune how it works and will then look to the next one. We are in discussion with other companies to bring more such promotions to Arkadia.

Are there any other marketing partnerships that you can reveal to the community at this time that are specifically related to increasing the Arkadia player base? Also, how long will you wait until you take your marketing efforts to other geographic/demographic areas?

There are others in the pipeline that are very close to being announced. However, I cannot reveal anything at this stage. We'll be watching to see how the current marketing is working and then look to expand the reach into other markets globally.

Can you give a little more information as to what the Underground area is and what relevance it has in the overall Arkadia theme?

The 8 Coins Underground is a cavern system that is part of the 8 Coins mining complex mentioned in the back story. It will be accessed by teleporter. You will be able to use vehicles down there to get around, as it is really big. It adds some extra diversity to the planet and will be an important part of the mining and Treasure Hunting economy on Arkadia.

Celeste Harbour seems to be the only city at this point in time and a rather large one. As this city is considered to be the central hub of activities according to storyline, and where the Military HQ is located, do you have a vision as to what you see this city becoming beyond that?

Celeste Harbour will no doubt play a large role in the future of Planet Arkadia. I'm really looking forward to it developing as a hub on the planet. I have no doubt that the city will develop further in the future too, there's lots of room around it to expand.

If it can be shared, how many other cities do you have currently planned, and is there a timeline for when these cities will become a part of the environment? If players are to be an integral part of building these cities through game play, as well as resurrecting ruins, can you share how this will happen?

Player involvement will happen through events and missions. We want everyone to see a new city in the game and say, 'Hey, I played a part in bringing that city into the game.' News from Sundari is that the Archaeological Society wants to rebuild the ancient cities to better understand how the Arkadians lived. The ruins throughout the planet seem to indicate where cities or structures have been in the past.

By all indications, it looks as though there is already a great start to the Arkadia economy based on number of pages in the in-game auction (or so it was reported at the forum I believe) – what further efforts are in the works to continue boosting and developing a self-sufficient economy?

The economy needs new players and a greater diversity. We are working hard on both fronts.

With regard to the blueprints, you had indicated that Arkadia launched with 300 of them, and also that a few more (I believe) were added with the first patch. Can you share what other blueprints may be on the horizon?

The 300 blueprints represent unique blueprints. Many have (L) and (UnL) versions, and some are only (L). The next release of blueprints will be mainly for the tailors.

Continued page 52



According to a list posted at the forum, it shows that there are 51 Teleporters that are comprised of Firebases, Firebase Academies, Dig Sites, and Outposts. You had mentioned to me that I shouldn't forget about the 'Smuggler Dens' – and said that they are harder to find – can you share how many of these there are and just what their function is?

The Smuggler Dens aren't super easy to find, and of course, these guys need to stay out of the spotlight. They are out there to be found. You will know it's a Smuggler's Den if you see a stolen dig site tent that is painted black and has the Smuggler's emblem on it.

A few in the community have asked about the ongoing storyline for Arkadia, which you know is a rather important issue with our community for all planets. Would you explain how the evolution of the storyline for Arkadia will occur, as it was mentioned that players would be an integral part of this process.

The story will certainly continue. It will play out in missions that are in development, and also through events. It's not meant to be a daily thing though. We feel people need to have time to get in and play the game and have events run that develop the history of the planet.

I'm sure one of your first priorities will be to work out any kinks to make sure that all runs smoothly and that the players are having a great experience – how much of this is on your part, and how much of this is on MindArk's part?

Well, it is a mix of both of us. We have seen some universe-wide issues during our launch phase, and we've had some things to rectify. Some of the fine-tuning we need to do, such as mineral spawns or mob spawns, is near impossible to fully test until it gets really hammered by large numbers of players. I believe we are now on track with this.

In the past, you mentioned that the Arkadia team will be just as diligent in progressing with the evolution of the planet as you were in achieving the launch, which took only an impressive 9 months of hardcore development. Can you give us some kind of schedule, or time-frame within which you anticipate introducing even more content?

