

# CONSTELLATION

## A D&D SPACE ADVENTURE

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

### THE SETTING

#### ELEVATOR PITCH

##### SETTING BACKDROP

Nine years ago the *Lightlanes* collapsed, and the universe as you know it was plunged into darkness.

The lightlanes were a stellar phenomena connecting all reaches of the galaxy. Little-understood, the lightlanes warped space and time, enabling faster-than-light travel. For centuries, interstellar trade and commerce expanded, empires rose and fell, and life thrived.

Then suddenly, the lightlanes were gone. You, whether by happenstance or providence, found yourself stranded on the world of *Bahari Chini*, a modestly inhabited planet known for its resource-rich oceanic mantle and core. You've been stranded on *Bahari Chini* either surviving in the wilds or among its peoples for nine years.

The planet is dominated by a crust-spanning savannah spotted with tropical oases around cave entries to the underground ocean. The planet—only recently *comcolonized*\* prior to the collapse of the lightlanes—has become embroiled in governmental strife, as historic cultural ideals reemerge in force.

\* *Comcolonization is the volatile change in a society brought on by the interest and investment of interstellar commerce.*

##### INCITING ACTION

Nine months ago, everything changed again when, for only a few hours, the Lightlanes reappeared, and a capital-class starship emerged into the star system.

The ship is owned by the *Primary Holding Company*, owners of the salvage rights for the defunct *Blue Hole Mining Compact* (the comcolonizers of *Bahari Chini*). Led by a

powerful *star sorcerer*<sup>†</sup>, agents of the Primary Holding Company have started the process of preparing the planet for the return of interstellar trade, telling of “Flickers” (short periods of time when the Lightlanes will allegedly flicker back into existence), and investing heavily in the restoration of the planet's dilapidated starbase. They've begun the salvage of the planet's abandoned orbital mining station and have been training (recruiting) some among the planet's inhabitants. At this point, *Primary Holding Company* is the only entity with Lightlane-capable starships on *Bahari Chini* and working with them is the only way of traveling offworld.

<sup>†</sup> *Star sorcerers are extraordinarily powerful creatures capable of using magic to alter reality at the starship scale. Most star sorcerers were exterminated during the collapse of the Olydian Empire hundreds of years ago.*

##### START OF THE CAMPAIGN

For whatever reason you so decide, your character is among the many denizens of *Bahari Chini* seeking to sign on with the *Primary Holding Company*.

Perhaps you're just in it for the work?

Perhaps you crave the swashbuckling spacer life?

Perhaps even, you have more nefarious motives, like the terror agents of the *Baharian Isolationist Front*?

Whatever your character's motive, one thing is for certain: galactic adventure awaits!

*Agonizingly corny...*

*...and woefully mistaken.*

*Doom awaits you—nothing more.*

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

### GAME BASICS

#### *DISCLAIMER: I'm God's FAVORITE PRINCESS.*

Okay—So this is the section where I sidestep the fluff and cut straight to real talk.

##### **Seriously though. Listen up.**

In order for this game to be successful, we really only need one thing to be true:

**I, Jeremy, need to enjoy running it.**

This is ultimately my game. I reserve the right to **completely** and **unilaterally** change or retcon literally anything about it, including the core multi-group experiment (to be discussed more in next sections).

As my players (and friends), I value your opinions, and I will make a good faith attempt to accommodate your preferences... **However**, as the game runner, my mental well-being and satisfaction with the game trump yours, and that's just the way it has to be.

**Sorry not sorry.**

*So sure about that, so-called  
game master?*

### EPISODIC EXPLORATION

**So about that multi-group experiment...**

#### **COLLECTIVE DISCOVERY**

The core conceit of this campaign will be its inclusivity. The players will consist of **whomever wants to play (subject to my pre-approval)**.

At least at first, the campaign will involve parties of 4-7 players going on expeditions for the **Primary Holding Company**. A mission may

be completed in one session or may take multiple sessions to complete.

Once you complete a mission, your party must submit a mission debrief.

**That's right asshole—You have D&D homework.**

#### **SHARING IS CARING (UNLESS YOU'RE A LIAR)**

In your missions, you will either reveal one or more hidden sectors on a galactic map or will further explore one or more previously revealed areas. Your mission debrief will be shared with **all other players in the campaign** to share discoveries about **factions, galactic events, stellar/planetary phenomena, adventure leads, or anything else of interest**.

