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Games

The Colonies™

fighting for freedom on occupied earth



 **BTRC**

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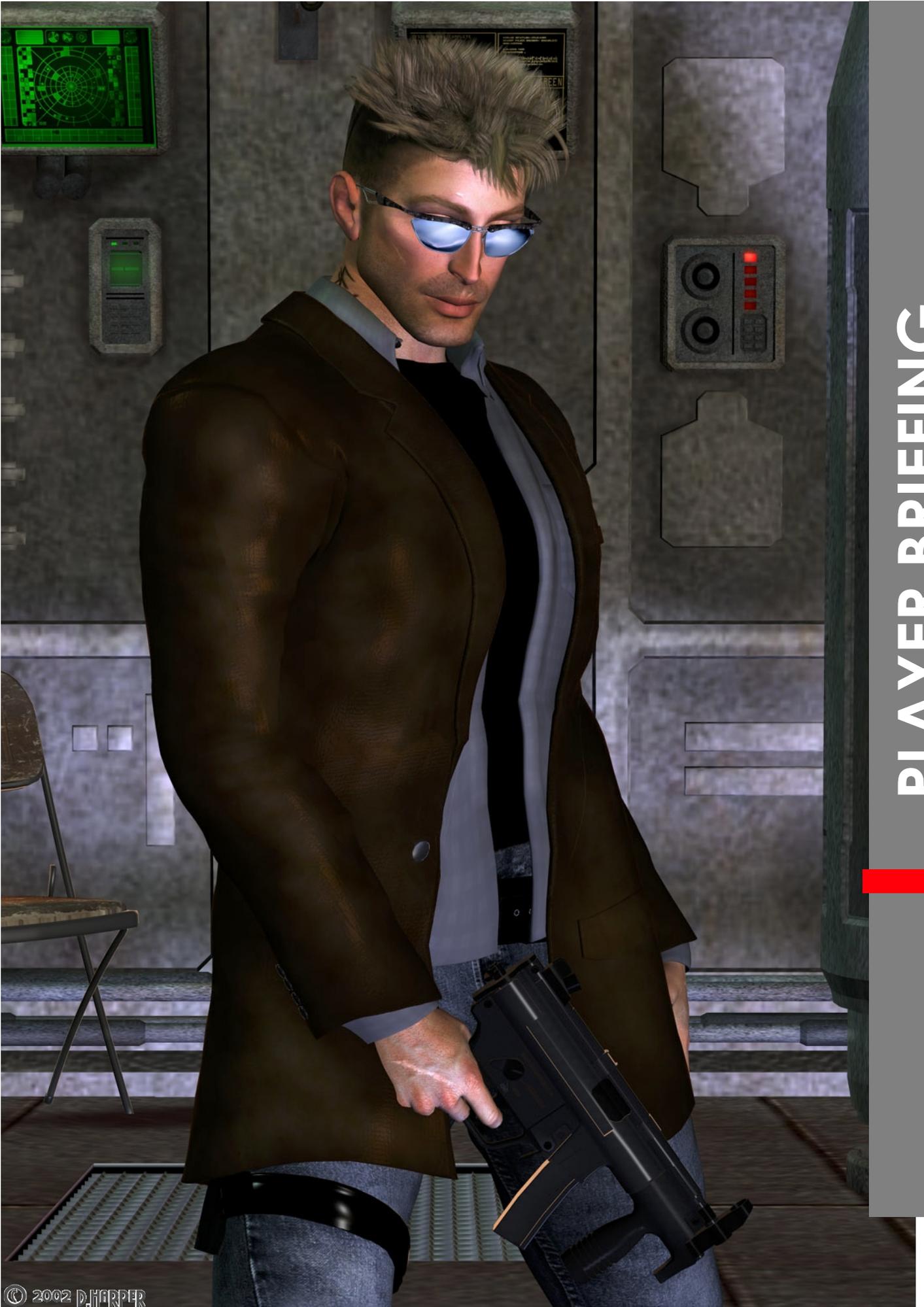
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PLAYER BRIEFING



The following is an excerpt from Brigadier Samuel Robertson's introductory lecture to his class at the Martian Defense Force Academy.

▼ **THE HEIGHT OF DISCOVERY** - *It all started with the Hubble Space Telescope. After countless years of continual upgrading, it was finally retired in 2010CE. The Sagan Space Observatory, which supported a scientific crew of five, replaced it. NASA and United States Spaceforce scientists shared time on the observatory and eventually began renting its use out to other nations and organizations. This orbiting telescope became man's ultimate early warning system. But, we'll get to that later.*

Another important instrument in humanity's development was the International Space Station or ISS. It was crucial to Earth's future and directly contributed to the development of new spacecraft designs, alloys, and even solar cruises (commercial space tourism), providing a much-needed boost to the commercial space industries of the United States, United Kingdom, and the European Union.

With the advent of construction yards on the Moon in 2018CE, giant factories were erected to create the materials necessary for interplanetary ships. The next generation of spacecraft were just around the corner and caused the decline of the International Space Station. Since it was too fragile to for docking any of the large deep space and interplanetary craft designs, U.S. personnel were reassigned to the Moon. Full ownership of the station was eventually relinquished to the European Union in 2020CE. A larger transit station was built in Earth orbit using lunar materials, but most research continued to be done on smaller, older facilities.