I think we showed even with our first patch how quickly we jump on things to make the in-game experience the best it can be. August will see the first big update, and then we'll just continue with our normal fast pace into the future.

How has being an actual player in our universe for so many years influenced your development plans for Arkadia? What are the key elements that you gave more focus to, and why?

Being a very active participant of Entropia Universe definitely had a big influence on how Arkadia developed. There was a real benefit in knowing how the economy works and what areas of the game are most important. It led us to really focus on lots of small details such as detailed item descriptions, good terrain that allows flow without hindrance, lots of blueprints, creating few points of interest that bring the community together, making a city that is viable, lots and lots of testing, and maybe the biggest – our focus on community relations.

Now that you have had the experience of developing and launching a planet, where do you see Arkadia in let's say 5 years from now?

Well, 5 years is a very long time in game development. So any real predictions are likely to be different than reality. The focus going forward is to evolve the planet based on the actions/feedback of the players within the scope of a grander vision that I cannot share.

An example is adjusting the Command Posts in areas that are the busiest. We want to work hard to ensure Arkadia further develops its own identity. The addition of clothing will definitely add to that, but ultimately, it will be up to the community to decide when they themselves feel Arkadian.

What are your thoughts with regard to the continued expansion of the Entropia Platform and where MindArk is headed?


I think it will take some time for the new planets to really make a big impact. We are working very hard to grow the player base; that is crucial to the success of a multi-planetary universe. The upside is that the game has more choices. We are seeing quite a large number of people coming back to Entropia to explore Arkadia, people who just needed something new to maintain their enthusiasm. I'm really excited about the new planets that are in development, because they will add more diversity to the universe.

I think too much is made of each planet attracting a totally different type of gamer – there is only so much that can be done with the EU platform. What I think will really matter is spreading the word that Entropia exists. We have seen it when we are talking to people here in Asia, no one has heard of Entropia, so the opportunity is huge to get the game out there and attract new players.

After the launch, the Arkadia Forum basically blew up with a tremendous increase in activity. Do you have any stats that you can share with us with regard to new memberships, number of threads and post, or anything else that would compare a before and after?

In the week of launch, Arkadia Forum more than doubled its membership, and active users rose by 250%. It's been a real credit to Vantastic and Ewok, our volunteer forum Administrators who have delivered a forum that is great to use. The team is growing too – Larkin and Lee DeLioncourt have joined the Mod Team, ensuring that quality is maintained.





As with all planets, Arkadia may not be for everyone, but the overall feedback since launch has been incredibly positive. One of the more common statements mentioned is how optimized the planet is, and how minimal the lag, if any, there is. When asking Dave about this, he said that it was intentional, and one of the details that was important to work with from a game-play perspective.

By all indications, Dave and his A-Team have not only done an exceptional job of launching Arkadia, but have also defined the standard by which they will continue to interact with the community and deliver Arkadia to the universe.

NEXT ISLAND'S NEW PRODUCER/ PLANET MANAGER HAROLD SIPE



By MindStar9

We recently learned that ongoing and future development of Next Island is now an in-house process, rather than contracted to a third party, and is now located in New York City (US) where Planet Partner David Post oversees all phases of the Next Island evolution. It is here where Next Island's Community Relations Manager Meg Stivison is located, and now Harold Sipe who was brought on board as the new Producer/Planet Manager.

Meg, being the proactive Community Relations Manager that she is, contacted me and offered an interview as an opportunity for the Entropia community to get to know Harold as the newest member of the Next Island team. She worked on projects in the past with Harold, so perhaps it was old home week when he found himself sharing an office with her.

What follows is a bio summary of who Harold is, and an offering of impressive credentials that give testimony if you will, that he is quite qualified to bring a level of professionalism to the ongoing development of Next Island. Beyond the bio information, you will find a Question and Response session that gives insight into the current and future direction of Next Island.