As the campaign progresses and parties begin to strike out on their own and determine their own missions (rather than be assigned them), these debriefs will become **essential** to make good decisions.

You, of course, could always falsify your debriefs if you discover something you'd rather keep within your party—just make sure your debriefs are based in fact if you have any hope of passing your fabrications past Primary Holding. Remember, for now, they're your only way off **Bahari Chini...**

#### **ALL EFFECTS ALL**

With all the adventures occurring in one consistent galaxy, the choices of one party have the potential to affect the others.

Decide on a whim to murder the beloved NPC janitor on the starship? Well, now they're dead. Bummer for all those other players who loved the character. Don't worry though—you're totally cool—you only have to answer to your other friends for ruining their experience, no pressure there at all.

For real though, this is one of the things where I, as the game runner, **may** opt to intervene.

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

Folks will take this game seriously and get invested in it. Don't grieve them.

That said, if you TPK and that NPC dies with you, that's a tragedy. It's dramatic. It's why I play this game. I'm not a punch puller, I'm just also not a dick.

### *Simultaneity*

The plan is that all active adventures will occur at the same time. So if one party starts a mission and doesn't finish it in one session, and another party plays before that first party meets again, there may be new information or resources available, or resources depleted, or galactic events altered, by the time the first group meets to finish their mission.

For example, if one party is in a huge bind at the end of their session (perhaps boxed in and about to be captured), another party could, if they so desired, go on a rescue mission (either personally or to hire mercenaries) to give their friends some backup. In the rescue case, the conclusion of said rescue mission would require a quorum of players for all present characters to proceed.

### *ORGANIZING GAMES*

**Ultimately, it will be a party's responsibility to coordinate their meetings with me and find the right schedule (or lack thereof).**

I don't have strict limits in mind, but I also can't be spending 20-hours per week running D&D. I want to be fair, but when I have to choose, I will probably find myself prioritizing the most invested parties (selfish) or the parties who have played least recently (fair). I simply can't make promises when considering a large and open-framework playerbase.

Some parties may end up meeting monthly, quarterly, or even biannually if that's the right frequency for them. Another party might meet

weekly for short, 1- to 2-hour weeknight sessions.

### **MULTI-GROUP EVENTS**

While I've very rarely seen this work out well (except for when I myself did it with Pete for our Halloween DnDTime shenanigans), galactic events may occasionally unfold as to warrant a multi-group event.

When or if this happens, I expect I would run it as several back-to-back-to-back "short" sessions with each group individually, culminating in one humongous all-hand-on-deck finale.

When or if this does occur, I'd want to do all the sessions in one week or weekend, so while I'd try to find a good time for everyone, I would not want to delay too much and reserve the right to proceed sans any given player, if needed.

### **ALL FOR ONE (OR) ONE FOR ALL**

Last but not least, let's talk about playing in multiple parties. It is technically allowed... If you were to do this, you could do it with the same character or different characters.

**However**, I want everyone who wants to play to be able to play, so secondary characters are last priority, hardstop, and each player would get **one** character in a multi-group event finale.

It is my preference for parties to stick together (and pick sick team/code names). A common opportunity that I can anticipate to party with others may be to fill in for an unavailable player for a session, or if that players' character's specific skills are needed for a specific mission...

### **MECHANICS**

#### **D&D5E IN SPACE?**

*Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.*

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

Yes, I am running this game using Fifth Edition **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™** (~~please clap~~).

*Please don't.*

When it comes to flavor, I want to emphasize a few things. **In this galaxy**, magic is real; divinities are real; powerful entities able to infuse you with otherworldly powers are real; psionics are real; freaky-deaky alien biologies are real; bio-stim drugs that grant you insane abilities are real; sci-fi technologies are real; ...((deep breath))... you get the point.

**Bahari Chini** itself is home to all of this. It is completely up to you to decide how **you** want to flavor your character's abilities.

All I ask is that you play a character that is motivated to explore space and makes some sense in the setting:

So plain old stone-tipped arrows are a no-go... But stone-tipped arrows made hypersharp by a sci-fi arrow sharpener that makes the tips quark-thin are totally cool.