The Colonies

The year 2021CE gave birth to fusion power. A ten-year resolution was instituted by the United Nations and all major governments agreed to replace old nuclear fission reactors with these new, cleaner, and more efficient fusion reactors. In an unprecedented outbreak of peace and common sense, every member of the United Nations signed a ban on nuclear weapons and fissionable materials three years before the deadline of 2031CE. *This may very well have been the downfall of man.*

The last big scientific invention born on Earth was the technology of photonics. Using light instead of electricity, this new medium replaced silicon-based computers, allowing smaller and faster systems to be built. It laid a foundation for nearly unlimited computer creativity.

The United States, in cooperation with Russian Federations, achieved the boldest space mission yet in 2030CE - the colonization of Mars. The United Kingdom and the European Union also became partners and contributed billions of dollars in supplies. Originally intended as a scientific outpost, it soon became an adventurer's paradise; much like Africa or the Amazon in previous centuries. Tourism on Mars for the rich was offered by three civilian corporations. The United Nations which a decade before had agreed on the destruction of nuclear weapons found itself unable to agree on the political status of Mars. Corporations, billionaires and even a few religious groups could afford fusion-powered ships capable of carrying enough supplies to start a Lunar or Martian colony. And they did, often avoiding national restrictions by launching from obscure facilities in impoverished countries in exchange for helping these countries gain their own space presence. The years from 2032CE to 2036CE were extremely chaotic, but in a peaceful way. Fusion power made the trips possible, but not profitable, and there was more than enough real estate for the relatively small number of colonists (several thousand by 2036CE).

Disaster! - Now, back to the Sagan Observatory. The year 2036CE marked a four hundred percent increase in its usage due to Earth's top astronomers and astrophysicists fighting for time on it. Each one strived to become the first to qualify a new celestial body which appeared in the skies. It turned out to be a new comet that was also on a collision course with Earth.

Data was checked and rechecked.

Unfortunately, the findings were accurate. This new threat caused governments to cooperate and compete like never before. Several ideas surfaced - most were fantastic yet unlikely.

Nuclear weapons seemed to be the only hope. The United States and Russia worked diligently to design a device and delivery system that would be able to obliterate or deflect the massive body of stone and ice. In the end, however, physics proved to be on the side of the comet. It was just too big and too fast. Impact was predicted for the central Atlantic in early 2038CE.

Chaos ensued. Governments and virtually everyone who could afford or extort it, built or commandeered a spaceworthy craft and fled Earth. There are no good records of how many ships were launched, how many were lost or what their destinations were. Any with the endurance headed for Mars. The Moon was considered a last resort, as it was expected to be heavily bombarded by debris ejected from the impact of the comet with Earth.

We know at least twenty-eight "colony" ships successfully reached Mars in the 2037CE to 2039CE period, landing at widely separated spots on the planet. The chaos of the moment and later events prevented contact with all but the closest of the landings for periods of months to up to two years. Some of the ships carried nothing but infants and a handful of adult caretakers, parents staying behind so that a larger number of smaller bodies could find a new life under the reddish sky of Mars. We know of at least thirteen failed landings, sometimes through operator error, sometimes from lack of a surviving pilot. Some ships missed Mars entirely, having run out of fuel, miscalculating their trajectories or other problems. Some of these are still drifting between Mars and Jupiter, others passed without sufficient information being gathered to make a long-term orbital plot.

In addition, in 2037CE a secret U.S. operation, deep in the Arizona desert, began refitting an experimental deep space ship design to carry refugees to far away planets. Intended for unmanned exploration, the craft used a new drive system: the fusion-photon drive. It was, theoretically, capable of achieving near-light speeds by using high-energy photons to generate thrust. In addition to colony seeding modules, special hibernation chambers were added to protect the colonists from radiation and to reduce the supplies needed for the multi-year journeys. The United States knew that it would possibly take centuries for Mars to build itself up to where another exodus of this type could be feasible, and if by cosmic bad luck Mars ended up in the crosshairs before then, humanity would become extinct. So, a long shot was gambled on, and the first interstellar colonization was underway.

Using census data and various records like military dossiers, the government secretly recruited citizens to colonize new worlds. Most of these colonists left Earth without even being informed of their ultimate destination. Although, the existence of these seeding ships was never made public, recent data recovered from Earth confirms that at least twenty were launched.

Setup or Salvation? - Earth's countdown to devastation was interrupted when a radio signal came in from space in early 2038CE. Everyone's attention was focused on this signal. After days of analysis, the encoding method was finally cracked and the first sounds of an alien voice echoed throughout the halls of the White House and U.S. Space Command.

They called themselves the Virimar and offered to destroy the comet. The world leaders agreed without hesitation; a decision which spared our brethren their lives, but cost them their freedom.

The blasts that pulverized the comet were visible even in daylight. One bright approaching star became a diffuse patch of light in the night sky. People were celebrating in the streets when word came that the comet was gone. They rejoiced for two days. On the third day, however, another catastrophe struck. The world went momentarily dark and silent.

A shockwave from the blast struck the Earth, destroying all orbital satellites and many central computer systems. The computers were relatively easy to fix, but all satellite communication was lost, including the link with Mars.