BIO SUMMARY

Harold has a strong design and technical background with 12+ years of experience producing successful digital projects from video games to web and mobile applications. He has a proven track record for managing projects through to completion from the development cycle to launch, as well as on time and on budget. He is well-known for his ability to troubleshoot challenging projects and resolve complex design, technical, or production issues.

He has worked in the video game industry, and as a Game Producer with Merscom LLC, acted as the creative vision holder and project manager for casual and social media video games. These games were produced in partnership with such licensors as: Paramount Pictures, National Geographic, Lifetime TV, and others. Titles shipped in 2009 include: Nat Geo Games – Mystery of Cleopatra, and Lifetime's Wisegal. In 2010, Shutter Island, based on the Paramount Pictures film, was a game that occupied the top slot on most American game portals for upwards of 12 weeks.

Harold is also a writer whose comics work has been published by IDW Publishing and Image Comics. His first graphic novel, SCREAMLAND, from Image Comics, was published in 2008. The book was selected for honorable mention in Publisher's Weekly 2008 Critic's Round-Up, named best horror comic of the year by Fangoria Magazine, and best satire by Wizard.

He has acted as Product Manager for the first line of graphic novels and manga published to mobile devices in North America. A couple of the titles include: Jeff Smith's Bone, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, but there are other titles from some of the largest comic companies in the industry.

Clearly, Harold has a background conducive to stepping into his new role at Next Island. According to his Linked-In site information, he has been in the process of getting acclimated to his new environment and responsibilities since February of this year. The following speaks directly to Harold's new position, as well as some insight into the new direction that the Next Island team is taking.



Question

Please give a description as to what your official role will be as the new Producer/Planet Manager for Next Island.

Response

I giggled a bit at this, as I think it is both easy and really complicated to try and define the role of a producer. The easy answer is I manage milestones and timelines, budgets, production resources, and creative teams. That is the sort of easy resume answer.

The truth of it is I can be pulled in any number of directions. Recently, I sat in on marketing meetings, was involved with promotional discussions, and gave input on licensing agreements. Really, just about anything that affects development or conceptual IP of the game is something that will come across my desk. It's a really varied job, and that's why I love it. It's something new every day.

Question

How did you hear about Entropia Universe?

Response

I've been working in the games industry for several years, so I heard about Entropia Universe through many industry outlets. I'm particularly interested in the real cash economy, the connections with other Entropia planets, and how those present unique challenges and opportunities for Next Island.

We are all pretty excited about the new planets in the EU system as well. Our sister planets present different environments and activities for our great player base, and we are pleased to be a part of the Entropia Universe.

Question

Most recently, we learned that Next Island development is now an in-house process. What can you share with us about the decision not to contract with a third-party developer and move the operation to the New York City Next Island location?

Response

I can speak to that in so much as I really know. Before this past February, I had been working as a freelance Game Producer and was really only aware at that time of Next Island through the press and what I knew of the Entropia Universe.

David Post's passion for his concept and what we are revealing as the back-story for Next Island is really what sold me on this, and made me really excited to join his team as we are ramping up in New York City. I assume a lot of the decision came really wanting to execute the vision into the world now that it is open and we are gaining a player base.

Question

With the change to in-house development, can you give us any information regarding the development team and how many members you have?

Response

Some of this I can't speak to. I know our players have heard this, and I understand the frustration being invested in something and having the answers be cagey or non-committal. There are a lot of factors at play here, and as a private company, there are always decisions that we can't and shouldn't release or discuss. This is just a business reality.

We will be talking about our new QA team at our blog, and I am really looking forward to getting that out there. One thing both Meg and I are committed to is a new level of transparency moving forward. I hope we're beginning to see this take effect with the sneak peeks at new content that Meg is releasing at the forum.

Question

What is the development team's immediate focus for Next Island, and what more can you share with regard to the updates that are coming in June that we've been told will be pretty incredible?