**You get the picture?**

### OTHER CAVEATS

There are a few caveats I'll cover briefly:

1. I will not be using any magic items from D&D. All equipment will be completely custom to the **Constellation** game.
2. I will be adding new mechanics, skills, proficiencies and the like to address starship battles and the game spanning alien environs.

### D&D5E IN SPACE?!?!?

Yeah.

### BUT SPACESHIPS?!

I have not fully worked this out yet, but I intend to borrow some mechanics from the acclaimed StarWars 5e system.

### FACTIONS

Entities with the power to sway events on a galactic scale—also known as **Factions**—will be core to this setting.

One faction that you've already heard about is the **Primary Holding Company**. Other common factions in the setting may be independent planets, megacorporations, galactic governments, media conglomerates, religious movements, or other rogue elements out for their own purposes.

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

My plan is to have factions plotting and scheming behind the scenes and taking actions between sessions so that the universe feels alive! Factions will all have their own secret goals, bonds, and ideals.

Actions that you take as players in-game have the capacity to influence how the schemes of factions unfold. The more you help a faction, the better relationship your faction (**Primary Holding Company**, at least at first) will gain with that faction. The more you interfere, the more adversarial that faction will become.

As I said, I want these factions to feel alive. If you make your party too big of a thorn in a factions' side, well, they might decide that they need to have you dealt with...

*But wouldn't that story just be positively delicious...*

### THE ABSOLUTE BARE MINIMUM LORE You MUST KNOW

1. Before the collapse of the Lightlanes, the galaxy was broken up into "constellations" or groups of stars highly interconnected by hundreds of small, and few moderately sized, Lightlanes. Constellations were then connected (usually) by one or two large Lightlanes to other specific Constellations. The size of the Lightlanes limited the size of ships that could traverse them safely.
2. Humans were among the first races to spread throughout the galaxy in aeons past. As a result, most alien species have some human in their ancient ancestry, and have bipedal vaguely humanoid forms. Virtually no "pure"

humans exist today, and any creature that appeared to be "normal" human by our standards would probably be considered at a minimum, deeply unsettling.

3. **Sol**, the star of the human homeworld of **Earth**, has been lost to time, although some relics of Earth are still present throughout the galaxy. Sol is a legendary system and is the crux of many spacer myths of treasures, technological wonders, and horrors.
4. Technology may be hyper advanced, but it's not quite planet-destroying advanced.
5. Lightlanes can transfer **matter**, but not **energy**, so information must be physically brought through Lightlanes to spread throughout the galaxy.
6. There was a central government called the **Federation of Free Trade Systems** which enforced their own laws through the Lightlanes. They were broadly run by megacorps like **AM Shipyards**, **New Japan**, and the 'Mericorp subsidiaries **Amber Waves Cooperative**, **Halcyon Skies**, and **Doodle**. Despite their name, The **Federation** was aggressively protectionist of their member megacorps and were broadly disliked (but tolerated) by normal people, and begrudgingly worked with by spacers needing kit.

The **Federation** were based in **Oroborous**, a constellation colloquially referred to as the "inner rim" due to its high population, ring-shape, and it having more large Lightlanes and connections to other constellations than anywhere else known in the galaxy.

# CONSTELLATION

## CAMPAIGN PRIMER

- 7. *Bahari Chini* is located in a sector of the galaxy inhabited primarily by sapient human-like animals called beastfolk. If you're native to the sector, you may want to consider making your character a beastfolk!
- 8. The galaxy is huge. If you have a character idea that fits the sci-fi vibe, it can probably be done! Talk to me!

9. *If you'd like to explore the life-changing experience of "no longer being alive," consider crossing me.*

-S

# CONSTELLATION

## APPENDIX A. YOUR CHARACTER

### WHAT IS A BACKGROUND?

From a Baharain local to a marooned alien from elsewhere in the galaxy, think of your background as a basic explanation of your character's recent past. In this case, think of your character immediately before the lightlane collapse and for the past few years stranded on *Bahari Chini*. What was their job? How old were they? What were their dreams? And what has changed in the intervening time?

From a gameplay perspective, a background gives your character some mechanical bonuses and abilities which lets them do more in the game. For your background, you gain: proficiency in two skills of your choice, one feat from the D&D player's handbook, one tool or **starship proficiency**, and some personal possessions. Make choices which reflect the experience of your character's past.