Response

We are all looking forward to sharing David's vision of Next Island with our players, and to introducing more of our game world in the June update. June's content, and our future content moving forward, will focus on bringing the conceptual underpinning of the game world to life. In the short term, this means unique Elysian items for Next Islanders, and new characters to meet.

Question

What are your long-term goals for Next Island?

Response

For new players, we'll offer beginner quests, clear tutorials and social locations. Our experienced player base is already helping introduce new players to the game, and we plan to create an even more inviting early game experience.

For experienced players, Next Island will offer unique items, attractive environments for social and society activities, and more challenging missions. The Entropia Universe platform offers so much to players, and we'd like to take full advantage of that with Next Island.

Question

How frequently do you anticipate that there will be updates to Next Island?

Response

We've got a lot of exciting plans in the works here at Next Island, but there are many factors involved in game development. I would be remiss in promising dates and deadlines with so many factors in both the creative and technical aspects of a project like this.

(Note from Meg: Harold's amazing track record with production milestones and deadlines is just one of his strengths that he brings to us at Next Island.)

Follow Meg's blog at NextIslandNews.com for further information on the development process, or check NextIsland.com for news about game updates.

Question

With regard to time travel, are there any plans in place that will sort out the use of crystals and crafting the crystal that will be used to travel to other destinations? I ask because there were issues with the Ancient Greek scenario. It was quite a costly undertaking only to get to Ancient Greece where it was not in any condition for full game play.

Response

Our June content reinvents the time travel scenario, while keeping the gorgeous environment and science-fiction mystery that was such a draw to the original scenario.

Question

It was mentioned in the interview I did with David Post for the September issue of the magazine that there would probably be three destinations per year added to the time travel feature. Is this plan still on target, and if so, can you share what the next group of destinations might be?

Response

Again, we have a lot of exciting game content in the works, but I would hesitate to give a firm commitment. We're focused on improving our existing time destinations of tropical Next Island and Ancient Greece in the short term, but longer term, the Elysian's time travel technology means that any and all time periods are possible destinations for Next Islanders.

Continued page 56

Question

Next Island was launched without a fully functioning economic system in place. Will this be something that is rectified with the June update? Specifically, blueprints that will utilize materials that feed into the development of an economy on the planet?

Response

In the Entropia Universe, the economy is constantly being adjusted. It's just one of the fascinating aspects of being part of a real cash economy and a Planet Partner in the Entropia Universe.

Question

Next Island was also launched without a proper new player area where new players are introduced to the planet with guided quests and other activities in order to learn how to navigate their avatars and progress through game play. Are there any plans in place to create such a location?

Response

Our June release offers a new starter experience for first-time players. In addition, text-based tutorials will be available at NextIsland.com, as well as at the NextIslandLife.com forum. Going forward, future updates will continue to offer some game content with new players in mind.

Question

What are your plans for the ongoing Next Island storyline? Will this be incorporated into a quest line, or by other means? Are there any plans to involve the players with helping to develop and progress the storyline? Also, relating to quests, what are future plans regarding adding more quests, and will they be simple, straightforward quests, or multi-tiered?

Response

The Entropia platform allows us to create challenges for a wide variety of playing styles and skill levels. We plan to use the quest system for a variety of player challenges that will also present more and more of the Next Island game world.

The background of Next Island is a rich and exciting back-story, and we're looking forward to sharing this with players. We're also working on assets to present other sections of Next Island's story through other channels. Of course, we invite players to create and share their own back stories using the forum and our Facebook page.

Question

Can you share any near future plans that development has for potential new content that might be exciting to the community?

Response

My long term goal is that we focus on a more casual sensibility in the game. I think the EU platform is a long way from lending itself to a casual game, but there are a few ideas from that space we are working on to apply to the game:

- Beautiful and relaxing environments
- More achievements as rewards to players
- Easy-to-understand tutorials that will guide players through many of the professions available in EU and Next Island

I think David's vision of Next Island is a game that lends itself more to a casual outlook, and that will really set it apart from other worlds in EU.