You can see all the available feats here:  
[https://5e.tools/feats.html#ability%20score%20improvement\\_xphb,f1stsource:xphb=1,f1stlevel%2019=2~level%2011=2](https://5e.tools/feats.html#ability%20score%20improvement_xphb,f1stsource:xphb=1,f1stlevel%2019=2~level%2011=2)

### EXAMPLE: FORMER AMBASSADOR

Perhaps, your character was formerly an alien ambassador from a far-off civilization. Feel free to make up whatever details you want about this civilization, its society, and your character's former role within that society. Just note that since our story starts after being marooned on the backwater planet of *Bahari Chini*, it's entirely up to me (the game master) to decide how things may have changed for your character and that civilization in the intervening years!

### Background Benefits

**Feat:** Skill Expert (Charisma skills)

**Skill Proficiencies:** Persuasion, Insight

**Tool Proficiency:** Calligrapher's Supplies

**Equipment:** fine clothes, diplomatic credentials

### ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES

Feel free to make up anything you want here, but also, here are a few examples for you to choose from if you want or to inspire you!

#### BAHARIAN NATIVE

You're a native denizen of *Bahari Chini*. Perhaps one of the many harvesters of pre-collapse scrap? Maybe a shrab (shrimp-crab) farmer? Perhaps even a diver seeking pearls in the planet core sea.

#### Cook

You were a cook on a space station (perhaps the *Blue Hole Mining Co.* mining station) or a large starship. Transitioning to life planetside may have been easier for you than for most, or perhaps you yearn to taste the universe...

#### ESCAPED PRISONER

When the lightlanes fell, a *Federation* prison ship crashed on *Bahari Chini*. You were one of its many prisoners who happened to survive the crash!

#### PIRATE

Yarr.

#### REVERIE SURVIVOR

You were a spacer... once... before that *thing* appeared on your vessel. One-by-one your crew began to disappear without a trace. In a panic, you recharted to the nearest inhabited planet, *Bahari Chini*. By the time you arrived, you were the last crewman left... You've been planetside ever since.

#### SPACE MARINE

You served in a minor conflict somewhere in the galaxy. Perhaps the conflict was over before the lightlanes fell? Perhaps you were

# CONSTELLATION

## APPENDIX A. YOUR CHARACTER

just on leave and who knows what has changed in the intervening years?

### SPACE TRUCKER

You drove space freighters. It wasn't glorious but it was a livin'.

### SPECIAL AGENT

You are/were a special agent for one (or more) of the myriad factions throughout the galaxy. Who did you serve? What were their goals? Has the nine years of isolation on *Bahari Chini* changed your loyalties?

### STARSHIP MECHANIC

You were a mechanic on a space station (perhaps the *Blue Hole Mining Co.* mining station), a large starship, or a planetside repair facility.

### STELLAR REFUGEE

You're a refugee from some minor conflict or interstellar catastrophe somewhere in the galaxy. What happened? Who did you lose? Are they still out there in the galaxy, somewhere?

### WEALTHY ADVENTURER

You were on a light spot of holiday (or checking in on some investments with *Blue Hole Mining Co.*) when the lightlanes fell. Your fabulous wealth has not been so meaningful on *Bahari Chini*—How have you managed?

### WELL-INTENTIONED MERCHANT

You traveled to *Bahari Chini* on a freighter to sell your wares in what should have been a routine route and have been stuck here ever since the lightlanes fell. What did you sell? Who did you leave behind? What are your goals and dreams now?

# CONSTELLATION

## APPENDIX B. BASIC LORE

### COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Everyone knows these things!

#### ALIENS

**AI.** Robots are common in the galaxy, and most have at least rudimentary intelligence. But the technology for true sapience and the capacity to feel and dream has been lost to time... And of course is technically illegal per *Federation* law.

**Celestials.** On certain worlds, the combined psionic/spiritual energies of its people manifest as powerful entities known as Celestials. The most powerful celestials are referred to as Gods, but most celestials are more like normal people. Celestials never age, and many people have an (incorrect) belief that all celestials are naturally naive and pure of heart.