Question

Communication is very important to the community, and while David has pretty much stayed in the background except for a message conveyed through others here and there, Meg has done a pretty good job with keeping up with people at the Next Island forum. Will you as well be interacting with the community to keep us informed as to where you are with regard to development and any update issues that may arise?

Response

I think Meg does a really great job with player relations, and it is something she cares a lot about. She is very engaged with the player community, and I think the events in world get better and better. I would point to our scavenger hunts and to the recent dating events at Crystal Resort as examples of how we want to move forward on social activities in world.

Information about Next Island is shared at:

- NextIsland.com
- At our Facebook page – Facebook.com/NextIsland
- On Twitter as @NextIsland; and
- Meg blogs on development progress and community news at NextIslandNews.com

Question

David mentioned early on that there were big marketing plans with both print and electronic media as it relates to bringing in a new player base. Can you give any details as to what stage of implementation these marketing plans are at right now, and when we will start to see them in action?

Response

My focus is on developing good game play and adding new content. Obviously, we're all interested in reaching a wider audience, but marketing plans aren't really my focus.



Question

Will all Next Island staff be playing with official avatars and not regular avatars, and will they be in game to interact with events and activities that take place that may be produced by players?

Response

Meg and I are developers before we are players, and we understand the potential for exploits and conflicts of interest when developers have for-profit avatars. Our goal is to make Next Island a great game and a fun destination for players, not to take advantage of the RCE ourselves.

The Planet Partner Agreement forbids us from profiting from in-game activities, and to be perfectly frank, the potential to make a few PEDs is just not worth risking jobs we enjoy.

Also, our goal is to work with players to build a vibrant world with lots of engaging activities.

CONCLUSION

I think we can surmise from Harold's responses that Next Island is indeed heading in a new direction, and that having the development in-house will allow them to focus on David's vision for the further evolution of Elysium and Next Island.

On behalf of EntropiaPlanets, I would like to wish David Post and the Next Island team a journey of success along the path leading to new horizons.



PlanetaryMotions



PLANET CYRENE

Developed by: Creative Kingdom Inc/ Digital Scryers LLC
Scheduled colonization date: Second Half 2011

Planet Cyrene has been revealed to be an environment where shamanistic magical powers are pitted against advanced human and alien technology. Combining an extraterrestrial environment with classical architecture, Planet Cyrene appears to blend the boundaries between science fiction and fantasy. A major city has been identified, and was named "Janus." Further primary inspections revealed a city inhabited by outlaws (Smuggler City), and huge forests, swamps, deserts, and jungles covering the surface of the planet. One of the forests appears to harbor a big city built in the trees. The northern part of the planet is completely covered in ice.



NEXT ISLAND

Developed by: Next Island LLC

Colonization dates: December 2010 for pioneers, February 28th 2011 for full colonization.

The groundbreaking scientists on Next Island have developed technology to enable colonists to travel through time. While modern-day Next Island is known as a gorgeous island paradise, brave explorers have been able to gather time travel crystals and travel back to visit Ancient Greece. Next Island scientists and colonists are searching for further crystals to enable visits to other points in Next Island's timeline.

PLANET ARKADIA

Developed by: Arkadia Studios

Colonization date: 25th of May 2011

Planet Arkadia was opened up to colonists less than 3 weeks ago. Eager colonists instantly flocked to the planet, hoping for a chance to discover new materials and resources, or perhaps even some real treasure. At this very moment, only the Sentosa continent has been secured, but it is expected that more continents will follow. Strange hardware with alien origins has been reported to have been discovered ...



THERYON WARS

Developed by: Pyxel Arts / Spaniard Blend

Scheduled Colonization Date: Q4 2012

Theryon Wars appears to be not a planet as such, but rather a vast area of undiscovered space. Unknown riches can be found all across space, with rare ores and minerals abundantly available on asteroids or remote moons, and as such, the area is heavily battled by rival factions.

PLANET DOTMAN

Developed by: China Recreation District

Scheduled colonization date: : To be determined

Planet Dotman was intended to primarily be a meeting hub for Han People. It was supposed to feature huge shopping areas and its main focus would be trade. Unfortunately, after the unexpected death of the CRD company's chairman, little else has been heard about the Planet, and nobody seems to know for sure if the planet exists. Rumors have it that a Vogon vessel was spotted near the planet's original coordinates. There is no reason for panic.



UNIVERSAL MONSTERS PLANET

Developed by: SEE Digital Studios

Scheduled colonization date: not before 2012

Not only did SEE manage to figure out a way to allow for people to have some form of eternal life, but they also came up with a revolutionary technique that allows to transform pictures into life. A first attempt for this using monster movies luckily was done on a separate planet. We say luckily, as the test apparently was successful, and the planet soon got overrun by monsters and mutants. SEE is currently culling the population of the planet to ensure thrill-seekers can start traveling over there in due time.



PLANET MICHAEL

Developed by: SEE Digital Studios

Scheduled colonization date: not before 2012

SEE are pioneers when it comes to cryogenic preserving of people. When the King of Pop, Michael Jackson, passed away, SEE quickly secured his body, and intends to use a rare energy field they discovered near a remote planet within the Entropia Universe to bring Michael's spirit back to life. The planet chosen was not inhabitable prior to SEE treating it with a secret process, meaning there are no hostiles on the planet. It is expected to be a planet where Michael's fans can celebrate his music and dance moves.

ARABIAN PLANET

Developed by: Beladcom

Scheduled colonization date: To be determined

One of the planets closer to one of the major suns within the Entropia Universe, this planet is yet to be named. Reports indicate the planet resembles the earthly area named Arabia, where civilization as we know it started thousands of years ago, leading to the intermediary name of "Arabian Planet." The planet is thought to have a desert feel, speckled with oases and cities.



ROCKTROPICIA

Developed by: Virtual Music Worlds LLC

Colonized: 6 April 2010

ROCKtropica became the second planet that was deemed fit for human colonization. Initial scouting of the planet revealed a presence of zombies, werewolves, dragons and scantily clad women. Undoubtedly, it was the latter that formed the basis for a collective of earthly musicians to form a corporation to start exploitation of the new planet. Music is an all-around feature on the planet, which draws inspiration from the founders of the company.



PLANET CALYPSO

Developed by: SEE Digital Studios

Colonized: 30 January 2003

Calypso was the first planet in the Entropia Universe to be colonized. Initially by the MindArk corporation itself, but later on ownership was transferred to their sister company First Planet Company. In January 2011 SEE Virtual Worlds (SEE WV) gained the rights to Planet Calypso, and now SEE Digital Studios is in charge of maintaining and developing Planet Calypso. The cities on the planet were originally constructed by robots that ended up turning against their human masters. Further inhabitants of the planet include various beasts (land-dwelling, seaborne and flying), and a variety of mutants.



ENTROPIA UNIVERSE

Discovered by: MindArk

After life on Earth became unsustainable, missions were launched in an attempt to find new planets for mankind to settle. The Entropia Universe was discovered by the corporation of MindArk, when one of their search probes got lucky and ended up discovering a solar system similar to the one Planet Earth inhabits. While many such solar systems were found, none contained planets that were deemed to be suitable for colonization, usually due to the lack of a sustainable ecosystem or available resources on these planets. From discovery of the universe, it took a while before colonization could start. Rights for colonization were sold off to individual corporate entities.



ENTROPIA UNIVERSE

MindArk

[Entropia Platform](#)

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The online magazine contains more in-depth content, with more interesting articles than is published at the forum. By making an online magazine, we hope to reach out to a larger portion of our community, and through text and pictures, display the universe we live in.

You too have the possibility to contribute to the magazine – either by providing us with a news story idea, something you know that would be interesting to write about, awesome people you know in our universe worth mentioning, a great tool, etc.

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