**Reverie.** The *Nihil Reverie*, or just *Reverie*, is a catch-all for the unknown monsters that live in the space between stars. They have a nasty reputation for disappearing the crews of entire space stations, leaving no survivors, yet outlandish stories describe their horrible fangs, claws, billions of eyes, and other details that only a survivor would ever even know. But these things aren't real of course... right? I'm sure they're just a tale that spacers tell...

#### CIVILIZATIONS

There are countless civilizations of wildly differing technology levels across the galaxy. Some purely medieval, others experiencing industrialization, but most in a strange duality where they have been exposed to the greater galaxy and its peoples and cultures, but lack the full technological prowess to venture out without help. *Bahari Chini* is one such of these civilizations. Among the few fully capable of interstellar connectivity, there are planet-states, stellar kingdoms, and sector-wide empires.

However, one thing remains the same throughout most of these places: Get shot in the head and you're probably going to die—Just because a society is medieval doesn't mean they (or their local flora/fauna) don't pose a threat!

#### MAGIC

Magic exists. On most planets, it's a moderately rare phenomena and the ability to use it is hereditary. On other planets, it is seen as anathema! On rare others, still, it is extremely common and everyone and their mother can cast a spell or two.

Powerful magic, however, is fairly uncommon. **Starsorcerers**, magic wielders capable of warping reality at the starship scale, are all but extinct, and when they are present they are generally feared and mistrusted.

#### SPACE

Space functions a little differently from what you might expect. Instead of instantly dying if exposed to the vacuum of space, in this setting, the only issue with space is the lack of air (which is still a pretty serious concern). It's dangerous, but much less inhospitable than you might normally expect.

# CONSTELLATION

## APPENDIX C. SPACER RULES

### SPACE COMBAT

Starships and space combat will be played using a slightly modified version of the mechanics from the **STAR WARS 5E** tabletop roleplaying game system. And you don't have to learn anything, because as the game master, I'll know the rules and can explain them as we play.

### STARSHIPS

Early in the game you'll be introduced to several starships owned by **Primary Holding Company**. From here, you'll have the opportunity to explore the galaxy and upgrade the ships over time, perhaps even expanding the fleet to include entirely new ships! You'll learn more about these ships when you actually play in the game.

### SPACEFARING ROLES

While spacefaring, there are four key starship roles which your character can have. In spacefaring challenges (like space combat), your character will make ability checks to influence how those conflicts unfold and the checks you can make depend on your role.

You can always try to pull off outside the box solutions to spacefaring challenges, but these ideas are provided to give you an idea of what each role might do during challenges. The most important thing to keep in mind is that this system is designed to ensure that no matter your role, you'll have plenty of unique and interesting things to do during space combat!

**Pilot.** You pilot the starship. You might try to pull off an *Evasive Maneuver* to dodge hazards or disrupt enemy gunners, you might try to perform some *Precision Navigation* to set yourself up for a more successful subsequent turn, or might try a *Risky Stunt* like a barrel roll with high payoff if you succeed, or dramatic consequences if you fail!

**Engineer.** You handle the starships' systems. You might try to *Divert Power*, rerouting energy to boost the ship's speed or shields, you might try to pull off an *Emergency Repair*, restoring the use of a disabled ship subsystem for a few rounds, or perhaps you'll push the ship beyond its limits with a *System Overclock*, granting even greater boosts to shields, weapons, or thrusters, at the risk of causing system failures!

**Gunner / Sensors Operator.** You operate the ship's scanners and weapons systems. You might perform a *Sensor Sweep* to aid the pilot in avoiding hazards, you might *Lock on Target* to boost your subsequent attacks against that target, or maybe you just lay down the hurt and *Fire Away*.

**Coordinator / Captain.** You liaise between the crew, any nearby planets or space stations, and perhaps even your adversaries. You might *Rally the Crew* granting an ally a reroll with a bonus, you might *Call for Backup* if friendly support is nearby, you might make a *Strategic Misdirection* using comms or other ship systems to befuddle your adversaries, or might simply stay *Calm Under Pressure*, allowing the crew to ignore the negative effects of critical system failures for a few turns.

### LEARNING A ROLE

Depending on your character's background, they may have proficiency in one or more of these roles at the start of the game. Don't worry though if they don't - Your character will level up over time becoming more skilled in their spacefaring capabilities.